



The Chikaming Legacy

Newsletter of Chikaming Open Lands

Summer 2009

CHIKAMING OPEN LANDS

LANDMARK OCCASION — COL HIRES ITS FIRST EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR!

On June 15, 2009, Randy Rood began his first day of work for the decade-old Chikaming Open Lands. The Board of Directors breathed a sigh of relief, the staff nodded their heads in approval, thus beginning a new chapter in the life of the organization. “All of us on the selection committee were very impressed with Randy’s credentials. We believe he is uniquely qualified and we are confident that he will make a very significant contribution in our efforts to grow and sustain our land trust serving the southwest corner of Berrien County” said COL Board President, Steve Smith.

Randy comes to COL with exemplary experience and public service to the citizens of Berrien County as the Director of the Berrien County Department of Parks and Recreation for 24 years. He commented, “Working for the County was a huge undertaking and I dedicated my life to preserving the natural beauty of this area. I am honored and thankful to have this opportunity with COL to continue my life’s work in land conservation. Additionally, I am looking forward to working with the highly dedicated and forward thinking Board of Directors, the COL membership and staff.”

During his tenure with the Department of Parks and Recreation, he was instrumental in creating the county’s natural resource-based park system including the nationally acclaimed Silver Beach County Park on Lake Michigan in St. Joseph, Madeline Bertrand County Park on the St. Joseph River in Niles

Township, Love Creek County park and Nature Center in Berrien Township, and the Galien River County Park Preserve in New Buffalo Township.

Elizabeth Nellums, Land Protection Specialist for COL, quipped, “It’s hard to believe he’s only been with us for a little over a month already. Since he’s worked and dedicated a lot of time to Berrien County, he can count on connections and relationships he’s worked years to cultivate. When he started working here, he hit the ground running.”

Much of Randy’s previous work focused on the northern part of the county and he’s really looking forward to learning about the southwest corner. He comments, “I’ve always thought that this area has an allure all its own. I am absolutely committed to developing a long-term relationship here, with the people here, and I will do my very best to make a meaningful contribution to the important mission and work of COL.”

Randy earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Environmental Science from Grand Valley State University and Master’s Degree in Public Administration from Western Michigan University.

Take a moment in the near future to stop by the office and say hello to COL’s new Executive Director and learn what he has in store for the organization.



Randy Rood at his new post in COL’s Lakeside office.

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Dear Members and Friends of Chikaming Open Lands:

Later this year Chikaming Open Lands will celebrate its 10th anniversary. We are proud of our accomplishments. We have over 800 members and have protected over 830 acres of land and

habitat in perpetuity. We have a professional staff headed by our first Executive Director. We have major donors and grantors who have supported us with funds that have been critical to helping us protect land and develop a sustainable organization to do the work that is required to close land transactions.

It's important to acknowledge our past accomplishments because we all worked hard to get there. At this important juncture, however, it's even more crucial that we cast an eye to the future and ask ourselves where we want to go and develop goals and programming to make that a reality. It is easy to repeat our mission — "to preserve open space and the diverse, natural character of southwest Berrien County" — but what exactly does that mean in terms of our goals and programs?

Several years ago the Board of Directors adopted four strategic goals which are defined in our strategic plan. These goals are:

1. To conserve the natural habitats, water resources, farmland, scenic lands and the biodiversity of southwest Berrien County in Michigan.
2. To increase community awareness of the benefits of conservation.
3. To develop and improve an organization capable of acquiring, protecting and managing properties in perpetuity.
4. To raise funds from a variety of sources to enable Chikaming Open Lands to reach the goals stated previously.

Each year the Directors and staff review these goals and identify programs they plan to implement or maintain in the next 1-3 years in order to attain these goals. As an example, we are working to obtain at least 5 more conservation easements in the Galien River watershed by

2011. And of course, appropriate funding is essential in order to make this come to pass.

As you can imagine, protecting the land we all cherish is an on-going effort. Protected land provides habitat for species of plants and animals that might be threatened or endangered. Protected forests and plants also provide a source of carbon sequestration -- removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and replacing it with oxygen.

In closing, you are important to us and we are grateful for your support. Without it we would not have reached this our 10th Anniversary.

Sincerely,

Steve Smith
President, Board of Directors

SAVE THE DATE!

COL is celebrating its 10th anniversary!

When...

The evening of October 10

Where...

Chikaming Country Club

Please plan to join us as we celebrate the last 10 years and look forward to the future.

Check the website in coming months for details ...

www.chikamingopenlands.org



COL Events Recap

This year Chikaming Open Lands hosted its first team in the Berrien County Bird-A-Thon, a full-day excursion in early May around the diverse habitats of southwest Michigan. Teams started at midnight and ended at 6pm, meeting at Love Creek Nature Center for a community dinner. More than \$400 was raised by the COL*lared Doves (pun intended)! We will be hosting another team next year, so if there are any birders out there in our membership, keep this event in mind!



On June 6, 2009, COL sponsored its Second Annual Member Appreciation event at the Acorn Theater. Tom Butler visited southwest Michigan and gave an inspirational talk to the membership. He is a founding board member and current president of the Northeast Wilderness Trust, the only land trust in the northeastern United States focused exclusively on protecting forever-wild landscapes. As well, Tom is the editorial projects director for Foundation for Deep Ecology. His latest book is Wildlands Philanthropy: The Great American Tradition, a beautifully presented collection of personal stories from people who invested time and energy to save this beautiful land for generations to come. This book was available to the membership for purchase and signing. Those who attended were treated not only to thought-provoking discussion, but to delicious food prepared by Viola's of Three Oaks. Much of the food was donated by local farmers. It was a wonderful way to spend part of an afternoon.



In June, COL members and friends had an opportunity to get an update on the Chikaming Township Park and Preserve located on Warren Woods Road. This was the first event in the Second Saturday Series. In 2002, COL began helping the township raise money for this project and funded the prairie-seeding as well as signage in the park. Today, the prairie looks healthy, the reforestation areas are thriving, and the trails are interesting to say the least. Additionally, there is now a community garden on site and people in attendance were able to see that effort first-hand. In addition to learning the history of the formation of this park, people were able to learn more about the prairie from Lauri Lindquist (from The Conservation Fund), take a guided walk with Mike Latus (River Valley science teacher extraordinaire), and hear about the Township's master plan from Tom Hackley.



Did you know that a 30-ft. replica of a Voyageur Canoe can hold up to 19 people? On July 11, we sponsored 3 launches into the Louis J. Sima Great Lakes Marsh, a 156-acre preserve owned by COL. Participants were able to see the marsh up close and learn about the animals and plants living there. Thanks to grants from The Pokagon Fund and American Electric Power Foundation, the marsh is undergoing restoration and a water trail is being created for kayaks and canoes. Our contractors at JFNW have been targeting two invasive plants, common reed (*Phragmites australis*.) and Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*). There will also be a Purple Loosestrife Beetle release, *Galerucella sp.*, to reduce the spread of this invasive plant. Next year, in addition to these efforts, we will perform our first management burn in the marsh, which is intended to reduce invasive woody species. Much thanks goes to the funders listed above and to the Riviera Homeowners Association, the Preserve Homeowners Association, and the Berrien County Parks Department for helping make restoration efforts a reality in the beautifully unique marsh.

Photos from top: Mike James for Bird-a-Thon publicity; Tom Butler speaking to membership; June 13 Chikaming Township Park & Preserve tour; July 11 Voyageur Canoe ride.



HISTORY IN THE MAKING — THE FIRST 10 YEARS

By Beth Denton, Outreach Coordinator

I find that in order to know where you're going, it's helpful to know where you've been. Being a newcomer to COL myself with just over a year under my belt, I began to do a little research to do just that. I searched written documents and pictures, but the most interesting part of my research ended with my conversation with Peter Van Nice, Don Flinn, and Jean and Steve Smith. I asked them how it all began and below is part of the conversation which ensued.

PVN: It had to do with three different things coming together: Prairies, Fernwood, and Lake Forest Open Lands, a land trust in the northern suburbs of Chicago. I was interested in prairie because I had a big ol' field that was pretty nasty looking and I was trying to figure out what to do with it. I was a member of Fernwood which had restored a prairie and I went over and looked at that and found it very interesting. I was a member of Lake Forest Open Lands even though I lived over 30 miles away in the city, but I had some friends who were running it – it was 30 years old at the time, been around for awhile. They had a virgin prairie which was quite unusual. And in fact, that's how that organization got started – trying to acquire that prairie. They were afraid it would be developed. And so even though I had no active involvement in Lake Forest Open Lands, I got all their mailings and everything else, and I talked with people there about my prairie. It suddenly dawned on me that here was this land trust in a highly developed area, a suburb of Chicago – very upscale area — and they were saving all this land. I began to wonder, “How do they do all that when it's completely developed?” So one day I was sitting up here and I was thinking, “If they can do that there, why can't we do it here, where things aren't developed?” So that's basically how it got started. Jeannie and I talked about it and we called Steve and Jean Smith our long-time friends and neighbors, to see if they thought it was a good idea .

SS: And then that was in '98 or early '99 when we had that first meeting. I really didn't know what a land trust was, but I thought it sounded like a good idea. I was recently retired and Jean was looking for things that would occupy my time and keep me out of her way.

JS: Well, it was a big adjustment!

DF: I can speak to that a little bit, because that was the juncture at which you approached me. If I had known what goes into forming a land trust, I might have thought a little more about doing it! The original incorporation papers were put together by George Covington and filed, I'm pretty sure this is the right date and you can check me: December 11, 1999. You had approached me at least a month before that so the five of us were the incorporators. There was no board at that time.

PVN: Then in 1999, we went to Snowmass for the Land Trust Alliance rally. We were not a 501c3 yet, incorporated, yes. The four of us show up in Snowmass..

JS: Babes in the woods!

PVN: We didn't have a clue what we were doing, but LTA did and we were members. We went to classes on how to start a land trust and we talked to people who *did* know what they were doing — like the people at Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy. They helped us do our first easement on the Eleanor O'Connor Wilson Woods property.

SS: And soon after we had that knowledge, we began to work on the Chikaming Township Park & Preserve — we started raising pledges for its acquisition and restoration.

DF: So, for awhile, there was just the 5 of us and then in 2000, we began to look for members.

JS: And then came Mike Heckathorn, Jon Vickers, Al Chapman, and John Doepker. But that wasn't until a little later.

PVN: I used to go to the Post Office just hoping for a check from a new member. And one day I walked in there and there was a check for \$1,000. I was just stunned! Stunned that someone would be supportive of our cause — and it felt wonderful. I quickly began to wonder how many other people out there felt the same way.

JS: Pretty quickly, Peter's home office was taken up with COL business, so it was time to look for another place. We received a grant from the Mott Foundation for office facility and capacity-building. I think that was the next major step,



moving from Peter and Jeannie's home. It gave us recognition in the community. Peter, tell the story of how you acquired the building where the current office is located!

PVN: Well, I had always thought that location was great because Lovell & White is there, it's a location with good traffic.... And of course, I knew who owned it — the Lakeside 13, of which Jean and Jeannie were members. They were a group of women who at the time in 1985 were concerned that beautiful downtown Lakeside would be spoiled by somebody coming in and putting in a McDonald's or something like that.

DF: Or a bar! That really concerned them. It had been one in the past.

PVN: So I started talking to Jeannie and said if you want sell this building, we'd (COL) be interested in buying it. So, we met and what happened was stunning. They agreed to sell, but the amazing part was that more than half of them donated back the proceeds to COL which made a huge difference. It was about \$60,000 which was roughly the cost of the building renovation.

SS: When we moved into that office, we had maybe 150 members. We had a part-time person doing some administrative work for us (gratis), and then in 2005 we hired Jean Brokish.

DF: The DEQ grant followed soon thereafter, and that's how we managed to pay a full-time employee. That was one of the first things for COL to stop being an infant and become at least a pre-adolescent. The whole grant was a contract – the discipline of it was tremendous. We realized the responsibility of having a grant and of growing the organization. In fact, we undertook a self-evaluation process through the LTA which ultimately led to accreditation. Boy, that was an eye-opener.

SS: And that's when Jean, by default, became the president of the board of Directors going forward. Peter had resigned by this point — it was a lot of work, grueling work for one person — and Jean really harnessed the people on the Board to find out their levels of commitment. If there's one thing I've learned, it takes a lot of people to make an organization like this be successful.

JS: Going forward into the future, I would like to see a goal of COL being the first charity people give to. Through continuing education and involvement, particularly once this economy turns around and development picks up again, I think people will realize the significance of what we do. It takes a lot of committed people to make this work. With a professional staff and Board, it will happen.

At a Glance:

The making of a land trust

December 11, 1999 — COL files articles of incorporation to become an official organization. Peter & Jeannie Van Nice, Steve & Jean Smith, and Don Flinn are the original incorporators. COL operates out of Peter's home office; become official in 2000.

2001 — COL acquires the Eleanor O'Connor Wilson Woods property through purchase and sales agreement. Five acres of high quality back dune forest.

2002 — COL helps Chikaming Township Park Board raise more than \$200,000 to buy 267-acre site which becomes Chikaming Township Park & Preserve

COL acquires Louis J. Sima Great Lakes Marsh through a donation from the family of Louis J. Sima of New Buffalo.

2003 — COL receives a grant for \$3,500 from the Berrien Community Foundation to hire a botanist to create a survey of the Louis J. Sima Great Lakes Marsh.

2004 — COL purchases a building in Lakeside from the *Lakeside 13*, rehabs and opens building for business — one side is the COL office, the other a business renter.

COL wins a grant from the Mott Foundation for capacity building - to furnish the office and pay the salary of a land protection specialist.

2005 — COL hires its first employee — Jean Brokish, Land Protection Specialist.

COL is awarded a 3-year \$590,000 grant plus a \$450,000 matching grant from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to improve the water quality of the Galien River Watershed.

First conservation easement donation from George & Andrea Platz.

2006 — COL adds an administrative assistant to staff and Jean Smith becomes the president of the Board of Directors.

2007 — COL applies for accreditation from the Land Trust Alliance

2008 — COL becomes one of the first 39 land trusts in the country to be accredited

Jean Brokish moves to Hawaii, Elizabeth Nellums is hired

2009 — COL hires Randy Rood as 1st Exec. Director



New and Renewing Donors

Major Gifts (\$10,000+)

Mr. & Mrs. Macdonald Flinn
McCormick Family Foundation
Mr. & Mrs. Paul Miller
Robert Parsons & Victoria Herget
Mrs. Russell J. Parsons
Ms. Brenda Shapiro
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Van Nice

Major Gifts (\$2,000-\$9,999)

Mr. Christopher Hehmyer
Mr. & Mrs. Martin Hughes
Jonathan Janott & Don Hermann
Carroll Joynes & Abby O'Neil
Gregory S. Kerrigan
Mr. & Mrs. Martin Koldyke
Mr. George Lucas
Mr. Andrew McGhee
Mr. Robert Meeks
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Smith
Quincy White Estate

Members (\$1,000-1,999)

Linda Anderson
Anonymous (2)
Mr. & Mrs. Alan Berkshire
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Brumfield
Mr. & Mrs. Eugene Clapp
Mr. & Mrs. Brian Kern
Robert D. LoPrete
Ms. Louisa Rice Malkin
Ms. Elizabeth L. Malkin
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Osnos
Mr. & Mrs. William Racine
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Sims
Mr. & Mrs. Terrence Walsh

Members (\$500-999)

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Mr. & Mrs. Albert Chapman
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Members (\$100-499)

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Mr. & Mrs. Warren Baker
David Barnes
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Barrett
Berrien Birding Club
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Candace Broecker
Jean Brokish & Bernard Schmidt
Mr. & Mrs. Lester Buczek
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Ms. Eileen Thompson
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Mr. & Mrs. Paul Valliere
Mr. & Mrs. Adrian Van Ginhoven
Mrs. John Viskant
Dr. Kyle Vonk
Mr. & Mrs. Jack Wagner
Ms. Barbara Warren
Mr. & Mrs. Myron Warsaw
Mrs. Alice Wilder
Dr. John Woollam

Members (\$25-99)

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Mr. & Mrs. Dale Ashcraft
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Mr. & Mrs. William Magoun
Mr. & Mrs. Robin McBride
Ms. Diana Meckley & Mr. Charles Powell
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Mr. William Wagner
Mr. David E. Walters
Ms. Jeannine Warner
Don Wilson
Mr. & Mrs. Ken Wolf
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Wolkowitz
Ms. Carol Zmuda

We regret the following donors were not listed in the Annual Report:

The Lazars
The Berkshires
Jim Veldman
Nancy and Melvin Johnson
(should have had a second easement listed for 73 acres total)





A Treasured Friend.... Quincy White

Quincy White, a long time resident of New Buffalo Township and Chicago, died October 10, 2008, after battling health problems in recent years. In 1999, when COL was getting its bearings as a young land trust, Quincy became a charter member and avid supporter of land protection efforts in six townships in southwest Michigan. Steve Smith, President of Chikaming Open Lands, states, "We at COL are pleased that Quincy felt strongly about the importance of our mission to preserve open space in this area that he left us a bequest in his will. This is a wonderful thing that he and his family did for us and we are so appreciative of this generosity."

Quincy was born in Evanston, Illinois, and graduated from Hotchkiss in 1950 and Yale in 1954. After serving two years in the Air Force he earned his law degree from Harvard in 1960. During his legal career he worked at Leibman, Williams, Bennett, Baird & Minow, which later merged with Sidley & Austin. He was a partner in the firm and headed the Intellectual Property Group from 1967 until his retirement in 1995.

After his retirement from Sidley & Austin, he moved to his New Buffalo home to live full time and serve the area and community he had always loved. He served as Chairman of the New Buffalo Planning Commission and as New Buffalo Township Trustee from 2000 to 2008. Once the Pokagon casino began operation he served on the Board

of Directors of the Pokagon Fund which supports non-profits in southwest Michigan. Agnes Conway, Township Supervisor, said of Quincy, "Even if you didn't agree with him, you could always be sure that he was acting in what he felt was the best interest of the Township."

Quincy had many interests and took full advantage of retirement to pursue them. He attended summer classes at the University of California at Berkeley to study creative writing and to participate in theater classes. He and his wife, Joyce, hosted many play reading parties with readers not only reading their parts, but dressing in costume. Rehearsals were serious, but somehow when it got to show night at someone's home the party often turned quite funny, mostly due to the talents that Director Quincy had to work with. The Whites would often host a Christmas party and ask folks to bring the worst present they had ever received. It was usually quite funny until someone inevitably shouted, "Hey, I gave you that!" He was a dear friend to all who knew him.

Quincy enjoyed sharing his childhood experiences and the beauty of nature with his three grandchildren. Quincy is survived by his wife, Joyce Caldwell White and two daughters, Cleaver Layton White and Neelie White Fritz. His bequest is a wonderful way to have an enduring impact to help preserve the natural beauty of this area.



From left: Steve Smith, Quincy White, and Andy McGhee

If you or anyone you know is interested in considering a bequest to COL, please contact Randy Rood, COL Executive Director, at 269-469-2330.

The following gifts were made...

in memory of:

*Matthew Kern
Chuck O'Grady
Elizabeth W. Sowers
Bill Stevens
Phil White
Quincy White*

in honor of:

*Beth Denton & Bill Burck
Sue & Melvin Gray
Vickie Kaiser
Don Meckley & Rose Parisi
Werner & Sue Petterson
Jean & Steve Smith*



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Paul Miller
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Jean Smith
Steve Smith, *Pres.*
Peter Van Nice

Chikaming Open Lands . . . dedicated to preserving open space and the diverse, natural character of southwest Berrien County.

Thank you sponsors!

The Acorn Theater, Belle Via Market, Treeline Farm, Edge of the Woods Farm, Hickory Creek Dairy, Old Europe Cheese, Jerry Fisher Catering, Sweet William, Reverie Spa, and Viola's Cafe — for providing food and libations for COL's Second Annual Membership Events on June 5 & 6. And to **Tom Butler** — for donating his time, travel, and several copies of his book to the event as well.

Joanne Sims, Sue Petterson, Lauri Lindquist, Mike Latus, and Tom Hackley — for their parts in the Chikaming Township Park and Preserve tour in June.

The City of New Buffalo, the New Buffalo Boat Launch staff, and Pat Underwood at Love Creek Nature Center — for making the Second Saturday Series Voyageur Canoe ride a success.

Upcoming events

Clean the Galien – August 8 Join your friends and neighbors to clean up an area in the Galien River watershed. The watershed is important to the health and flow of its rivers and lakes and it's important that we work together to improve it. Wear clothing appropriate for outdoor work and be happy knowing you're making a difference! Meet at COL office in Lakeside at 9:45 a.m. Michigan time.

Local Farm Tour – September 12 Everyone knows that 'eating local' and supporting local agriculture just makes sense. And our area is agriculturally bountiful. Join us as we tour a local farm and learn of its offerings. Location details forthcoming — please check the website or call the office.

Stewardship Work Days — Sept. 5 & Oct. 3 Please meet at the Lakeside office at 10 a.m. until noon.

Ten Year Anniversary Celebration — October 10 It's time to celebrate COL's first 10 years and look to the future. Look for your invitation in the mail soon!

**Be sure to visit our  website for updates on projects and events:
www.chikamingopenlands.org**