

THE LITTLE FORKS CONSERVANCY



Summer 2010

Preserve Today, Ensure Tomorrow

Issue 50

Treasured Family Land Conserved Forever

For over thirty years, Robert and Cheryl Duda have brought their family to their 24 acre retreat in Gladwin County. The land, used for camping trips, has been carefully restored by the Dudas over the years. Mr. and Mrs. Duda recently donated a conservation easement to The Little Forks Conservancy to ensure the land they love is conserved forever.

Part of a larger cattle farm, the property had been used primarily as pasture prior to the Duda's ownership. They have worked very hard since acquiring the land to help restore the property with an emphasis on promoting biodiversity. The Dudas' property is now a variety of habitat types including upland woods, grassland, wetlands and a small intermittent stream.

Trees have been planted throughout the property gradually converting open grazing land to woods. Through their efforts, Mr.

Duda said the property has changed "from a sea of queen Anne's lace to nice stands of 40 feet high pines and deciduous forest." In addition, wildflowers have come back in abundance including asters and trout lilies.

The small pond which was used as a watering hole for the cattle is now surrounded by trees and vegetation providing habitat for several frog species and herons.

This property lies within the Cedar River watershed which is a focus area for the Conservancy. The small intermittent stream on the property has a healthy vegetated buffer, which helps preserve water quality. This waterway eventually drains into Howland Creek which flows into Wiggins Lake.

"The Duda Family has been committed to protecting the natural features of their land over the years. Protecting the land with



Originally used as a watering hole for the cattle, Robert and Cheryl Duda's small pond is one of many natural features protected with a conservation easement by The Little Forks Conservancy.

a conservation easement will guarantee the property remains in a relatively natural state benefiting wildlife, water quality and native vegetation" commented Elan Lipschitz, Land Protection Specialist.

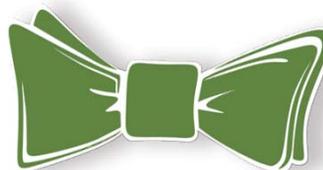
The conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement between The Little Forks Conservancy and a landowner which determines the uses of the property in order to best conserve its natural condition forever. By

protecting the land with a conservation easement, the Dudas hope to "let the property continue its evolution back to a more natural condition," Mr. Duda said.

If you have any questions about conservation easements or the Little Forks Conservancy's work in the Cedar River watershed, please contact us at (989) 835-4886 or via email at elipschitz@littleforks.org.

OUR MISSION:

The Little Forks Conservancy permanently protects land with natural and cultural resources that add to the quality of life in our community.



Save the Date
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10
GREEN TIE IS BACK



From the Director: Remembering a Dedicated Leader

It was with great sadness that I learned of the passing of Hugh Starks, one of the founding board members of The Little Forks Conservancy.

Founding board members always hold a special place in the history of an organization. To have the ability, foresight and patience to begin a non-profit is leadership that is reserved for only a few among us. It is entrepreneurial in its own unique way. The need to write by-laws, establish policies, find funding, get an office, and hire staff from the beginning was more than just a few people

sitting around a coffee table trying to “do some good for the community.” It was recognition of the complexity and long-term commitment that land conservation entails.

The reality of doing land conservation in a manner that is voluntary and permanent, means we don’t finish a deal and move on. We establish relationships. We build permanent partnerships with the land and the landowners. While the land may change over time as forests mature or grasslands succeed into woodlands, we provide assurance to a landowner that certain changes will not occur.

The grove of hemlocks sitting over the river will not be destroyed. The woods that are home to native species of plants

and animals will be able to withstand the invasion of foreign species that arrive with disturbance and development.

The community will benefit from open space and a healthy natural system that is protected by an organization made up of local leaders, with the support of other residents, local businesses, foundations and hopefully even the public policy makers.

Hugh and his wife Eileen leave a legacy that is greater than each of them as individuals. Nobody can accomplish what we do on their own. I can’t. I am privileged to lead an organization that simply reflects the land ethic of a community. It is a way for community members to join others who share

their belief and vision of building and maintaining a quality of life that includes a healthy natural environment.

It is time to rededicate ourselves to a vision that Hugh held dearly. That we leave the community a better place than we found it. Our mission at The Little Forks Conservancy is to focus on the land with good, healthy natural systems and then to work with the owners to conserve those natural resources forever. That, my friends is a very tough job, especially in mid-Michigan.

It takes leaders like Hugh Starks and it takes people who join the cause to make a difference. For those of you who share this vision we are grateful.



Project Partners

-1999-

- Don Blades, 274 acres

-2000-

- Hugh & Eileen Starks, 40 acres
- Borys & Lubo Zura, 44 acres

-2001-

- William H. Meek, 75 acres
- Glenn & Carol Sanford, 20 acres

-2003-

- Ceo Bauer, 236 acres

- The Midland Area Community Foundation, 41.5 acres
- Nancy Steiner, 9.8 acres

-2004-

- Phil & Janet Hehnl, 5 acres
- Dr. Kyung-Sik Ahn, 31 acres
- Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy, 39 acres
- George & Sue Lane, 191 acres

-2005-

- Ceo Bauer, 78 acres

- Scott & Kathryn Whalen, 119 acres

-2006-

- Blanche Stark, 79 acres
- Shellenbarger Land Company, 80 acres

-2007-

- David & Anna Spencer, 154.5 acres
- Norman & Patricia Engel, 190 acres
- George and Sue Lane, 80 acres

- Robert and Susan Piesko, 140 acres

- Richard and Kathy Shellenbarger, 73.4 acres

- Jon and Elizabeth Ringelberg, 70 acres

- Gerald and Pamela Schmiedicke, 80 acres

- Elizabeth Levi, 8.5 acres

-2008-

- Robin and Ardith Arbury, 219 acres

- L. Charles Christensen, 200 acres

-2010-

- Robert and Cheryl Duda, 24 acres

Riverview acquisition nears a major milestone; challenge continues

Your donation is needed now to help us reach our first major milestone in completing the Riverview Natural Area acquisition.

Our goal is to raise the final \$25,000 needed to pay off the short term loan we used to acquire the 219 acre Arbury parcel by September 1 so that we can celebrate this milestone at the Green Tie Gala on September 10!

As an extra incentive, any new (not previously pledged) contribution will be matched by the Carls Foundation, up to a total of \$25,000.

The goal of the Riverview land acquisition is to pur-

chase and hold 419 acres along the Tittabawassee River. The Conservancy received a short-term loan from The Conservation Fund in the fall of 2008 in order to complete the purchase of the properties and increase our fundraising opportunities.

The Conservancy was recently awarded a grant from the Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation (see page 4) to establish a parking area at Riverview. Once fundraising is completed for Riverview, we will be able to provide better access for visitors to this wonderful natural area.



Quick Facts about Riverview Natural Area:

- Comprised of two properties: the 219 acre Arbury acquisition and the 200 acre Christensen acquisition
- Home to diverse habitat types: farmland, forest, wetlands, and meadow
- Located along nearly two miles of the Tittabawassee River with high banks providing scenic views.

One board member retires; two new board members welcomed

The Little Forks Conservancy bid farewell to Board Member Daniel J. Cline and welcomed new board members Jill Gushow and Dan Rader at our annual meeting in May.

Board Member Dan Cline, a partner at local law firm Cline Close Dyer PLC, has retired from the board after reaching his term limit. During his term on the board, Dan served as vice president and was also president from 2002 to 2005. While he was president, Dan helped strengthen the Conservancy's policies and procedures as well as leading us through two land acquisition projects. Dan remains an active

member of the Conservancy's Land Committee. He is also involved in several projects with the Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation Policy.

Jill Gushow, an accomplished attorney and business professional, has joined the board of directors. A native of Auburn, she is actively involved in the Great Lakes Bay Region, serving on the board of Mid-Michigan Home Health Care and the Marshall Fredericks Sculpture Museum Saints and Sinners Event Committee. Outside of work, Gushow is a published author, a triathlete, and a 2009 RUBY Award recipient.

Dan Rader, the environmental health and safety responsible care leader for The Dow Chemical Company – Michigan Operations, also joins the board. Born in Plymouth, Indiana, Dan has held a variety

of roles during his 24 years at Dow. His assignments have spanned the across the United States, Japan, Germany and Mexico. Dan enjoys running, scuba diving, bird watching and home improvement projects.



Maple Syrup Sale

\$13 per pint

Enjoy delicious maple syrup made from lands protected by The Little Forks Conservancy

Get your pint before we run out!

Call 989-835-4886 to order today

Stewardship Efforts Get a Boost

Acquiring land or accepting a conservation easement is just the beginning of a project for the Conservancy. The Conservancy conducts a wide variety of stewardship activities after the project closes. These activities range from species inventories, signage, invasive species removal, trail work and – perhaps the greatest responsibility – monitoring each and every conservation easement each and every year.

This year we are thrilled to receive a \$20,000 grant from the Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation dedicated to support our stewardship efforts. The grant lets us deal with several

specific needs. First and foremost is the establishment of a parking area and trail head for the Riverview Natural Area.

We know many of you have been eagerly awaiting a chance to explore this spectacular property on your own. We hope that by late summer or early fall we can safely invite people to explore and enjoy the woods, wetlands and river frontage that make this site special. We will also need to blaze a couple of new trails to connect the parking area to our trail loops already in place on other parts of the property. There will be several chances to volunteer for that work, stay tuned.



The Overlook at the Averill Preserve is one of many areas that will receive extra care thanks to a recent grant.

In addition to Riverview, our fence needs mending at the Averill Preserve and a new layer of crushed limestone should be added to the turnout and overlook off of the Rail-Trail. Both preserves need additional signage and some more inventory work. The herpetological study this spring

was just a beginning to inventory Riverview.

This grant comes at an opportune time as we continue our work to improve access to our key preserves. Since our commitment to the resources, the land and the landowner is meant to last forever, our stewardship costs are also perpetual.

Herpetological Hike at Riverview



Left: Hike Leader David Mifsud holds a garter snake as Daniel Foster looks on. The garter snake was one of many amphibian and reptile species spotted during the hike at Riverview Natural Area.

Right: Noah Gushow-Reuter checks out a red backed salamander held by David Mifsud. Red backed salamanders are found throughout the woods of Riverview.



Thank You!

The Little Forks Conservancy would like to thank the following individuals for donating their time and talent:

- Our Tuesday Afternoon Stewardship Team: Ed Elliott, Glenn Sanford, Denny Brooks, Sarah Buchhorn.
- For helping at our recent Garage Sale: Carol Feider, Judy Enger, Debbie Anderson, Dale Anderson, and Beverly Curnutt
- For providing a dish at our Project Partners Picnic on June 16: Carol and Glenn Sanford, Debbie Anderson
- For hosting our Cedar River Open House: Reverend Karen Blatt and Beaverton Presbyterian Church.
- For guiding our trip into the World of Turtles and Frogs: David Mifsud of Herpetological Resource and Management.
- For conducting inventory work at Riverview: Phil Stephens and Denny Brooks

New program for landowners on the horizon

For years now the Conservancy has been struggling to find a way to work with landowners who are not ready or able to sign permanent conservation agreements on their land. Perhaps one family member does not want to participate or a bank will not subordinate their interest in the land due to a mortgage. There are a number of reasons why a permanent arrangement may not be possible at this time.

An exciting new program will soon be created for landowners thanks to a grant from the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network.

The grant will fund a pilot Land Registry program in the Cedar River watershed. Land registries recognize landowners who manage their lands in a

manner that provides benefits to the general public. As a participant in a land registry program, landowners can enter into an agreement to manage their property according to certain guidelines that reflect sustainable activity. The agreement is non-binding and typically only in effect as long as that landowner owns the property.

“The decision to enter into a permanent conservation easement takes a lot of personal motivation,” said Executive Director Doug Koop. “A land registry program will allow us to recognize landowners who are great stewards of their lands today but, for whatever reason, are not ready to enter into a permanent conservation agreement.”

The Cedar River watershed, a priority area of the

“A land registry program will allow us to recognize landowners who are great stewards of their lands today but, for whatever reason, are not ready to enter into a permanent conservation agreement.”

– DOUG KOOP, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Conservancy, will be the focus of the pilot program. The Conservancy has protected more than 1,000 acres in the watershed and recently received a grant from the State of Michigan to purchase conservation easements there.

The grant will allow the Conservancy to design the program and to develop appropriate criteria and recognition materials in order to launch the land registry program in the fall.

For more information about the conservation op-

tions offered by The Little Forks Conservancy, contact our office at 989-835-4886

This project has been made possible by a grant through the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (“WIN”). WIN is a volunteer organization that includes more than 90 citizens and organizations and focuses on opportunities to better link the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Saginaw Bay communities in order to sustain and improve the region’s quality of life. More information about WIN is available on its website at www.saginawbaywin.org.

Cub Scouts install bluebird boxes at Riverview Natural Area

On Wednesday, April 28 members of Cub Scout Pack 3798 braved the wet and muddy trails of Riverview Natural Area to install bluebird boxes that they had assembled.

The Cub Scouts made 15 bluebird boxes, which were placed in two open fields on the Riverview property.

Although they are called bluebird boxes, they may be used by a variety of bird species.

The Conservancy would

like to thank the following cub scouts (parent’s name in parenthesis): Shane Hogan (Todd Hogan); Dominic Drake (Brian West); Gabriel Looker (Darlene Looker); Christian Shuetz (Tom Shuetz); Jon McCreadie (Greg and Dawn McCreadie); Mackenzie Smith (Robin Smith). Also participating from the Webelos Den were: Jonathon Harkness (Brian Harkness); and Ryan Berg (Eric Berg).



Left: A Cub Scout gets a ride over one of the wetter parts of the trail. Below: A Cub Scout installs the bluebird box he made with the help of Den Leader Todd Hogan.



2009 Annual Report

By *Geoffrey Kusch, president of Little Forks Conservancy.*

I am pleased to submit my President's Annual Report on activities of the Conservancy in 2009. During a time of continued financial stress in our community and in the State of Michigan, we are still able to show successes in meeting our mission of permanently protecting land with natural and cultural resource that add to the quality of life in our community.

This past year we increased our volunteer involvement, completed all of our required monitoring, paid down a significant amount of debt on the Riverview Natural Area, obtained new grants for continuing our work and saw a rising level of creativity in our fundraising opportunities. I would like to thank everyone for their resilience in 2009.

We should especially praise the staff and board who spent countless hours preparing our application for accreditation through the Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Commission. Through revisions and adoption of policies, compilation of hundreds of pages of support documents and numerous hours preparing the pre-applica-

tion, full application and follow-up requests for additional information, we are now just a short time away from the final determination on our request.

We should be proud of being able to facilitate two Eagle Scout projects at Riverview. New boardwalk was placed to allow hikers a drier, less impactful nature experience as they explore the land above the river.

Visitors will also be able to enjoy two new benches where they can sit, enjoy and reflect upon the Tittabawassee River as it rolls gently by.

Among the many fundraising events last year – maple syrup, movie nights, Riverview education series, and even a garage sale – we launched what we hope will grow to be our signature fundraising event, the Green Tie Gala. In the first year we were able to raise more than \$7,000 to support the Riverview Natural Area.

As we now look forward to the rest of 2010, we need to dig in and close several funding gaps. We need to redouble our commitment to raise our membership numbers, grow our community and business support and deliver results in our land protection program.



STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2009

UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Support and Revenue

Grants and contributions	\$ 162,495
Investment income	3,157
Change in value of beneficial interest	55,364
Net assets released from restrictions	
-For specific purposes	16,797
-Time restrictions expired	<u>50,000</u>

Total support and revenue

287,813

Expenses

Conservation program	237,455
Administration	49,844
Fundraising	<u>24,502</u>

Total expenses

311,801

Change in unrestricted net assets

(23,988)

TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Support and revenue (grants and contributions)

Restricted for programs for future years	17,263
Restricted for specific purposes	249,079
Change in value of beneficial interest	33,003

Net assets released from restrictions

(66,797)

Change in temporarily restricted net assets

232,548

Change in net assets

208,560

Net assets at beginning of year

1,728,474

Net assets at end of year

\$ 1,937,034



Welcome New Members!

We would like to thank the following individuals who are first-time members of The Little Forks Conservancy. By giving \$20 in '10, their gifts will be matched 2-to-1 by our Board of Directors.

Anonymous	Jim Inman
Bob Bissonnette	Connie Lesh
David and Susan Dunn	Joseph McNier
Monica Essenmacher	Sarah and Joshua Thomson
Connie Frye	Brian Tessin
Mary Ellyn Gushow	

Know someone who isn't a member? Tell them to Give \$20 in '10! For more information or to give \$20 in '10 online, visit our website at www.littleforks.org.

Save the Date

Food Fun & Fireworks

July 21 • 6 p.m.

The Little Forks Conservancy's annual fundraiser at Dow Diamond is back and better than ever. With the addition of the nightly suite we have more room than ever. Proceeds benefit the Defense Fund. See the back page for more details.

Admission: \$50 per person.

Riverview's north trails. This will be a slow and easy 1.5 mile hike. You can meet Elan at the Little Forks Conservancy's office at 105 Post Street or Karen at Chippewa Nature Center's Visitor Center, whichever is more convenient for you and we will caravan to the property.

Admission: Free.

Dow Gardens Outdoor Movie Night

July 30 • August 27

Bring your lawnchair and enjoy an outdoor movie under the stars at Dow Gardens! The Conservancy will be there selling concessions to benefit land conservation. Watch our website for more information.

Admission: \$5 for Adults. Free for Dow Gardens season passholders.

Green Tie Gala

September 10 • 7 p.m.

The Little Forks Conservancy invites you to forget your black tie and go green. Enjoy delicious hors d'oeuvres while watching Empty Canvas sing and paint! Their canvas and other great items and experiences will be auctioned live later that evening. Proceeds will benefit the Riverview Natural Area.

Admission: \$50 per person or \$90 per couple

To register or find out more information about these events, visit our website at www.littleforks.org or contact our office at 989-835-4886.

Exploring the North Trails at Riverview

August 25 • 10 a.m.

Chippewa Nature Center's Karen Breternitz will be your guide as we explore

2010 Business Partners for Conservation

These businesses have made contributions to the Conservancy's annual operating fund. We

thank them for their support of land conservation to keep our community a healthy and attractive place to do business.



Gold



Green

BRETT GEHRINGER OF HANTZ FINANCIAL



Simmons Specific Chiropractic



CLINE CLOSE DYER PLC ATTORNEYS



Dolce Hotel & Conference Destination



CHEMICAL BANK MEMBER FDIC



On Eagles Wings Inn



Rider Type & Design

PLEASE JOIN US

Help us protect the natural resources that define our community. Your membership saves land right here in mid-Michigan—preserving our rivers, forests and fields now and for generations to come.

Yes, I want to join The Little Forks Conservancy to protect significant natural resources in my community.

\$5000 \$1000 \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 \$25 Other _____

Please make your check payable to **The Little Forks Conservancy.**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Please send me information on options for conserving my land.

The Little Forks Conservancy • 105 Post Street Midland, MI 48640

Thank you!



The Little Forks Conservancy
 105 Post Street
 Midland, MI 48640



Food



Fun



Fireworks

Wednesday, July 21 • 6 p.m. • Suite Level at Dow Diamond

Join us at Dow Diamond for a night of Food, Fun and Fireworks! This annual fundraiser begins at 6 p.m. with a delicious buffet before the Great Lakes Loons take the field against the Clinton LumberKings. Enjoy the view from Lasorda's Landing, a covered patio on the suite level or relax in the connected nightly suite. After the game, stick around as fireworks fill the sky!

Tickets: \$50 per person

Call 989-835-4886 to reserve your seats today!

Food, Fun & Fireworks

PLEASE FILL OUT THE FORM AND RETURN WITH PAYMENT TO LITTLE FORKS CONSERVANCY.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

- I would like to reserve _____ seat(s) at \$50 per person.
- I am unable to attend, but would like to make a donation of \$_____ to support The Little Forks Conservancy.

Please register by July 16, 2010

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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- Maureen Craig
- Judy Enger
- Carol W. Feider
- Bill Gebo
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- Geoffry Kusch
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