



Land Conservancy OF WEST MICHIGAN

Keeping Nature Nearby

Fall 2006

A Commitment to Conservation Creates a New Nature Preserve

In response to a Land Conservancy appeal for help to create a new nature preserve on the north side of Holland, there was a tremendous outpouring of support from Park Township and Holland-area residents, businesses and foundations, along with other Land Conservancy members.

The result: the project fundraising goal was met and the property is now the new Kuker-Van Til Nature Preserve.

Located in Park Township, this 45-acre nature preserve features rolling, sandy hills with a mixed hardwood-pine forest. On the west side of the property there are a few open, sandy “blow-outs” – reminders of how long-ago the land was timbered and cleared, and then how difficult it was to re-vegetate. On the east side of the property an oak-covered ridge drops down to a low, wet area where ferns and hemlocks shelter frogs and turtles.

Unfortunately, we cannot thank the person who was the driving force behind the preservation of this land. Edith Van Til, the landowner for more than five decades, passed away in early 2005. “Edie” inherited the property in 1952, shortly before her marriage to Bernard (“Bud”) Van Til; 15 years after her parents (the Kukers) had purchased their original 60 acres for \$2,800.

When Bud and Edie first owned the property it was very open with few trees. In fact, old photos show them posing with WWII-era planes that landed on the property.

As the forest grew back, Edie loved watching the turkey, deer, and songbirds and was adamant about keeping the property natural to benefit the wildlife her property sheltered. As Park Township grew and residential developments proliferated she turned down many offers to sell her increasingly valuable property. Edie actively sought conservation options for her land and contacted the Land Conservancy in 2003.



Edith Van Til's family land is the new Kuker-Van Til Nature Preserve in Park Township, Ottawa County.



Thankfully, Edie's heirs and adopted family, the Blackburns, were committed to honoring her desire to preserve her natural habitat. The difficulty arose with the highly appreciated value of her property. The property's taxes had shot up more than tenfold, making it improbable that the Blackburns could keep it undeveloped for the future.

The Blackburns generously declined offers to sell for development and instead wanted to donate the property to the Land Conservancy to create a nature preserve, as had been discussed with Edie while she was living.

Continued on page 5.

The new Kuker-Van Til Nature Preserve features rolling, sandy hills and a mixed hardwood-pine forest. *Photo: Danielle Vogel*



Mission

To keep nature nearby, the Land Conservancy of West Michigan permanently protects natural and scenic lands.

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The Land Conservancy of West Michigan is a recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

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Nature Nearby Celebration Highlights Volunteers

A bright point of every Annual Membership Meeting is the recognition of our outstanding volunteers. All of the achievements of the Land Conservancy are rooted in the dedicated volunteers who contribute their time, talent, and enthusiasm to help with workdays, committees, office projects, and much more. Simply put, these people are what makes the organization a success.

At the April 27th celebration, Dwight Baker was honored as volunteer of the year. Dwight has been a stalwart stewardship volunteer by participating in workdays, leading crews at different preserves throughout the past year, and serving as an active member of the Stewardship Committee. Dwight's passion for the environment is clear to anyone who has had the pleasure of working with him in the field.

This year's Mary Jane Dockeray Award, which honors an individual or organization that has made a significant contribution to the quality of nature interpretation or to conservation efforts in West Michigan, was given to Dr. Randy VanDragt and Dr. Dave Warners. As active leaders in environmental and biological education, both have been instrumental in the establishment of an ecosystem preserve and the Bunker Environmental Center at Calvin College. In addition, they have set the standard for natural features inventories in our local communities.

During the Annual Meeting we also said goodbye to outgoing board members. Robb Bajema provided outstanding service on the Land Protection and Nominating Committees.



Dwight Baker (left), LCWM Volunteer of the Year, plants trees at Saul Lake Bog with Board Member, Elise Roe. *Photo: Rhoda de Zoete*

John Cleveland gave distinguished service on the Executive Committee and provided excellent direction on strategic planning. Jay Kilpatrick offered exceptional support on the Land Protection Committee, as well as leading a benchmarking project comparing how we are doing with other land trusts of a similar size. Matt Zimmerman contributed standout service on the Land Protection Committee and provided superior legal counsel for the last six years.

Continued on page 4.

Honorarium & Memorial Gifts

Gifts were made in honor of:	Barbara VanDyke <i>by Don & Laurie Gardner</i>	Rita Callow <i>by Sun Title Agency, LLC</i>
Stan Cheff <i>by Don & Laurie Gardner</i>	Peter Wege Matt Zimmerman <i>by Peter & Patrice Emmerson</i>	Clarence & Evelyn Dunneback, Victor & Eleanor Kalicinski, Paul & Evelyn Wolterink, John & LaMae Kolean <i>by Dave Dunneback & Lisa Wolterink</i>
The Maas Family <i>by Kathy Bowler</i>	Gifts were made in memory of:	
Doug Powless <i>by Dan & Jann Bidwell</i>	C. Michael Brown <i>by Rebecca Shankwiler-Brown</i>	John A. Paroff <i>by Kathryn Paroff</i>
Elise Roe <i>by June Roe & Matt Roe</i>		

Underwriting for this newsletter generously provided by:



With more than 180 attorneys in Grand Rapids, Metro Detroit, Holland, and Muskegon, Warner Norcross is one of Michigan's leading providers of legal services.



Land Acquisition Fund Challenge Met Again

For a third year in a row, Land Conservancy members met a \$30,000 fundraising goal for the Land Acquisition Fund, triggering a \$30,000 match from the family of Ruth and August Homeyer. The successful challenge this year, combined with similar challenges made in 2004 and 2005, will add over \$200,000 to the Fund.

“Our members’ response to the Homeyer challenges has been tremendous,” said Julie Stoneman, Land Conservancy Executive Director. “The growth of the Land Acquisition Fund means we have a powerful land protection tool thanks to the Homeyer family and our donors.”

In 2003, the Homeyer family sought suitable projects to honor Ruth and August Homeyer and their love of the natural world (see profile

on page 7). The Land Conservancy’s proposal to build the Land Acquisition Fund and seed purchases of natural lands was a great fit according to Rev. Charles Homeyer, Ruth and August’s son.

“Mom and Dad had an appreciation and love for nature all of their lives, born in part by Dad’s experience of growing up on a small farm in the Arkansas Ozarks about 90 years ago,” said Rev. Homeyer. “They expressed their appreciation on their many trips to our National Parks, fishing in streams and lakes, bird watching, and many visits to our own Lake Michigan shore. Therefore, it is a most appropriate part of their legacy that some of their money should support the growth of the Land Acquisition Fund, giving others and generations yet unborn the opportunity to appreciate and love ordinary natural features

and extraordinary natural beauty much as they did in their lifetimes.”

The Land Acquisition Fund can be used to purchase options or to cover other up-front costs of acquiring land such as surveys or appraisals. Fundraising campaigns then cover the full acquisition costs and pay back the seed money to the Fund. Used in this way, the Fund acts as an internal revolving loan fund and can be used over and over again to support more land purchases.

“Thank you to everyone who helped us meet these challenges and our sincere gratitude to the Homeyer family for giving us this opportunity,” said Stoneman. “Because of the farsighted generosity of the Homeyers and our members, we are significantly better positioned to meet our conservation goals.”

Funds Needed for New Rockford Preserve

This spring the Land Conservancy formally dedicated the Maas Family Nature Preserve, making it open and accessible to the public. This remarkable 17-acre property located along the White Pine Trail in Algoma Township boasts a healthy population of the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly.

Every nature preserve the Land Conservancy owns has a special fund for the long-term care and protection of the land. The Maas Nature Preserve is in urgent need of the establishment of such a fund. Immediate projects it will support include fencing and signs to prevent motorized vehicles from trespassing on the property, creating ruts, and damaging the butterfly habitat.

Approximately \$25,000 is needed to adequately ensure this property will always remain a beautiful place for wildlife and visitors. To help with the fundraising effort, the Wege Foundation, Steelcase Foundation, Frey Foundation, and Ken and Judy Betz have stepped forward with challenge grants. If we raise \$12,500 for the Maas Family Nature Preserve by early 2007, they will match all the gifts dollar for dollar helping us to reach our goal twice as fast!

If you would like to contribute to the Maas Nature Preserve Fund, please make your check payable to the Land Conservancy and put Maas Preserve in the notes line. Mail your check to LCWM, 1345 Monroe Ave. NW, Ste. 324, Grand Rapids, MI 49505.

Visit the Maas Preserve!

All Land Conservancy nature preserves are open to the public from dawn until dusk. If you find yourself along the White Pine Trail just north of Rockford, we encourage you to visit the Maas Family Nature Preserve.

Directions: The preserve is located along the White Pine Trail in Algoma Twp. north of Rockford. Park at the White Pine Trail staging area at 12 Mile Rd. east of Summit Ave. and walk 1/2 mile north along the trail.

Funds are needed for the long-term protection and management of the Maas Family Nature Preserve. *Photo: D. Vogel*





Land Protection Project Support

Community Foundation for Muskegon County
 Consumer's Energy Foundation
 Delmar & Audria Olsen Family Fnd
 Richard & Helen DeVos Foundation
 First American Title
 Fremont Area Community Fnd
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 Ruth & August Homeyer Trust
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 RED Investors, LLC
 Mrs. James Sebastian
 Ruth Skwarek
 South Highlands Beach Assoc.
 Edith Van Til Trust/Blackburn Family
 Wege Foundation
 Evangeline White



Volunteers Help to Keep Nature Nearby!

Thank you to all our volunteers who worked hard in the field and in the office during this busy growing season. If you are interested in volunteering in the field or in the office, serving on a committee, or helping in some other way, please contact Peter Homeyer at 616-451-9476 or peter@naturenearby.org.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Linda Armock | City of Grand Rapids,
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| Bill Byl | Lynne Goodwin | Marlene Leistico | Elaine Salisbury | |
| Rick Chapla | Lindsey Goss | Timothy Lundgren | Diane Sampson | |
| City High Students | Daniel Grady | Becky Martin | Ellen Satterlee | |

Nature Nearby Celebration... (Continued from page 2)

During the business portion of the meeting, Daniel Grady, Timothy Lundgren, and Dave Warners were newly elected to the Board by the general membership and Bill Byl, Mike Hayes, Elise Roe, and Al Steinman were reinstated for a second term.

The evening ended with Jim McGrath of the Nature Discovery Center entertaining and teaching the crowd about Michigan's native reptiles and amphibians. He even brought living specimens of insects, frogs, and snakes for the audience to closely examine, touch, and hold. It



was a great night visiting with old friends and recognizing some of the people who made last year such a success. Thank you one and all for your dedication and passion for *keeping nature nearby*.

Young naturalists study reptiles and amphibians up close at the Land Conservancy's Nature Nearby Celebration this past April.
 Photos: Danielle Vogel



A Commitment to Conservation...

(Continued from page 1)

In order to do that, though, the Land Conservancy needed help to pay the first-year taxes and other expenses that would be required to create and maintain the nature preserve.

The support for protecting this beautiful property was outstanding! Special thanks go to Haworth, Inc. and an anonymous donor whose lead gifts created a \$30,000 challenge that matched donations to the project. Land Conservancy member (and former board member) Ken Freestone helped us organize the fundraising with the assistance of several neighbors of the property, including Jane and Glenn Lowe and Ann and Randy Schutt. Attorney Nathan Bock, Lakeshore Environmental, Inc., and First American Title all contributed to this project through pro-bono services required to complete the transaction. Finally, the ultimate thanks go to everyone who made a contribution, ensuring that the Kuker-Van Til property will be a natural treasure for generations to come.

This fall the Land Conservancy will create a loop footpath through the nature preserve with a preserve sign marking the entrance, on the north side of Perry Street between 160th and 168th Avenues.

Kuker-Van Til Nature Preserve Dedication

All are invited to attend the preserve dedication on October 14th at 10 am. See page 8 for details.



Thank You Kuker-Van Til Donors!

* *New Land Conservancy Member*

* Robert & Wendy Andrews
 * Robert & Margaret Ankerman
 * Charles Aschbrenner
 * John & Linda Bader
 * Brendt & Melissa Baldwin
 * Tom Balsanek
 * Jeffrey & Christine Bart
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 * Michael & Mary Dykema
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 * Richard & Gretchen Fisher
 * Patricia Flynn
 * John & Nancy Foster
 * Ken & Lorma Freestone
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 * Don and Diane Geese
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 * Loraine Griffin
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 * Ms. Holly Haas
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 * Tom & Erin Werkman
 * Don & Ann Whitmore
 * Marilyn Wickens
 * Bob & Pat Williams
 * Dorothy Willson
 * Sue Wisneski
 * John & Mary Zinkand

Welcome New Members (3/1/06 - 7/31/06)

David & Karen Aupperlee
 James & Marilyn Bamborough
 Bopi Biddanda
 Pamela Billmeier
 Kathy Bowler
 Judi Brown
 Marvin Cardinal
 Stella Clove
 David & Amy DeGraaf
 Nick & Marty Dewey
 Gail DeYoung
 Shirley Downer
 Peter & Patrice Emmerson
 Douglas Everse
 Angela Faber
 Mark & Heidi Feldpausch
 Stephen and Linda Fiorenzo
 Robert Flink
 James Foerch
 John & Cynthia Fulenwider
 Brent Godfrey
 Daniel S Grady
 Robert & Jane Griffin
 Nancy Hamlin
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 Jerri Lynn Osmar
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 Phyllis Webb
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William Winglar
 Cheryl Wisdom
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 Hilary Zack
 Charlene Zoet

Wish List

Discounted Property Surveys

Flotation Cushions

Filing/Data Entry Volunteer

Heavy Duty Wire Cutters

Life Jackets

Long Handled Loppers

Minivan or Truck



Aloha Doug!

In August, the Land Conservancy had to bid farewell to Doug Powless after his five faithful years with the organization.

Doug was offered an opportunity of a lifetime - to finish his master's degree in Conservation Biology through the University of Hawaii at Hilo. He and his wife Heather, who has been one of our most dedicated volunteers these last few years, will be greatly missed.

Doug began as the Land Conservancy's first full-time stewardship employee in 2001 to oversee our 5 preserves and 8 conservation easements. Since then, his job more than doubled, with the addition of 7 new preserves and 15 conservation easements. Doug remained vigilant and persistent through it all, while the land protection staff continued to add to his workload.

Most of you will remember Doug from the many workdays he held at the preserves, clearing trail, removing invasive species and garbage, and searching for those



illusive property lines. Doug also led the comprehensive monitoring of the LCWM's conservation easements and crafted multiple conservation plans for priority areas throughout the region. He came on board at the perfect time; his expertise in ecology and bird and plant species was an asset to the Land Conservancy and imperative in planning for the future of our preserves and overall land protection efforts.

We will miss Doug for his exceptional work, impeccable record-keeping and scientific expertise. Many of us will also miss him for his ability to answer any and all questions about birds, lack of fear for hard work or getting dirty, great laughs and memories from his many work days. Aloha Doug, we wish you and Heather all the best in Hawaii!

Doug Powless (right), former Science & Stewardship Director, left the Land Conservancy in August to pursue a master's degree at the University of Hawaii. Photo: Danielle Vogel

Tech Grant Provides Much Needed Equipment

This spring the Land Conservancy received an anonymous gift of over \$10,000 to help replace and upgrade equipment for use around the office and in the field. This money will go towards computers, a copier, a digital camera, GPS units, compasses, and two-way radios.

"We are so grateful for this gift," says Julie Stoneman, Executive Director of the Land Conservancy. "Our equipment was very outdated. This contribution allows us to be much more efficient."

Denison Update

Earlier this summer, the Denison property, 413 acres of dune and wetlands straddling the Kalamazoo River channel, was sold to Aubrey McClendon, an Oklahoma businessman. The sale (and the resulting single ownership) resolves the legal issues between the previous owners that had stalled conservation progress over the last year and begins a new chapter for the efforts to preserve this remarkable property.

McClendon and his local representative, Stephen Neumer, have repeatedly stated their desire to work with all interested parties for the property, including conservation

groups. The City of Saugatuck will continue to negotiate purchase of the land south of the river channel with its conservation partners including the Land Conservancy of West Michigan, The Nature Conservancy, and Saugatuck SOS.

The majority of the public funding committed for south Denison remains in place, but agreements will need to be reached in the near future to retain those funds. Groups will also seek expansion of Saugatuck Dunes State Park on the north side of the river.

New Tax Incentives for Private Land Conservation

Land Conservancy Seeks Eligible Landowners

On August 17, President Bush signed a new tax law that helps all of us interested in protecting natural areas and family farms. The law enhances the federal income tax benefits for landowners who donate qualified conservation easements for the remainder of 2006 and 2007. These easements provide a win-win solution for protecting important resources, while keeping land in private ownership.

With the successful passing of this bill, the tax incentives for donating a conservation easement now work much better for many modest income landowners who, under the old rules, only got credit for a small portion

of the value of their donation. Now, with a qualified conservation easement, a donor can deduct up to 50% of their adjusted gross income in any year (up from 30%), and, if most of their income is from farming, ranching or forestry, they can deduct up to 100% of their income. More importantly, if donors can't deduct the full amount of their easement's value in the first year, they can now use the deduction for up to 16 years (up from six).

A conservation easement is a legal agreement that allows a landowner to permanently limit the development of their property in order to protect its conservation values. The land remains in private ownership and use. The public does not have access to the property, but benefits from the protection of the natural and scenic resources that are an important part of our community.

"This change in the law will make it possible for many more landowners to achieve their conservation goals and protect their natural land, for the benefit of their children and our community," said Julie Stoneman, Executive Director of the Land Conservancy of West Michigan.

For more information on conservation options for your family land, please contact the LCWM land protection staff (April Scholtz or Rhoda de Zoete) at 616-451-9476 or lcwm@naturenearby.org.



A Lasting Legacy – August and Ruth Homeyer

Born in Chicago, August Homeyer was a young boy when his family moved to a small farm in Arkansas in the 1920s. By all accounts, it was those years on the farm – hunting, trapping and exploring the countryside – that planted the seeds for a lifelong love of nature. But it was the influence of special teachers in both elementary and high school that set him on the path to be a scientist.



Ruth & August Homeyer's Charitable Lead Unitrust provided matching grants for the Land Conservancy's Land Acquisition Fund.

August won a scholarship which enabled him to attend Washington University in St. Louis and earn a bachelor's degree in chemistry. It was in St. Louis where he met Ruth Hemminghaus, a singer who shared his love of birds and the outdoors. They married in 1934, their union lasting for sixty-seven years.

Completing his master's degree and PhD in chemical engineering at Penn State during the depression, August went to work for a company that manufactured chemicals for school science labs as well as pharmaceuticals. August rose high in the ranks of the company and became its international representative. Subsequently, Ruth and August became world-wide travelers.

The couple raised two sons, Charles and Bruce. Charles remembers his parents watching birds and taking evening classes to further their understanding and appreciation of the natural world. Ruth and August traveled the world over, but for several summers, to

escape the heat and humidity of St. Louis, the family rented cottages in West Michigan and loved the natural setting here. They also became very involved with the Missouri Botanical Garden, supporting special projects such as a boardwalk through a wetland in the arboretum. In fact, the Homeyers celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at the Garden.

August passed away in 2002. According to grandson Peter, August wanted to make certain that the same sort of gifts and opportunities that allowed him

to do something extraordinary with his life be made available to others. He felt fortunate to have the rich experiences life provided him and wanted the chance to influence another generation just as he had been influenced. With foresight to continue his charitable giving beyond his own lifetime, August left a Charitable Lead Unitrust. Guided by their children and grandchildren, the legacy of Ruth and August Homeyer funds projects as diverse as restoration of the St. Johns River in Florida and equipment needs for the Wealthy St. Theatre here in Grand Rapids.

The Land Conservancy is deeply honored to be a part of this remarkable legacy. The challenge grants we received from the Homeyer Unitrust (see page 3) have been used to build our special fund for the acquisition of natural lands in West Michigan, keeping nature nearby so that generations to come will learn about the natural world August and Ruth Homeyer loved so much.



Land Conservancy
OF WEST MICHIGAN

- Landmark Leader \$2500
- Patron \$1000
- Business Member \$500
- Sponsor \$500
- Benefactor \$250
- Sustainer \$100
- Supporter \$50
- Contributor \$30
- Other \$_____

Please help the Land Conservancy protect West Michigan's forests, fields, wetlands, & dunes!

Yes! I want to help *keep nature nearby* with a gift of \$_____.

Name _____

Gift enclosed

Address _____

Please bill my credit card

Card (please circle): Visa Mastercard

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Card # _____

Exp. Date _____

Phone _____

Signature _____

Email _____

Billing Address: Same as on left

Please make check payable to the Land Conservancy of West Michigan and mail to:
1345 Monroe Ave. NW, Ste. 324, Grand Rapids, MI 49505.

Fall Field Trips

Dune Pines Nature Preserve Hike

Laketown Township, Allegan County
Saturday, September 30 at 10 am

Join us for a naturalist-guided hike through the beech-maple forest at the new Dune Pines Nature Preserve. Visitors will also have the opportunity to visit nearby Castle Park Reserve and climb to the top of a steep sand dune for a spectacular view of Lake Michigan. Hiking will be strenuous at times. **Directions:** US 31 south of Holland to Washington Avenue (exit 47B). Head north on Washington Avenue and turn left on Matt Urban Drive (first stop light just past McDonald's). Matt Urban Drive becomes 48th Street and finally 146th Avenue. Follow 146th Avenue through the Village of Graafschap for about 4.5 miles. Preserve entrance is 1/2 mile past the intersection of 146th Avenue and 66th Street. Park on the north side of the road along the split rail fence.

Kuker-Van Til Nature Preserve Dedication Ceremony

Park Township, Ottawa County
Saturday, October 14 at 10 am

Take a tour and help us dedicate our newest nature preserve. Explore the rolling, sandy hills and pine-hardwood forest and learn more about the generous donors who made this preserve possible. **Directions:** From I-196 take business loop I-196 (exit #55) toward Holland/Zeeland and follow for 4.5 miles. Turn right on 112th Avenue and make a quick left onto E. Lakewood Blvd. Follow E. Lakewood Blvd. for 6 miles (becomes Douglas Ave. and then Ottawa Beach Rd.). Turn right on 160th Ave. and then left on Perry St. Park at Winstrom Park and hike west on the bike path to the preserve entrance.

Julie Stoneman (far right), LCWM Executive Director, celebrates the dedication of the Maas Family Nature Preserve near Rockford with the Maas family. A fundraising effort is currently underway to create a fund dedicated to the long-term care of the preserve. See page 3 for more information on how you can help. *Photo: Danielle Fogel*

Nature Preserve Workdays

Wege Natural Area (Lowell)

Saturday, September 16

9 am - 10 am: Invasive Plant Workshop

10 am - 12 pm: Nature Preserve Workday

The day will begin with an Invasive Plant Workshop focused on identifying common invasive woody plants, why they are a concern, and the best control methods. Immediately following will be a hands-on experience to practice the management techniques while helping to remove autumn-olive from the Wege Natural Area.

Directions: The preserve is just north of Lowell High School on Vergennes Street. Park at the Wege/Wittenbach Agri-Science Center.

Lamberton Lake Fen Nature Preserve (Grand Rapids)

Saturday, September 30 at 10 am

Help remove non-native European buckthorn that has invaded the fen. Wear pants, long sleeves, and work gloves. Bring loppers and prunes if you have them. This workday is not appropriate for children. **Directions:** From Plainfield Dr. just north of I-96, turn right (east) on Lamberton Lake Drive. Turn right (south) on Plaza Drive. Meet at the preserve entrance at the end of Plaza Drive.



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OF WEST MICHIGAN

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