



The Chikaming Legacy

Newsletter of Chikaming Open Lands

Fall 2010



Clockwise upper left: Ann Dudley Goldblatt, Jean Smith; outside view of barn; inside views of barn; T. Hanover, P. Kohring, S. Smith; E. Nellums, J. Humbert; view of raffle table.



COL'S FIRST ANNUAL BENEFIT A GRAND SUCCESS!

Chikaming Open Lands' first annual fundraiser proved a wonderful evening for all in attendance. Hosted by Stan and Ann Dudley Goldblatt at their beautifully converted barn near Three Oaks, the party included cocktails and hors d'oeuvres followed by a unique raffle drawing.

Guests approached the two-story red barn through a one-lane drive amidst fields of mature corn. The new autumn sky hinted of light rain, but the festive event held it at bay. Ascending the majestic stone staircase, guests entered the barn to see friends in conservation. They were serenaded by Garth Taylor, Jane Pellouchoud, Stewart Beach and friends, who provided lively bluegrass music, and they dined on delicious seasonal harvest food prepared by Classic Catering. Wine was donated by Tabor Hill Winery and beer came complimentary from the soon-to-open Sawyer based Greenbush Brewing Company.

Steve Smith, COL's Board President, welcomed over 150 people to the event and thanked them for making the evening such a success, raising over \$20,000 towards preserving open space in southwest Michigan. "This is a wonderful achievement for this our first annual fundraising benefit! The funds raised will go toward helping us acquire a conservation easement protecting 30 acres of land and 2,000 feet of frontage on the Galien River in Chikaming Township. Thank you, everyone here and everyone who supported this event by making donations or purchasing raffle tickets — you sustain our work in land conservation."

Jean Smith oversaw the raffle drawing as she plucked guests from the audience to draw out the winning names. Congratulations go to Suzanne Miller for "Gateway to the Gridiron", 4 tickets to an October Notre Dame game; Peter Van Nice for "A Native Tree for Thee" which features a 12-foot white pine tree, delivered and planted; Lovina Gow for "An Autumn Evening with the Cranes", 10,000 sandhill cranes, that is; Emily Coolidge for "Koebel Dairy Day", an up close view of a local working dairy farm; and Betty and Jack Arnold and Judith Brown, both of whom won \$500 gift certificates to the Red Arrow Roadhouse.

Guests lingered around the fireplace well into the evening, and shared beams of flashlights back to their cars. Special thanks go to the event committee who worked very hard to make the evening a success: Linda Anderson, Maureen Culp, Beth Denton, Rob Gow, Johanna Humbert, Mike James, Jon Janott, Vicky Kaiser, Michal Miller, Nancy Racine, Randy Rood, and Jean Smith. And to the raffle and service donors: Maureen Culp, Gunner Piotter, Kip Miller, Koebel Family, Tim Trout, Linda Upton, Greenbush Brewing, Classic Catering, Kim Pruitt, and Stanford and Ann Dudley Goldblatt.

PROTECTING THE LAND ~ PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE



The Chikaming Legacy

Mission

COL is dedicated to preserving open space and the diverse, natural character of southwest Berrien County.

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Greg Kaiser, *Vice President*
Paul Miller, *Treasurer*
George Lucas, *Secretary*
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Randy Rood, *Executive Director*
Elizabeth Nellums, *Land Protection Specialist*
Beth Denton, *Outreach Coordinator*
Johanna Humbert, *Accounting & Database Management*

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

From the President and Executive Director . . .

As indicated on the front page in this issue of "The Chikaming Legacy", our First Annual Benefit for Open Space Preservation was an overwhelming success raising over \$21,000 for land protection. These funds will go toward the acquisition of a conservation easement protecting 30 acres of land with 2,000 feet of frontage on the Galien River in Chikaming Township. We are truly grateful for the outstanding support of our membership and to all who attended, bought raffle tickets, or sent in contributions!

This past summer was very busy and productive. Our Outreach efforts with the Second Saturday Series of educational programs were well attended, especially the "Raptors ~ America's Birds of Prey" program presented in June by the World Bird Sanctuary from St. Louis, Missouri. If you missed it the first time, an encore is planned for 2012. The Galien River Marsh Water Trail Guide is at the printer and will be available soon. The water trail is roughly two miles in length and the guide was developed to educate paddlers about the unique qualities and importance of restoring and protecting the Galien River Marsh. Be sure to read the "Outreach" section of this newsletter for more details on this exciting program.

Permanently protecting natural and open lands is a long, slow process; each transaction can take years to complete. In the area of land protection, we are pleased to tell you that significant progress has been made toward acquiring and protecting about 110 acres of natural open land, including 30 acres on the Galien River in Chikaming Township and the acquisition of a 40-acre wet prairie in Bertrand Township. You will receive specific announcements soon about the newest additions to our conservation efforts!

The native landscape in the Louis J. Sima Great Lakes Marsh is making a come-back! On a recent trip through the marsh in the Voyageur Canoe, many commented on the beautiful colors of native flora which had not been as prominent in previous years. These natives weren't getting the sun and nutrients needed in order to flourish because Phragmite, Japanese Knotweed, and other invasive species were proliferating and using these essential elements. Now, a panoramic view of the marsh is dotted with vibrant native colors — pink Swamp Rose Mallow and yellow Cup Plant, to name a couple. Continued progress in the marsh is expected in the years to come.

In the area of development and fundraising, member contributions were at an all time high and a grant from the Land Trust Alliance was secured to help fund and advance our strategic conservation planning efforts, develop a template for comprehensive management plans for all our preserves, and assist planned upgrades to the COL website. As a conservation organization we will work to incorporate paperless communication wherever possible and according to your preferences. Printing many newsletters and outreach materials is costly to our organization and to the environment and we know you'd like to see as much money as possible go toward land conservation. So please take a moment to send us your email! (See page 3 for details on how to do this.)

Later in October, the Board of Directors and Staff will collectively participate in a retreat designed to look at COL's "big picture" and develop a scope for at least the next 5 years. We will be working together to decide how best to use our financial and personnel resources and will be working hard to meet your expectations where it concerns conserving open space.

As you can see, there's a lot going on and projects previously "in the works" are now becoming reality. Thank you for your vital support of Chikaming Open Lands' on-going efforts dedicated to "Protecting the Land and Preserving our Heritage"!

Best regards,

Steve Smith, *President*
Randy Rood, *Executive Director*



THIS YEAR END, HELP US PROTECT 30 ACRES IN CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP

COL has identified a 30-acre property in Chikaming Township, in the floodplain of the Galien River, which is critical for erosion control, water filtration (reducing pollution), and flood prevention. Many rare and threatened plants are present on site, including the state-listed Prairie Trillium (*Trillium recurvatum*). As a bonus to us, it is adjacent to an existing easement held by COL. Protecting this property with a conservation easement will create a 60-acre greenway along the Galien.

The total cost of this project is approximately \$140,000. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Environment (MDNRE) has committed \$31,100, and an individual donor has pledged \$30,000. The \$21,000 raised at COL's benefit in September is also designated to this project.

The remaining almost \$60,000 still needs to be identified. To that end, COL's year-end appeal will focus on bringing in funds to protect this pristine, important property. Watch your mailbox in November for an opportunity to be part of this important project. Any gift will help!



SPRING MEMBERSHIP DRIVE A GREAT SUCCESS!

This spring COL held a major membership drive, both for renewals and new memberships. What a success it was! In the course of just a couple of months we were able to renew 212 members, as well as introduce 29 new members, who then enjoyed our June Raptors event and all of our Second Saturday programs. The campaign also raised \$86,795 towards our operating expenses.

We want to take this opportunity to thank you, our members, for your ongoing enthusiasm for and support of Chikaming Open Lands!

HELP US REDUCE PAPER! Please forward your email address today so that we can expand our use of paperless communications, conserve energy, and reduce our printing and postage expenses. We plan to offer an electronic newsletter option to our members later this year. Please call us with your email address, include it in your remittance, or email jhumbert@chikamingopenlands.org *Thank you in advance for your cooperation—it is most appreciated!*



Outreach

The aim of COL's outreach program is to engage as many people as possible in its mission, preserving open space in southwest Michigan. This often occurs through educational programming — and this year was no exception. In June, COL brought the World Bird Sanctuary all the way from St. Louis, Missouri to present its delightful, all-ages show on Raptors: America's Birds of Prey. This event was so much fun that it will likely be brought back to our area in 2012. So if you missed it the first time, you'll have another chance soon. How spectacular it was to view these magnificent birds up close and flying within inches of our heads! Helping COL with sponsorship were: Abonmarche, Holiday Inn Express (New Buffalo), New Buffalo Savings Bank, JFNew, Horizon Bank, and Fairfield Inn and Suites.



Raptor's: America's Birds of Prey



Trek in Mud Lake Bog

In July, COL friends and members had a chance to view Mud Lake Bog, a rare floating mat bog located near Buchanan, Michigan. Kip Miller, Board of Director member and Berrien County naturalist at Love Creek Nature Center, led approximately 25 people through the floating boardwalk trails. Attendees had the opportunity to learn about the carnivorous pitcher plants that grow there and many other interesting plant and animal life as well. Those who were hungry munched on a few wild blueberries — if they could stave off the cedar waxwings and blue jays, that is! The bog is in need of some tender loving care as some invasive plant species have begun to proliferate there. Although it is not a COL owned preserve, COL will take on more of a stewardship role in the bog. As part of this role, Beth Denton (COL Outreach Coordinator) has begun to teach a group of 4-8th grade students in a year-long class that will educate them about the bog's importance to the area.



Pitcher Plant in Mud Lake Bog

In August, the Voyageur Canoe returned to the Louis J. Sima Great Lakes Marsh for its annual ride through the calm waters of the Galien River. This marsh is one of the last of its kind in the area and riding in the canoe gives riders a closer understanding of its importance in the watershed and in maintaining healthier water ecosystems. Of particular importance this year was the visual confirmation that COL's invasive species control program is succeeding and more native species are able to thrive.



A view of the marsh from the Voyageur Canoe

Next year, COL will work to provide another great year of educational outreach opportunities for its members and friends! Many thanks go to our sponsors who helped us this year. Please join us in the months ahead by patronizing their places of business.



Far left: Voyageur Canoe paddlers prepare for their trip. Left: A view of the group inside the Voyageur Canoe.



New Water Trail Nearing Completion!

Galien River Marsh Water Trail

Welcome to the Galien River Marsh, an ecosystem that was once prevalent along the Lake Michigan shoreline which is now rare.

Great Lakes Marsh: Synchronized to the Rhythms of Lake Michigan
The marsh ecology and the plants and animals found here are influenced by the climate and water levels of Lake Michigan.

In addition to being closely linked to a Great Lake, a Great Lakes marsh has the following communities:



1. A deep marsh with submerged plants, largely under water.
2. An emergent marsh whose roots are in standing water, but whose leaves emerge from the water.
3. A wet meadow whose soil may be inundated with water, but at other times may be dry.
4. A shrub boundary between the marsh and the forest.
5. A city forest containing oak, hickory, black cherry and other trees.

Migration Rest Stop
The coast of Lake Michigan is a migration route for waterfowl, raptors and songbirds. As the birds migrate to the spring and fall, the marsh provides a resting and feeding area. The calm water, protected from storms, serves a vital function for many species.



Invasive Species



Purple Loosestrife



Phragmites



Garlic Mustard

Protecting the Marsh

In 2002, the Louis J. Sima Family of New Buffalo donated 156 acres of the Galien River Marsh to Chikaming Open Lands (COL). The Berrien County Department of Parks and Recreation acquired 88 acres of the marsh and adjoining upland in 2007. To date, about 70% of the great lakes marsh at New Buffalo has been forever preserved. COL coordinates and encourages stewardship of the marsh and has received a major grant from The Preserve Fund for restoration work, along with contributions from Berrien County Parks and our neighbors in the Preserve and Riviera homeowner associations.

Chikaming Open Lands is working hard to remove the threat of non-native invasive plants from spreading uncontrollably and crowding out the native plants on which marsh wildlife depend. Controlling invasive plants, now and in the future, is essential to preserving the marsh's rich biodiversity and importance as a functional wetland.

Other threats to the marsh include pollution from failing septic systems and storm water run-off. Educational and regulatory efforts to reduce these threats are underway by other partners.

Thank you for doing your part to protect the great lakes marsh at New Buffalo - an important part of our Michigan heritage!



For your safety

- Please wear a U.S. Coast Guard Approved Personal Flotation Device
- Travel with a companion or group
- Keep to your right
- Keep your eyes open for motor boat traffic
- Bring insect repellent and sunscreen
- Please don't litter or disturb plants and animals!



One of the best ways to access the Louis J. Sima Great Lakes Marsh is in a canoe or a kayak. Winding through the mysterious channels in a boat is a great way to spend an afternoon.

Floating in the marsh just became a little more educational! A new water trail has been constructed to enhance understanding of the marsh and its implications for the area. We want to encourage passive recreation (i.e. low-wake boats like kayaks and canoes) in the Marsh so that more people will value this rare example of a Great Lakes Marsh and want to protect it. This water trail will make the marsh even more accessible to the public by installing signs (see photo at left) at the boat launches in New Buffalo across from the public beach and Red Arrow Highway outside of town. In addition to the permanent signage, map guides will be available at these sites, local retail outlets, and COL's office and website. The trail guide and related signage were made possible through a generous grant from the American Electric Power Foundation, the MDNRE, and the National Park Service. Our partners for this project also include the surrounding communities of The Preserve Association and The Riviera Homeowners Association.





Land Protection

As part of our partnership with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (MDNRE), Chikaming Open Lands continues to reach out to landowners in the Galien River Watershed to protect wetlands critical for water quality. We have had great response to our efforts through phone, mail, and face-to-face contact! In August, Chikaming Open Lands entered into a purchase agreement for 30 acres of pristine wetlands in Chikaming Township. All funds raised in at September's benefit and the year-end appeal will go toward acquisition of this easement. We are working with Abonmarche Surveyors, Wightman Environmental, and the law firm of Burdick, Engeln & Schwartz to protect this crucial piece of the Galien River corridor.

Also coming up this year is the addition of Dayton Wet Prairie, a 40-acre wetland located in Bertrand Township. This property is a transfer from The Nature Conservancy, which is committing to 50% of the stewardship endowment necessary to protect the property in perpetuity. Dayton Wet Prairie is a rare prairie fen community, a remnant of the chain of wetlands and grasslands that once covered much of the Midwest. In recent years the property has suffered from the introduction of non-native invasive species, particularly the common reed, reed canary grass, and hybrid cattail. Chikaming Open Lands is planning to restore the Wet Prairie to its original condition, as a haven for rare and threatened prairie plants, grassland birds, and a species of special concern in the state of Michigan, the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake.



Mimich Road wetland



Dayton Wet Prairie



Entrance to Dayton Wet Prairie

Dr. Rosina Bierbaum Dinner and Lecture Climate Change & Sustainability: Global & Regional Impacts Tuesday, November 9, 5:30 to 8:30 pm, in Fernwood's Art Gallery

Fernwood and the League of Women Voters of Berrien & Cass Counties, Michigan, are co-sponsoring an evening on the environment with Dr. Rosina Bierbaum, Dean of the School of Natural Resources and Environment, Professor of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy, University of Michigan. Dr. Bierbaum will discuss *Climate Change & Sustainability: Global & Regional Impacts*. The lecture will begin at 6:00 pm, followed by a plated dinner prepared by Fernwood's Chef Tim Carrigan. The cost is \$27 per person complete, and Fernwood will accept reservations through noon on Wednesday, November 3. Hurry! Seating is limited for this important lecture.



(This is not an event sponsored by COL; however, since the message is concerned with the environmental and it's at a local venue, we felt you might be interested in attending.)

Stewardship



Every year in October, Chikaming Open Lands staff and members of the Stewardship Committee monitor all of our conservation easement and preserve properties to make sure they are being protected. This year, there are a total of 25 properties. During this annual monitoring process, we often meet with landowners to answer questions or walk the property together.

This year the Stewardship Committee held workdays at Robinson Woods, Grand Beach Marsh, and Wilson Woods. We worked to remove invasive buckthorn, multiflora rose, privet, and barberry. We are also working with local consultants to produce management plans for our newest preserves, with assistance from the Heart of the Lakes Advancing Conservancy Excellence (ACE) program. A preserve management plan identifies the key natural features on a property, makes recommendations for future stewardship, and suggests public improvements for the site. As an example, committee and staff are working to establish a management plan for Robinson Woods Preserve which will include plans for improving public access and use of the 80-acre property. In general, management plans allow us to improve the level of care we give to each of our preserves.



We have also made excellent progress on our restoration of the J. Louis Sima Marsh, part of the Galien River Watershed. We are currently in the third phase of the Galien River Marsh Restoration Plan. With principal support from The Pokagon Fund, and additional funding from the Preserve and Riviera homeowners and Berrien County Parks, we have noticed visible reductions in the amount of Common Reed and Japanese Knotweed, and we continue to work on invasive Purple Loosestrife. In August the Stewardship Committee made a monitoring trip into the Marsh – check out these pictures!



“War” on invasive plants with JFNew’s amphibious vehicles and a view of the Sima Marsh with fewer invasives in it!



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

Inside this issue. . .

- **Galien River Marsh Water Trail**
- **Season's Events Recap**
- **Land Protection Updates**
- **First Annual Benefit report**
- **Stewardship Activity**

