



Keeping Nature Nearby
Fall 2009



Photo: Danielle Fogel

Expansion Project Aims to Double the Size of Meinert County Park

Located at the northwest tip of Muskegon County, the nearly 100 acres of Meinert County Park attract many visitors. Outdoor enthusiasts and beachgoers treasure the park for its Lake Michigan shoreline and the impressive views from “the sugarbowl” climber-friendly dune. Children love paddling in the delta formed by Little Flower Creek as it empties into the big lake. Family reunion groups fill the picnic tables on weekends.



Meinert County Park
Proposed Expansion
Muskegon County

Directly south of Meinert County Park is 95 acres of rugged, forested, parabolic dunes and unusual wetlands. The area is a sanctuary to many rare birds, amphibians, insects and plants. The future of the natural habitat is at risk if these critical dunes are developed.

Working in partnership with Muskegon County, the Land Conservancy aims to purchase these 95 acres. Acquiring this land will more than double the size of Meinert County Park protect the unique wildlife habitat, and increase recreational opportunities for park visitors.

Last December Muskegon County was successful in securing a \$428,300 grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to be used toward the purchase of this property. The first choice of the long-time owners of the property, the Dekker and Rottman families, would be to see

this property become part of the park. They are working cooperatively with Muskegon County and the Land Conservancy as we go through the somewhat lengthy grant process.

The Land Conservancy will be leading efforts to raise the remainder of the funds necessary to purchase this property. Total estimated cost for this project is \$625,000. Private fundraising efforts must total just under \$200,000. Happily much of these dollars have already been identified. Between generous leadership pledges from community members and a challenge grant, less than \$60,000 in unidentified gifts still needs to be raised.

The public fundraising campaign is expected to begin by September when a finalized land purchase agreement is signed. If you would like to contribute at this time please consider making a pledge. The next \$50,000 will be matched, dollar for dollar, through a generous challenge grant.

Please join us for naturalist-guided hikes on the property at 10 am on Saturday, October 3rd (see page 16 for details). Visit LCWM’s website at www.naturenearby.org for current project updates, details regarding hikes, and more information on how you can help to preserve and expand Meinert County Park.

How You Can Help

Spread the Word!

Please help us to spread the word about the Meinert County Park expansion project. We remain confident that with your help the Land Conservancy and Muskegon County can protect this land.

Hike the Property!

Join us for a special tour of the property on Saturday, October 3, 2009 (see page 16 for details).

Make a Pledge!

Pledges of financial support are being accepted, with a public fundraising campaign to begin shortly. For more information, contact us at 616-451-9476 or lcwm@naturenearby.org.

Expected Project Budget

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Total Project Costs | \$625,000 |
| <i>Includes property purchase price, closing costs and expenses.</i> | |
| MI Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant | \$428,300 |
| Remaining Funds Needed | \$196,700 |
| <i>Pledged Gifts</i> | \$ 90,000 |
| <i>Pledged Match</i> | \$ 50,000 |
| <i>Support Needed</i> | \$ 56,700 |



Mission

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

Board of Directors

Penny Ladd, *President*
Jon Jellema, *Vice President*
Mary Hollinrake, *Secretary*
Daniel Grady, *Treasurer*

Bonnie Blackledge
Rick Chapla
Jan Deur
John Fox
Bob Gamble
Susan Hoekema
Mark Iverson
Timothy Lundgren
Dawn McDonald
Scott Rush
Deb Stekettee
Dave Warners

Staff

Peter Homeyer
Executive Director
April Scholtz
Land Protection Director
Pete DeBoer
Land Protection Specialist
Melanie Good
Stewardship Coordinator
Danielle Fogel
Communications Coordinator
Diane Sampson
Membership Coordinator
Michelle Collins
Development Intern

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

Land Conservancy of West Michigan
1345 Monroe Ave. NW, Ste. 324
Grand Rapids, MI 49505
Phone: (616) 451-9476
Fax: (616) 451-1874
email: lcwm@naturenearby.org
web: www.naturenearby.org

Printed on recycled paper.

From the Director! by Peter Homeyer

Since childhood I have enjoyed studying history, where the drama of personal choice can make a lasting impact on the world. So, on a recent trip to Washington D.C., I once again dragged my wife Lynne to walk the monuments on the National Mall. Tired and looking for a break, we ducked into the National Archives and sat down to watch a short movie on the preservation of the Declaration of Independence and Constitution. I learned that the custodians of these documents use a sophisticated combination of science and manpower to keep them safe. As the film ended I felt a rush from a simple thought: this work protects something valuable, something too dear to lose.

Back out on the Mall, walking on grass still flattened by the crowds gathered for the Presidential inauguration, I realized the Land Conservancy does something similar. In 1976 a local group began working together on another simple thought: the remaining natural and open spaces in West Michigan are too dear to lose. Together, they began turning this idea into action. In the early years they worked hard on this vision without any paid staff, and to this day the spirit and long hours put in by volunteers allow our still-small organization to accomplish big things.

Our volunteers come in all shapes, ages, and styles and fill all kinds of roles for the Land Conservancy. Some have served the organization for many years. Senator Patty Birkholz was instrumental in our first project, preserving the Saugatuck Dunes Natural Area, and still works tirelessly on Great Lakes issues (see page 8). Penny Ladd, our new Board President, just finished 15 years as our fund development chair, overseeing in that time a tenfold increase in membership and fiftyfold increase in donations. Ruth Meinert comes in to stuff, fold, and seal literally tens of thousands of letters every year (see mailing label on page 16). Dwight Baker and a dedicated group are restoring the native prairie at Saul Lake Bog one acre at a time (see page 10). Dawn Holtrop leads a committee which annually puts together the Korth Lecture, showcasing new ideas for bringing together the natural and built environment (see page 15).

These are just a few examples from hundreds of individuals who once again this year chose to give their time to *keeping nature nearby*. Please take a moment to think of the thousands of acres now protected forever through your thousands of hours of effort. It's both an inspiration and a comfort to me that this work, begun 33 years ago by volunteers, continues because of volunteers. Thank you.



Peter Homeyer, LCWM Executive Director
Photo: Lynne Homeyer

Peter

P.S. Please join us at Saul Lake Bog on Tuesday, September 29th for a potluck celebration in honor of all our wonderful volunteers (details on page 11).

Underwriting for this newsletter generously provided by:
Warner Norcross & Judd LLP
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
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.



Conservation Easement Protects Family Land Near Baldwin

“I just sit in the house and they come to me,” says Darci Maldonado, describing the wildlife that wander through her 120-acre property near Baldwin, Michigan. Hayfields surround her home, giving all the windows of the house a clear view of the goings-on of nature’s inhabitants.



Darci’s grandfather bought the property in 1907 and settled there to farm in 1910. Her mother was born

in a house there, and never lived anywhere else. Darci’s parents took over the farm in 1954. It was this legacy that prompted Darci to donate a conservation easement to the Land Conservancy this summer, protecting the property in perpetuity.

“This land’s charm is the hayfield that my grandfather carved out of the swamp land,” notes Darci. “All of the animals of wetlands, meadows and forests walk through here. Past the edge of my field is land as wild as it gets in Michigan. To the north and east it is several miles to the next neighbor, and to the west and south it is almost a mile. Peace, quiet and star-filled skies really are right outside the window.”

The open field allows relief from a majority of the surrounding forested wetlands or uplands. Much of this surrounding land is state-owned, part of the Michigan DNR’s Pere Marquette State Forest.

The wildlife that provides her so much entertainment is also attracted to the cedar-lined banks of North and South Cole Creeks. These waterways combine to create more than three quarters of a mile of frontage as they meander through and eventually join on the property, before leaving it to flow almost immediately into the Baldwin River. Together, the creeks and the Baldwin River are designated as natural rivers and support healthy fisheries.

Some people are skeptical of Darci’s tales of vast wildlife sightings — until she produces her photographs, most of which have been snapped from her living room windows. Pine martens, black bear, bobcat, coyote, turtles and, of course, deer have called the property home at one point or another.

While many of her human neighbors have weekend retreats nearby, Darci is able to watch the wildlife daily. And now we trust, thanks to her, the wildlife will be enjoying the peace, quiet, and star-filled skies for many years to come.

For more information about how you can protect your family land with a conservation easement please call the LCWM Land Protection staff at 616-451-9476 or email lcwm@naturenearby.org.



Darci Maldonado recently donated a conservation easement on her family’s land near Baldwin. One of Darci’s favorite pastimes is photographing the wildlife that call her property home. *Photo: Darci Maldonado*



Snapping Turtle *Photo: Darci Maldonado*



Juvenile Ruffed Grouse *Photo: Darci Maldonado*



Birth of an Interpretive Sign

Our nature preserves protect habitat for unique species such as the pitcher plant, which preys upon insects for its nutrients; the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly, which is as small as a dime but enormously beautiful; and the mink with its iridescent coat. These residents, however, do not always put themselves on display to visitors.

How do you help visitors to a nature preserve understand and appreciate the ecological features that make the preserves special?

The answer at three of our preserves is interpretive signs. They were created with the help of local nature illustrator Amelia Hansen, requiring many hours of hard work. We would like to share the process with you through Amelia's perspective on the sign at Saul Lake Bog Nature Preserve. Funding for this sign was made possible thanks to generous donations in memory of Mame Steketee.

Amelia Hansen, nature illustrator, has created interpretive signs at three LCWM nature preserves. To see more of Amelia's work visit ameliahansen.com.

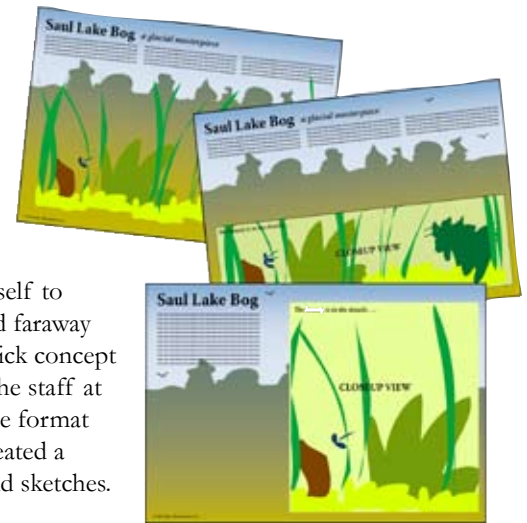


Step 2 – Concept Layouts

Create initial layouts for discussion, so the client and the illustrator can gain a better overall sense of the project's visual direction. This allows the client an opportunity for input.

Amelia's Notes:

LCWM wanted the sign to show both the bog landscape and a close-up view of some of the most interesting (but small) inhabitants. The flat topography of the bog doesn't lend itself to simultaneous close-up and faraway views, so I made some quick concept layouts that I emailed to the staff at LCWM. We agreed on the format we liked the best and I created a rough layout using my field sketches.

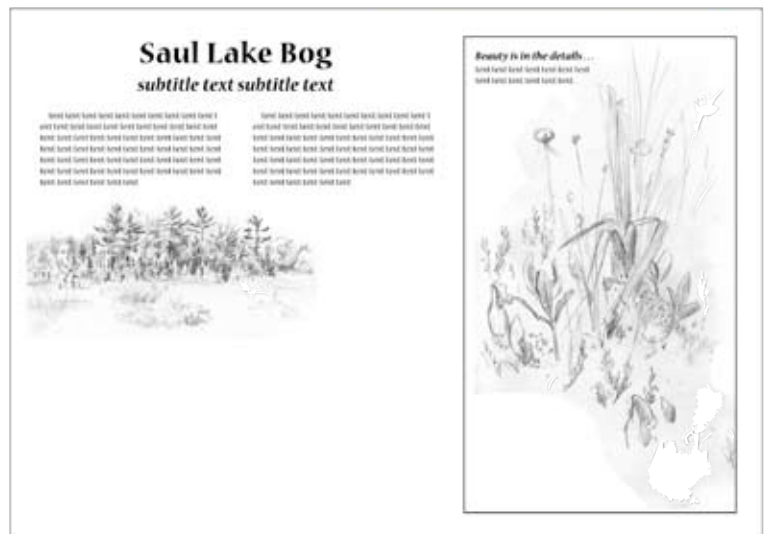


Step 1 – Site Visit & Reference Gathering

The client and illustrator meet to discuss objectives, compile a species list, and walk the site. The illustrator takes photos, makes field sketches and takes notes.

Amelia's Notes: Melanie Good, LCWM Stewardship Coordinator, first took me to see the bog in August 2007. What a beautiful spot! She gave me the tour and we talked about LCWM's interpretive goals for the site, what information was most important to convey to the public, and which natural features and species should be highlighted.

I took several photos that day and then came back a few days later and took even more. I also spent several hours drawing field sketches. I wanted to be sure I had a lot of reference from which to work.





Conservation Easement Donors

Ada Township
 Charles Anglin Trust
 Ken & Judy Betz
 The Bigford Family
 Jeanine Biese
 Chuck & Pat Bloom
 Manuel & Barbara Butzow
 Jeff & Anya Byam
 Christ Community Church
 City of Norton Shores
 City of Saugatuck
 Elizabeth J. Crosby
 The Duffing/Henrikson/
 Anderson/Bunch Family
 The Heasley Family
 HMA Development, L.L.C.
 Mrs. David Howe
 Margaret P. Hoyle Trust
 Manuel & Lilah Huyser Trust
 F. Martin & Dorothy Johnson
 E.L. Ladd & Company
 Joseph & Irene Larson
 John Levings
 Darci Maldonado
 Paul McEnroe
 The Muzzy & Lerchen Families
 Jill Nerheim & Lori Nerheim
 Ottawa County
 Ox-Bow School of Art &
 Artists' Residency
 Douglas & Gretchen Paprocki
 Parkland Investments, Inc.
 The Rasmussen Family
 Mark & Tami Redfield
 The Reed Family
 Paul & Christine Santoro
 Dick & Lu Schwikert
 Robert Smith & Family
 Peter & Joan Steketee
 Southwest MI Land Conservancy
 Cecilia Vanderbout
 The Gary Vos Family
 Peter M. Wege
 Mrs. Joseph Weingartner
 Willard & Joan Wolfe

Land Donors

Weldon & Marilyn Brummels
 Castle Park Association
 Valerino & Maria Castro
 Anne Cridler
 Reginald & Diane Cridler
 Lake Breeze Protection Group
 Joan Lerchen Trust
 Muzzy Family Partnership
 RED Investors, LLC
 Mrs. James Sebastian
 Ruth Skwarek
 South Highlands Beach Assoc.
 Edith Van Til Trust/
 Blackburn Family
 Wege Foundation
 Evangeline White

Oh Deer! by Melanie Good, LCWM Stewardship Coordinator

Too much of a good thing is definitely the case with one of our favorite wildlife species. I think most of us have fond memories of watching deer. My heart still races when I see a glimpse of a doe with fawns gracefully scampering through the woods.

Unfortunately, for healthy ecosystems, deer populations in much of West Michigan are too high. In 2005 deer populations were at 30,000 and 17,800 for Kent County and Ottawa County, respectively. When the Michigan DNR set its deer population goals for 2006-2010, it recommended Kent County's deer population to be between 17,500 and 21,000 individuals and Ottawa County's population to be between 10,500 and 13,000 individuals. But, the current populations continue to fluctuate well above these goals.

What does this mean? Well, as the DNR states, "above target goal deer populations will result in negative ecological impacts such as reduced forest regeneration, sustainability of ground nesting bird populations, potential for wildlife disease issues (Eastern Equine Encephalitis and others), and a reduction in the overall health of the deer population."

The impact of this is apparent to those who have seen the changes in the natural lands they love. But sometimes those changes happen gradually enough that detecting a change in a forest structure can be difficult. Therefore, P.J. Hoffmaster State Park has a deer enclosure that speaks volumes to the impact these lovable creatures have on natural areas. The depletion of a forest understory, the elimination of spring ephemerals and loss of wildlife associated with the degraded habitat is evident as one compares inside the enclosure to the surrounding landscape.

Do I hate deer? Absolutely not! But just like ice cream, moderation is the key to good health.



Melanie Good, LCWM Stewardship Coordinator. Photo: Danielle Fogel

Wege Natural Area Red Pine Harvest Update

By the time this newsletter reaches your mailbox, the first step in the Wege Natural Area's oak forest restoration will be complete. The red pine plantation is being harvested before school starts so the commotion does not affect the students that enjoy the preserve. Next, the many native plants in the understory and in the seed bank will begin to recolonize the area.



Photo: Patricia Pennell

Those plants are going to get a little help. This fall, in cooperation with Michigan Green, Dell will donate 1000 native Michigan trees to Lowell Area Schools and Land Conservancy of West Michigan to offset their carbon footprint. As part of this great project, Lowell Area Schools (LAS) is conducting an essay contest to choose the 1st through 5th graders who will plant trees at the Wege Natural Area and the adjacent LAS property. Each student will receive a backpack with educational material on the importance of trees and many other fun treats. Fifteen of those students will also receive an energy savings kit and one lucky student will win a Dell laptop!

If you would like to help with this exciting project, please contact Melanie at Melanie@naturenearby.org or 616-451-9476.



Garlic Mustard Challenge Winner Announced

West Michigan led the way in the Stewardship Network's Garlic Mustard Challenge until the bitter end on June 15, 2009. Alas, the Huron Arbor Cluster snuck ahead in the final hours. However, we still won. Here's how:

- Brooks Township Supervisor Les Salacina and Sarah Pregitzer found the only known populations of garlic mustard in Newaygo County and pulled them!
- Virginia Van Andel (LCWM volunteer) pulled 900 lbs of garlic mustard (second place in the state)!
- LCWM has the most sites free of second-year plants!
- We pulled 31,914 lbs of garlic mustard in West Michigan; 158,462 lbs in the state!
- New partnerships with the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative helped get students outside learning about garlic mustard and working at local natural areas, such as Ottawa County Park's Pigeon River Park, to eradicate garlic mustard.
- Many more great volunteers and organizations worked to protect the lands they love from garlic mustard.



Land Conservancy volunteers pulled several bags of garlic mustard this spring in Cascade Township. *Photo: Melanie Good.*

Visit www.stewardshipnetwork.org for more information. Help us reclaim the title next year!!

Fall Volunteer Workdays & Stewardship Events

Buckthorn Busting Workday!

Saturday, October 10, 2009 &

Tuesday, November 3, 2009

1 PM to 4 PM

Lamberton Lake Fen Nature Preserve

(just east of 3118 1/2 Plaza Dr NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525)

Want to see the fen after its first prescribed burn? Join this workday, see the beauty of the fen, and help continue the fight against the invasive buckthorn. This workday is recommended for adults and children 10 + with adult supervision. All tools provided. Please bring leather gloves if you have them. Advanced registration is not required but appreciated. Please email Melanie@naturenearby.org or call 616-451-9476.

Installing a Native Prairie

Saturday, October 24, 2009

2 PM to 4 PM

Saul Lake Bog Nature Preserve

(10469 Six Mile Rd., Rockford, MI 49341)

Cost: \$10 Stewardship Network Member/
\$15 nonmember

Register: www.stewardshipnetworkonline.com

Learn different techniques to creating/restoring a prairie/oak savannah. This program will be at a created prairie discussing the steps of installing a prairie. Participants will see numerous stages of a prairie creation project and will help plant seed. Advanced registration is required at www.stewardshipnetworkonline.com.

Autumn Olive Removal Workday

Saturday, October 31, 2009

1 PM to 4 PM

Wege Natural Area (11715 Vergennes Rd., Lowell, MI 49331)

Help with our oak forest restoration project. This workday will focus on removing autumn olive, an invasive shrub, from the understory of the forest that surrounds Lee Creek. This workday is recommended for adults and children 10 + with adult supervision. All tools provided. Please bring leather gloves if you have them. Advanced registration is not required but appreciated. Please email Melanie@naturenearby.org or call 616-451-9476.



LCWM Recognizes Outstanding Volunteers

Volunteers are the driving force of our land protection efforts at the Land Conservancy of West Michigan. They participate in workdays at preserves, donate time and energy at meetings, and promote our mission to protect our critical open lands. We would like to thank the following individuals for their devotion to the LCWM.

Thank You, Patricia Birkholz

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 Patricia Birkholz. Her involvement with the Land Conservancy dates back

to our very first project, the Saugatuck Dunes Natural Area, in the 1980s. She has also been a strong supporter of the Great Lakes environment in our state government and has served on



Patricia Birkholz was the recipient of the 2008 Mary Jane Dockeray Award for her significant contributions to conservation efforts in West Michigan. Pictured left to right: Peter Homeyer, LCWM Executive Director, Patricia Birkholz, and Rick Chapla, LCWM Board President. *Photo: Danielle Fogel*

many committees dedicated to the preservation of natural resources in our state.

Thank You, Board Members

We welcome John Fox, Jan Deur, and Susan Hoekema to our board of directors this year. We are also grateful to the new slate of officers elected to the board: Penny Ladd will serve as president; Jon Jellema as vice president; Dan Grady as treasurer; and Mary Hollinrake as secretary. Penny will be stepping down as chair of the fund development committee and Bob Gamble will be taking on this role. Bill Byl, Elise Roe, and Mike Hayes will be leaving the board as they have completed their second three-year term. Thank you one and

all for your time and dedication to the Land Conservancy of West Michigan. Your support *keeps nature nearby!*

Thank You Volunteers (April 2009 - July 2009)

We would like to thank all of the individuals and organizations who help us keep nature nearby by volunteering their time. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact Diane Sampson at 616-451-9476 or diane@naturenearby.org.

Todd Aschenbach
Larry & Chris Baer
Dwight Baker
Jerry Bakke
Diane Baumann
Nancy Benner
Alan Bennett
Jim Benson
Bonnie Blackledge
Cathryn Blue
Edward & Kathryn Bolt
Boy Scout Troop 290
Jim Bradley
Dan Broersma
Carole & Ernie Brumbaugh
Ray Byle
Ron Cammel
Janet Carbonneau-Jones
Rick Chapla
Dawn Cheikh
Jennifer Cleary
Susan & David Clements
John Considine
Betty Jo Crosby
Jan & Chris Deur
Joshua Dykstra
Clark Elenbaas
Jan Ensing

Jim Ferro
Lucas Fix
Daniel & Penny Folsom
John Fox
Mike Frey
Bob Gamble
Don and Diane Geese
Dan Grady
Richard Granse
Robert & Tammy Hartman
Charles Hayden
Michael Hayes
Kim & Dean Healy
Amy Heilman
Susan Hoekema
Mary Hollinrake
Dawn Holtrop
Richard & Elizabeth Hubbard
Mark Iverson
Jon Jellema
Elaine Kampmueller
Haig Kassouni
Fred Kraft
Albion Kromminga
Nicholas Kwick
Jamie & Penny Ladd
George Leonardos
Tim Lundgren

Neil & Kate MacDonald
Kory Manion
Lynn Martin
Tom & Dawn McDonald
Ruth Meinert
Sandy Miles
Patrick Miller
Bernie Mulder
Steve Mulder
Richard & Susan Muzzy
Larry Piatek
Pat Power
Richard & Elisa Rasmussen
George Reinert
Elise Roe
Marni Rose
Melinda Rose
Scott Rush
Dean & Elaine Salisbury
Hugh Sandoe
Doug Schrank
Carole Steiner
Alan Steinman
Deb Steketee
Janice Tompkins
Virginia VanAndel
Barb VanderHaak
Robert Vanderkamp

Randy VanDragt
Kathy Walson
Dave Warners
Chad Wiersma
Matthew Zimmerman
George & Gretchen Zuiderveen

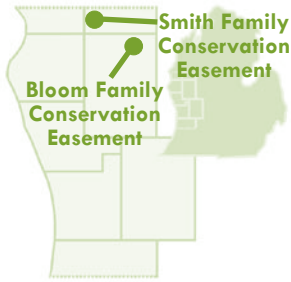
*Our sincere apologies
for any omissions.*

Wish List

- Cordless Drill
- Fire-Safe File Box
- First Class Postage Stamps
- Hand Cart or Dolly
- Leather Gloves (all sizes)
- Office Supply
- Store Gift Cards
- Photos of LCWM Nature Preserves
- Pickup Truck



Pere Marquette Watershed Protection Tops 1,300 Acres



The Land Conservancy continues to make great strides in the Pere Marquette River Watershed, as two more families have made the commitment to conservation on their respective lands. To date, 13 families have partnered with the Land Conservancy on or near the river and its tributaries to protect over 1,300 acres.

The Smith family has been enjoying their land on the mainstem of the river for four generations now, and they are not alone. This natural stretch of land, south of the Branch and US Highway 10, shares a boundary with the U.S. Forest Service’s Rainbow Rapids access, which allows many fishermen and canoeists to float the stretch that the Smith family has enjoyed since 1937.

“Many of the fishermen tell us that it’s their favorite spot on the river,” states Bob Smith, who, along with his brother Rick Smith and sister Diane Jensen, donated the conservation easement in December, 2008. The property has more than a third of a mile on both sides of the Pere Marquette; its pools, gravel riffles and wetland oxbow plus the naturally forested banks create both an ideal wildlife and fisheries habitat and superior water quality.

Chuck and Pat Bloom also made the commitment of conserving their property late last year when they decided to protect their 155 acres along McDuffee Creek in Northern Newaygo County.

McDuffee Creek flows into the Little South Branch of the Pere Marquette

Chuck and Pat Bloom protected 155 acres along McDuffee Creek in Newaygo County with a conservation easement. *Photo: Pete DeBoer*



The Smith family’s property, which includes more than 1/3 mile along both sides of the Pere Marquette River, is protected with a conservation easement. *Photo: Pete DeBoer*

a mile downstream after leaving the Bloom family property. It contributes to the Natural Rivers designation given to both the creek and the Little South Branch of the Pere Marquette. Wetland and lowland habitat buffers the creek, helping sustain the trout population and amphibian and reptile habitats in the forested and wetland areas of the property.

The Bloom property also sustains habitat for other visitors. “I’ve had to replace the bird feeder this spring because the bears simply push it over to get the feed,” Chuck mentioned. Bears frequent the area because of the abundance of U.S. Forest Service land, to which the Bloom property is adjacent.

“Our family has owned the property for about 55 years now and we have strong indications from our children and grandchildren that they will continue to own the property long after Pat and I are gone,” says Chuck. “Even if our descendents eventually sell the property, we can be assured that Mother Nature will continue to rule the site.”





Land Protection & Project Support

- Alcoa Foundation
- Anonymous
- Clark Hill
- Community Fnd for Muskegon Co.
- Driesenga & Associates
- Dyer Ives Foundation
- Foremost Insurance Group
- Fremont Area Community Fnd
- Frey Foundation
- Grand Haven Area Community Fnd
- Grand Rapids Community Fnd
- Grand Rapids Label Fnd
- Hansen Charitable Foundation
- J.A. Woollam Foundation
- Korth Family Foundation
- Marion A. & Ruth K. Sherwood Fnd
- McShane & Bowie, P.L.C.
- Michigan DEQ
- Nonprofit Tech. Assistance Program
- North Bank Communities Fund
- Progressive AE
- Ruth & August Homeyer Trust
- Steelcase Foundation
- Varnum, Riddering,
Schmidt & Howlett
- Wege Foundation
- Wolverine World Wide Foundation
- Zondervan

Business Members

Annual contributions of \$500 or more

- Alcoa Howmet
- Baker Book House
- Bata Plastics
- Cirrus Environmental
- Fairly Painless
- Foremost Insurance Group
- Forest Hills Foods
- Grand Rapids Convention &
Visitors Bureau
- Grand Rapids Label Foundation
- GVSU Annis Water Resources
Institute
- Jack Dykstra Excavating
- J.L. Miller Company
- Magna Donnelly
- McShane & Bowie, PLC.
- Meijer, Inc.
- Progressive AE
- Reusch Design Services
- Rooks Landscaping
- Saint Mary's Health Services
- Universal Forest Products
- URS Corporation
- Valley City Environmental
- Varnum Riddering Schmidt &
Howlett
- Warner Norcross & Judd
- Webtcs, Inc.
- Williams & Works
- Wolverine World Wide, Inc.
- Zondervan

Saul Lake Bog Celebrates 20th Anniversary

This August the Land Conservancy celebrates the 20th anniversary of Saul Lake Bog Nature Preserve, our first preserve. For two decades we have permanently protected the preserve as a home for plant and wildlife species and a place for nature lovers to experience the outdoors. The establishment of the preserve marked the launch of our organization as the premier regional land trust and would not have been possible without the support of our wonderful volunteers.

In the early 1970's our then all volunteer organization (formerly known as NACOMI) identified Saul Lake Bog as an important area to protect. This undeveloped, mature bog had the only pair of nesting Sandhill Cranes in Kent County. Although there were other properties in the region that also had important natural features, this one faced the threat of development.

Two key volunteers led the charge for the purchase of the property in the 1980's. Molly Bradshaw believed in the importance of protecting natural land. She recognized, however, that as a volunteer organization with only 80 members NACOMI needed additional support to protect the bog in perpetuity. Molly led the crusade to protect Saul Lake Bog and capitalized on the opportunity to use the project to build community support. Community donors came forth for the purchase of the initial 54-acres in 1989. In 1991, we raised funds and purchased an additional 50 acres and, along with the donation of 19 acres from the Castro family, the preserve grew to the 120 acres that it is today.

Randy VanDragt, a Biology Professor at Calvin College, also volunteered countless hours for the establishment and enhancement of the preserve. Randy valued the importance of this rare ecosystem. Saul Lake Bog is home to many species of plants and animals unique to this part of Michigan, such as pitcher plants, sundews and rose pogonia. The nature preserve ensures the bog stays intact and also serves as a destination for educators and the public to learn about this uncommon ecosystem.

"Molly, Randy, and the other NACOMI volunteers set the stage for the organization the Land Conservancy would grow into," says Peter Homeyer, LCWM Executive Director. "They permanently protected an important ecosystem that truly keeps nature nearby. Saul Lake Bog Nature Preserve continues to be our flagship nature preserve."

Volunteers, including Randy VanDragt (far right) install the first sign at Saul Lake Bog Nature Preserve.





Molly and Randy wanted to make sure everyone had the chance to experience Saul Lake Bog without destroying the delicate bog ecosystem. Volunteers constructed bog overlooks and catwalks so visitors could get an up-close look.

“The first time I visited there were no trails and no lookouts,” recalls Molly. “You had to wade through the moat which was wide and deep and climb up onto the mat. I loved how beautiful and untouched the preserve was. You couldn’t take a picture that would convey the beauty you experienced when you visited in person.”

Saul Lake Bog Preserve continues to be much loved and cared for by volunteers. Molly and Randy are still active volunteers today, as well as several new recruits. In Spring of 2002 Dwight Baker, Stewardship Committee member, embarked on a mission to create a prairie on the uplands at Saul Lake Bog. A long and difficult task, the prairie is now 3.5 acres of prime wildlife habitat.

The prairie also received support from the community. Last year



Volunteers constructed a boardwalk and two bog overlooks at Saul Lake Bog Nature Preserve. Pictured from left to right: Eric Smith, Molly Bradshaw, Bob Stegmier.

the Grattan Township Volunteer Firefighters provided their expertise and equipment to conduct a much needed prescribed fire at the prairie. They continue to provide this service to keep the prairie healthy.

There are many unsung heroes of the preserve too. Without the consistent work of our Preserve Stewards, Dan and Penny Folsom and Carole and Ernie Brumbaugh, the trails would be impassible and the bluebirds would lose their homes. Their hard work continues the long legacy of volunteers like Molly and Randy who gave their own time to make the preserve accessible for others to enjoy.

Saul Lake Bog Nature Preserve is open daily from dawn until dusk. We encourage you to take the time to visit this incredible place. In addition, we invite you to join us at Saul Lake Bog on September 29, 2009 (rain date September 30, 2009) for our volunteer potluck as we celebrate the efforts of all our wonderful volunteers (details below).

Saul Lake Bog 20th Anniversary Celebration & Volunteer Potluck

Date & Time: Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2009 at 5 pm (rain date Sept. 30, 2009)
Location: Saul Lake Bog Preserve, 10469 Six Mile Rd., Rockford, MI 49341
Please RSVP to 616-451-6476 or lcwm@naturenearby.org.

The Land Conservancy invites volunteers, members, and friends to a potluck to honor the dedication of our volunteers and to celebrate the 20th anniversary of our flagship nature preserve. Please bring a dish to share and a picnic blanket or a chair. Invite your friends and family!



Volunteers gather at Saul Lake Bog during the 2008 Volunteer Potluck. Photo: Gary DeKock



Welcome Michelle!

The Land Conservancy of West Michigan is pleased to welcome Michelle Collins as our new Fund Development Intern! Michelle earned her Master's in Public Administration with a focus on non-profit organizations this year from Grand Valley State University.



Michelle Collins is the Land Conservancy's new Development Intern. Photo: Danielle Fogel

Michelle grew up in Michigan and enjoyed camping and boating on family vacations.

"I am happy to be working for an organization I believe in; whose mission I feel passionate about," says Michelle.

Besides enjoying outdoor recreation, Michelle is also an avid dancer. She has taught children's dance classes and hopes to teach another class this fall.

Michelle has been an invaluable help to us, taking on program assistant duties from Diane Sampson, now the membership coordinator, and fund development duties from Peter Homeyer, now the executive director.

Tax Incentives Set to Expire in December

The increased federal tax incentives for donors of conservation easements are set to expire on December 31, 2009. The Land Trust Alliance, the national organization to which the Land Conservancy belongs, is fighting to make these increased incentives permanent; however, the only guaranteed way to receive these incentives is to donate a conservation easement by the end of this year.

The heightened incentives allow qualified donors of conservation easements to lengthen the amount of time that a gift can be taken as a tax deduction from a total of 6 years to 16. Also, the gift can be taken against 50% of adjusted gross income of the donor, which is an increase from 30%. If the incentives are not extended or made permanent by year end, they are set to go back to former levels. Please contact either April or Pete with any questions on these or other tax incentives.

Wanted: Nature-loving Landowner to Carry on Conservation Tradition

We were saddened to learn that Gladys Weingartner, one of our earliest conservation easement donors, passed away this summer at the age of 99. In 1998, Mrs. Weingartner protected her 34-acre property on Bear Lake in North Muskegon. The property has beautiful natural lake frontage and a mature oak forest – a remnant of the natural landscape that used to surround Bear Lake.

Mrs. Weingartner protected her woods and the lake through a conservation easement that allows her house near the lake to be replaced or renovated, but prohibits any subdivision or logging. There is no doubt that her easement donation helped the Land Conservancy motivate other conservation-minded landowners to permanently preserve their land.

Mrs. Weingartner's relatives are now seeking a conservation-minded buyer for the property. The good news for purchasers of

conservation easement land like this is that 2006 Michigan law (PA 446) caps property tax reassessments for land preserved with a qualified conservation easement. Ordinarily, when land is given to an heir or sold to a new buyer it is reassessed and property taxes can rise substantially. For qualified conservation easement land, the taxable value may not increase by more than 5% or the increase in the consumer price index, whichever is lower.

In this way, the State recognizes that landowners who permanently preserve important natural land with a conservation easement provide benefits to the public by protecting wildlife habitats, water quality and scenic views.

For more information on Michigan Public Act 446 or the Weingartner property, contact April Scholtz at april@naturenearby.org.



Gladys Weingartner (pictured here in 2001 with her nephew Jim Hanson), was one of our earliest conservation easement donors. Mrs. Weingartner passed away this summer at the age of 99. A conservation-minded buyer is sought for her cottage and protected land on Bear Lake in North Muskegon.



Time in a Bottle (or Pitcher) by Jerry Lang, PhD



Jerry Lang, an outdoor enthusiast, hunter and fisherman, became a member of the Land Conservancy of West Michigan in 2008 by supporting our efforts to protect Lost Lake. He has a Masters degree in entomology from Ohio State University and served as a medical entomologist in the Air Force. He returned to Ohio State University for a PhD under an Air Force graduate program, with his

doctorate dissertation concerning mosquito behavior. Jerry and his wife moved to North Muskegon after retirement to be close to family.

“Phytotelmata” is the tongue-twisting word scientists use to describe plants that hold rain water and provide microhabitats for a variety of creatures. Examples of phytotelmata include many tropical bromeliads that trap water at the base of their whorled leaves. These miniature ecosystems support various aquatic insects, other arthropods, and even amphibians that have evolved to live in these unique habitats. As an entomologist, I have had a special interest in phytotelmata – specifically the mosquito species that live in these habitats.

Water-holding plants in temperate regions, including Michigan, are rare. However, soon after moving to western Michigan last year, I discovered that water-filled, carnivorous purple pitcher plants – our own local phytotelma – were growing along the boggy edges of Lost Lake in Muskegon State Park. Using my wife’s turkey baster (with her consent!), I was able to suck out some of the water in several pitchers last fall and found *Wyeomyia smithii* (pitcher plant mosquito) larvae.

Although only an entomologist would understand, I have what E.O. Wilson would term a biophilial relationship with pitcher plant mosquitoes. I found my first *Wy. smithii* living in pitcher plants in a northeastern Ohio bog over 30 years ago when I was

an entomology graduate student. *Wy smithii* is a fascinating little mosquito with mostly tropical relatives. It’s small even by mosquito standards, and, interestingly, it does not bite. All the nutrients for egg production come from the larvae feeding on detritus in the pitcher plants where they apparently defy the digestive properties of the water.

Wy. smithii larvae have the ability to diapause (suspend development) in the fall and survive winter frozen inside pitcher plant water. Shortening day length in late summer and fall triggers diapause, which is a critical event in the life of *Wy. smithii*. If larvae go into diapause and stop feeding too early, they may burn up all their stored nutrients and starve before spring. If they go into diapause too late, before the physiological changes needed to protect their cells occur, they will freeze to death.

Research entomologists have found that northern populations of these mosquitoes are entering diapause more than a week later than they did just 30 years ago. In other words, the fall day length diapause “trigger” is now shorter (later in the autumn) than it was in the 1970s. This is an adaptation to warmer autumns presumably related to global warming. Selection has favored larvae staying active and feeding later into the fall. There have been no similar changes in diapause timing among southern populations of *Wy. smithii*.



Wyeomyia smithii, the pitcher plant mosquito, completes nearly all of its life cycle in the pitchers of the carnivorous purple pitcher plant. Magnification is 40x. Photo: Ryan Kitko

The irony of this little mosquito’s ability to adapt to global climate change is that its critical pitcher plant habitat – Lost Lake and similar places – may not survive the predicted drying effects of global warming on Great Lakes water levels. Since Lost Lake water levels fluctuate with Lake Michigan, too much of a drop in Lake Michigan levels could dry up Lost Lake. This would end the miniature pitcher plant ecosystem that has persisted since the last glaciation.

This points out once again that, as valuable as habitat preservation is for biodiversity, no habitat exists in isolation. Whether polar bears or pitcher plant mosquitoes, long-term survival of many of the earth’s species depends on addressing both the global climate and local and regional habitat preservation and restoration.

The purple pitcher plant grows along the boggy edges of Lost Lake in Muskegon State Park. The “pitchers” hold rainwater and provide microhabitats for a variety of creatures, including the pitcher plant mosquito. Photo: Nancy Tassin





Memorials & Honorariums (April 2009 - July 2009)

Gifts were made in memory of:

Angeline Deur
by Jan & Christine Deur

Eric Linde
by Ann Rogers

Jessie Soohen
by Russell & Susan Volz

John F. Swain
by Barbara Amberg

Eugene VanHall
by Stephen & Linda Fiorenzo

Edwin VerBerkmoes
*by Jeanne Linak
Arloa VerBerkmoes
Wayne & Kathy Weisner*

Gladys Weingartner
*by Carol Michael
Yolanda Benedetti*

Gifts were made in honor of:

Mike Lloyd & Kathy Love
by Don & Laurie Gardner

Elise Roe
by Matt Roe

Her sons, Don & Dennis
by Marge Stidham

Welcome New Members (April 2009 - July 2009)

Bob & Mary Andree
Mary Anne &
Bob Andrews
Thomas Appel
Yolanda Benedetti
William & Laurie Boer
Howard Bouwman
Todd & Jackie Brayman
Annette Burr
David F. Coons
Suzan Corbett
Michael J. Cronk
Patricia Davis
Kurt & Cheryl Deford
Kathleen DeMey
Jane E. DeVries
Diane DeVries
Easy Green Shop,
Stephanie Zafarana

Mr. & Mrs. Dale T. Ertzinger
Rex Gillette, Jr
Gary A. Goff
William & Deborah Granger
Tad & Kelley Hatch
Gordon & Carolyn Hulst
J.L. Miller Company,
Josh Miller
Debra Kraai
Jeanne Linak
Mike Lloyd & Kathy Love
Arnold McIntyre
Carol Michael
Mary Mieras
Lynn Miller
Jerry & Jill Nerheim

Lori Nerheim
Stephen Plaisted
Ann Rogers
Curt Sanders
David Schipper
Daniel & Kara Smolek
Carole Steiner
The Architectural Group,
Tim VandeZande
Tom & Liz Trzaska
David & Nancy VanBaak
James & Anna Mae VanderWoude
Michael VanValkenburg
Gary & Suzanne Wainwright
George & Joan Zuidema



Photo: Danielle Fogel

Stay Connected!

Visit Us Online
www.naturenearby.org



Become Our Fan on Facebook



Join Our Email Listserv

Be the first to know about Land Conservancy events and land protection projects! To join our email listserv, please email danielle@naturenearby.org.



The Land Conservancy of West Michigan & Korth Family Foundation Present the 9th Annual Korth Conservation Speakers Series



A Land Ethic for the 21st Century: Integrating Land Conservation and the Built Environment

The 2009 Korth lecture focuses on the relationship between the Aldo Leopold land ethic and the built environment as our speakers present the Aldo Leopold Legacy Center, designed by The Kubala Washatko Architects. The Legacy Center's design incorporates the Aldo Leopold philosophy and sustainable features and was awarded Platinum LEED® Certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

Featured Speakers

Buddy Huffaker, *Executive Director of the Aldo Leopold Foundation*
Tom Kubala, *Principal & Co-Founder of The Kubala Washatko Architects, Inc.*

Thursday, October 29, 2009

7:00 pm Registration
7:30 pm Presentation

Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

1000 East Beltline Ave. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525

Cost: \$18 per person

Price includes admission to Frederik Meijer Gardens' English Perennial Garden and Indoor Greenhouses from 6:30 pm to 11:30 pm. Gardens and the sculpture park close to general public at 5 pm.

Advanced Registration Required

Please register by 10/22/09 at www.naturenearby.org, email lcwm@naturenearby.org, or call 616-451-9476.

Aldo Leopold Land Ethic

Published in 1949 as the finale to A Sand County Almanac, Leopold's 'Land Ethic' defined a new relationship between people and nature and set the stage for the modern conservation movement.

Leopold understood that ethics direct individuals to cooperate with each other for the mutual benefit of all. One of his philosophical achievements was the idea that this 'community' should be enlarged to include non-human elements such as soils, waters, plants, and animals, "or collectively: the land."



Land Conservancy
OF WEST MICHIGAN

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 \$_____.

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Gift enclosed

Please bill my credit card

Card (please circle): Visa Mastercard

Card # _____

Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Billing Address: Same as on left

Donate online at www.naturenearby.org or make check payable to the Land Conservancy of West Michigan and mail to: 1345 Monroe Ave. NW, Ste. 324, Grand Rapids, MI 49505.

In This Issue

Meinert Park Expansion Project (Page 1)

From the Director (Page 2)

Land Protected Near Baldwin (Page 3)

Birth of an Interpretive Sign (Pages 4&5)

Stewardship Update: Wege Natural Area & Workdays (Pages 6&7)

Thank You Volunteers (Page 8)

Pere Marquette Watershed Protection Tops 1300 Acres (Page 9)

Saul Lake Bog 20th Anniversary (Page 10&11)

Time in a Bottle (or Pitcher) (Page 13)

Thank You Members (Page 14)

9th Annual Korth Lecture (Page 15)

Land Conservancy of West Michigan
1345 Monroe Ave. NW, Ste. 324
Grand Rapids, MI 49505
(616) 451-9476

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Grand Rapids, MI
Permit No. 906



Land Conservancy
OF WEST MICHIGAN

web site: www.naturenearby.org
email: lcwm@naturenearby.org

Lost Lake Dedication

Sunday, September 13, 2009 at 2 pm

Muskegon State Park, Winter Sports Complex
(442 Scenic Dr Muskegon, MI 49445)

Please join us as we dedicate Lost Lake and the 64 acres of surrounding forest that were officially added to Muskegon State Park last summer. The Land Conservancy managed land owner negotiations and led the fundraising campaign that raised more than \$420,000 through a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant and contributions from nearly 450 individuals, families, and organizations.

The dedication ceremony will honor key individuals who made the project possible and will conclude with naturalist-guided tours of the property. Advanced registration is not required but is appreciated. Email lcwm@naturenearby.org or call 616-451-9476.

Please note you will need to purchase a motor vehicle permit to enter the park (\$6 for the day).

Meinert Park Expansion Hike

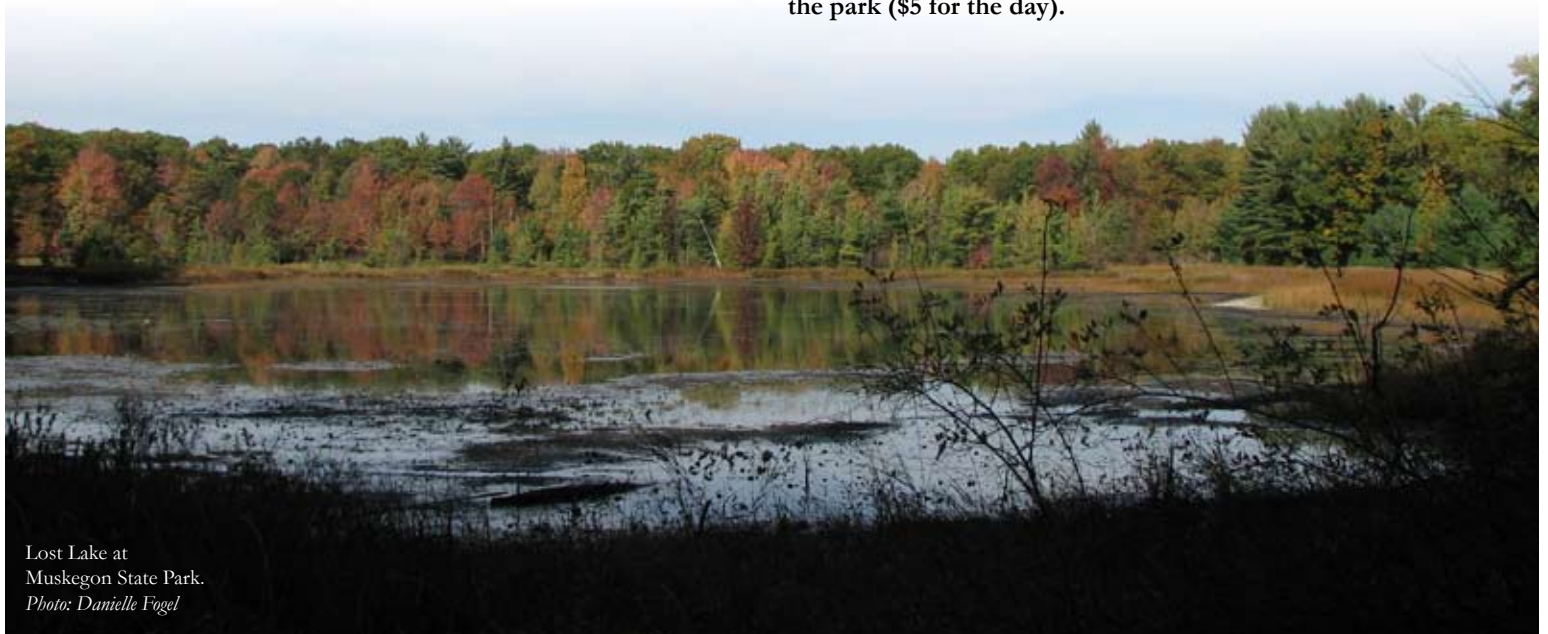
Saturday, October 3, 2009 at ~~2 pm~~ 10 am

(Please note corrected start time)

Two hikes offered: A challenging hike through the dunes and a family friendly hike along the shoreline.

The Land Conservancy is helping Muskegon County expand Meinert Park (see page 1). Join us for a special tour of the proposed 95-acre expansion. **Please note, this land is extremely rugged and the dunes are very steep.** Wear sturdy shoes and be prepared to traverse uneven and steep terrain.

Directions: Meinert County Park is located on Lake Michigan north of Montague at the end of Meinert Road. Take U.S. 31 to the Fruitvale Road exit, go right (west) on Fruitvale Road to Old 31, turn right (north) and follow Old 31 one mile to Meinert Road, turn left (west). The park entrance is approximately 5 miles at Lake Michigan. **Please note you will need to purchase a motor vehicle permit to enter the park (\$5 for the day).**



Lost Lake at
Muskegon State Park.
Photo: Danielle Fogel