



The Chikaming Legacy

Newsletter of Chikaming Open Lands

Fall 2011

A Sense of Place

What does Chikaming Open Lands really do? We could talk about preserving over 1000 acres and how people either donate their land or enter into conservation easements protecting their land forever. But what does this really *mean*?

There are many reasons why people want to preserve their property, but what it really means is this: They love their land and they want it to remain the way it is for future generations. In talking to many landowners they want to preserve a sense of place for family, friends, and their community.



At Chikaming Open Lands, we help keep this sense of place alive for people. We work with landowners to fulfill their wishes to preserve their land in perpetuity. It is this connection to the land that Chikaming Open Lands wants to help people preserve.



Three passionate Harbert families, the Fosters, Gazzolos and Douglass clans, recently donated their land to COL and this has become the newest preserve, The Woods Preserve. They purchased this land with the intention of

preventing it from being developed. They wanted to create a place of serenity and tranquility for their families, a place they could retreat to and feel the peace of the countryside and slower living. And so they bought it up and left it in its natural state. During the dedication ceremony for The Woods Preserve, Wylie Douglass addressed the large crowd along with other members of the donor families. "My mother had a sign on her wall and it read, 'My soul requires the tonic of wilderness.'"

This sense of place and connection to the land is important to Mike James, one of the newest members of the COL Board of Directors. During a recent conversation he talked about his experience living

on the edge of another of COL's preserves, the Louis J. Sima Great Lakes Marsh located in New Buffalo. He said, "Last winter was so cold that the Galien River actually froze over. I had misgivings about walking onto the frozen water, but I had seen hunters and fishermen do it so I knew it was possible. I walked to the edge of the river and then onto the river and kept walking, right into the marshy area that is not traversable during the warmer months. I walked over reeds and mouse trails, and listened to the curious raptors traveling above me. I went all the way to the other side of the marsh

and it felt like the last great unexplored place in this area. Going that far into the marsh is something not many people get to do and I did it on that one very special day." There is wonder, contentment, and a deep sense of thankfulness in his voice as he tells this story. These are the types of experiences COL hopes to instill with the creation of public preserves.

Wanting to preserve a place is one of the most generous intentions anyone can have. It is COL's mission to work with landowners to fulfill their hopes for their land and ensure a sense of place which is so important for a community's well being.



(Photos from "The Woods" dedication ceremony: Top — a 3 family photo of the donor families; Left — June Foster, Barbara Gazzolo; Right — a view of the crowd)



The Chikaming Legacy

Mission

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

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OUR LANDS, OUR LAND TRUST

Dear Members and Friends of Chikaming Open Lands,

Welcome to the Autumn 2011 edition of “The Chikaming Legacy”! This issue includes lots of updates about our recent activity, including information about our Partners in Conservation program of which we are very proud.

COL is very happy to announce the donation of The Woods Preserve, a six-acre woodland with significant open and scenic frontage on Harbert Road. This newest preserve was dedicated on Labor Day weekend, where 80-100 folks gathered on Harbert Road to celebrate the gift of land to COL by the Foster, Douglass, and Gazzolo families. Named and unveiled at the dedication ceremony, family members at the dedication expressed their connection to the land and to their land trust. On behalf of the families, Wylie Douglass expressed: “We have only been waiting 30 years to find Chikaming Open Lands. We wanted someone who had the wisdom and the commitment and the drive to take this from us and preserve it into perpetuity, and we are delighted that we have come up with them.”

Chikaming Open Lands has now more than 1000 protected acres with the addition of The Woods Preserve. We also have several important active land protection properties moving forward and expect to successfully complete two of those by year’s end. You, our members and supporters, drive us to continue preserving land that provide our special identity as individuals, families, and community — a community as diverse as our landscape, from lakeshore to farm. As a newcomer, I am struck by the beauty of this area and have written a few thoughts about the unique charm of our landscape.

Ode to Harbor Country

Her blue is like no other. Our dogs quicken their pace, beckoned by the smell. The surf crashes as I search along the water’s edge for crinoids while an errant gull peers down at us.

The kayak glides quietly, a silent voyager along a patch of water lilies. I am invisible. A Great Blue Heron fishes along the shoreline. The silver gleam of a steelhead catches my eye, the splash distracting the heron. She squawks at the unwanted guest.

A dragonfly buzzes by my ear and hovers lower beside a jack-in-the-pulpit. Great Monarchs flap haphazardly, finding respite within the back dune forest as they migrate. Solitude is sought within the embrace of sassafras, oak and poplar in the hollow.

Just steps away from the COL office, Robinson Woods awaits. Great oaks and thick beeches stand as sentinels. A small path from East Road leads into the primordial cavern. Awed and brainy humans are drawn to study these great woodlands and mark their passage.

Green and gold tracts, jugged by riparian corridors of the Galien and its tributaries. Pasture-fed cattle graze along the gentle slopes within the inland grid. We sow from and celebrate the earth. Nearby, joe pye, great bluestem and aster parade in the lowlands, punctuated by the cry of the sandhill crane.

Thank you for your invaluable membership and continued support of our work at Chikaming Open Lands. We are deeply grateful!

Best regards,
Chris Thompson
Executive Director

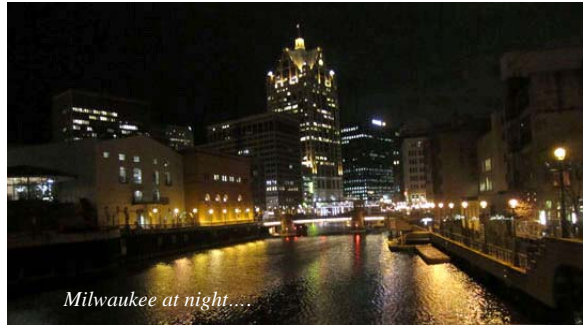


COL is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.



COL Rallies in Milwaukee!

Ninety-nine years ago on October 14 in Milwaukee, an assassin's bullet failed to kill President Theodore Roosevelt because Roosevelt's 50-page speech was folded in his breast pocket and absorbed the impact. He proceeded to



deliver the speech before seeking medical attention. Roosevelt is famously quoted as having said, "It takes more than a bullet to stop a Bull Moose."

Returning to the exact location of this assassination attempt, the 2011 Land Trust Alliance National Rally was opened on October 14 by President Rand Wentworth, who referenced Roosevelt in saying, "It takes more than a recession to stop the land conservation movement!"

Judging from the over 1,700 people in attendance, representing land trusts in all 50 states, and five foreign countries, Rand's statement must be true! He added a remarkable statistic – the acreage protected by private land trusts across America would fill the entire state of Wisconsin!

COL's three full-time staff members, along with two board members, attended Rally and took advantage of seminars and workshops on a wide variety of topics. Midway through Rally, COL board member Clay Robinson commented, "I was proud to sit in a seminar on financial management of land trusts and discover that Chikaming Open Lands is doing so much right! Sure, we all picked up new ideas, but basically we are really on the right track."

The skills and insights gained over the course of Rally will help COL continue our important work. Assistant Land Protection Specialist Susan LaCroix was eager to return to Lakeside after her all-day seminar on drafting conservation easements. "I learned so much my brain aches," she exclaimed. "It was great!"



The COL contingent at Rally!

At the year's end, we look to you.

Chikaming Open Lands was here when The Woods Preserve needed a steward because our community supports our work. We never know when a family will be ready to protect their land, but you, our members, keep us active with your participation in clean-up days, your attendance at our educational programs, and your financial support. Together, we are the local land trust.

As the end of the year approaches, you know what that means – our annual appeal is coming! We come to members twice a year, in the spring and again at year's end, to ask you to express your partnership with Chikaming Open Lands by making a tax-deductible contribution. Just think, what would our memories be if southwest Michigan became a suburb, or if invasive plants wiped out the native food needed by local animals and migrating birds? Keep COL active in the community so we can be here when land needs protecting. Thank you!

Honoraria & Memorials

In honor of . . .

Linda Anderson, from Jean W. Sharp
"The twin bambis born on my preserved land", from Diane DeWitt
Adelyn Bogert, from Amy, Nicholas & Carroll Bogert
Alan L. Freeman, from Arllyn Freeman
George B. Girton, from Mary L. Fox
Mike James, from Maureen & Vaughn Culp
Greg Kerrigan, from Charlie Rizzo
Susan Morley LaCroix, from Carol Morley Beck
Mary McDowell, from John Bokina
Don Meckley & Rose Parisi, from Mr. & Mrs. Richard C. Meckley
Roger J. Mulcahy, from Kathleen & Patrick McGinnis
Bill Oostenbrug's 90th birthday, from Mary L. Fox, Brenda Shapiro
Dottie Pattishall's birthday, from Nancy & Walter Aque
Werner & Sue Petterson, from Mr. & Mrs. Frederick Lighthall
Bill & Nancy Racine, from Mr. & Mrs. David Axelrod
John Sanders, from Mrs. Nancy Sanders
Bessie Simon, from Donna & Art Simon

In memory of . . .

Rocky Beach, from Bill Daniels & Ellen Carnahan, Steve & Jean Smith
Luther Buchele, from Joan Buchele
Lester W. Buczek, from Mrs. Lester Buczek
Kenneth & Georgette Burgess, from Jim & Georgiana Gormley
Judy DeVore, from Mr. & Mrs. John Keefe
Gene Goldwasser, from Mary L. Fox
Jane Henkle, from John & Ruth Magdzinski
Diane Hollatz, from Mr. & Mrs. Timothy Falconio, Mr. & Mrs. Michael D. Wright
Robert S. Ingersoll, from Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Smith
Dalia Jeziorski, from Joseph Jeziorski
Matthew Kern, from Mr. & Mrs. Kern
Dennis Long, from Mr. & Mrs. Phil Berman, Jr.
Jean Lucas, from Mr. & Mrs. Guy Arvia, Mr. & Mrs. Clifford T. Beckman, Mr. & Mrs. Carl Christ, Chikaming Country Club Women's Golf Association, Mr. & Mrs. Charles H. Dale, Mr. & Mrs. Carl Franzon, Lillian Gilruth, Mr. & Mrs. Kent Lindquist, Arlene & Bernard Lindquist, Wendy Lindquist, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Lindsay, Mr. Bill Lucas, Mr. & Mrs. James N. Lynch, Keith & Mary Anne McLean, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Meeke, Mrs. Russell J. Parsons, Sandy & Bill Rosenthal-Nemeth, Nancy Sheila Simonian, Dr. & Mrs. Lewis Smith, Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Smith, Claudia A. Sprovtssoff
Pepper, from Lucy Kamau
John D. Purdy, from Marilyn & Tom Cahill, Mr. & Mrs. Eugene Clapp, Mr. & Mrs. David Eblen, Caro Parsons, James D. Parsons, Robert Parsons & Victoria Herget, Mrs. Russell J. Parsons, Mr. & Mrs. William Racine, Ms. Linda K. Strohl
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Philip C. White, from Mr. & Mrs. David Eblen, Mrs. Phillip White
Carolyn Wilson-Garrison, from Mr. & Mrs. David Johnson



Land Protection

At COL, we work very hard with local, private landowners to preserve land with conservation easements. A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landholder and Chikaming Open Lands that permanently limits the use of the land in order to protect its natural features. It's a great way to pass on a legacy from one generation to the next, ensuring that land is protected forever.

Once property is put under easement, COL has a responsibility to make sure that it stays in its agreed upon natural state. Every year, COL staff go into the field to check each and every conservation easement — and this year is no exception! Our new assistant land protection specialist, Susan Morley LaCroix, is busy these days visiting all the landowners who have conservation easements on their property. She says, “Monitoring the conservation easements has been great so far! I’m especially enjoying meeting all the landowners, hearing about why they wanted their land preserved, and seeing why it is so special to them.” Having such strong engagement from landowners makes this annual process go smoothly and we have also been very lucky to have gorgeous autumn weather making for great property walks.

The yearly monitoring process involves lots of people, from the landowners to the volunteers who assist Susan with this task. It is absolutely a necessary process and COL thanks all of you for your commitment to it!



Assistant Land Protection Specialist, Susan Morley LaCroix.

Chikaming Open Lands and The Pokagon Fund join forces for the “Partners in Conservation” program

Earlier this year, COL received significant support for land conservation work when The Pokagon Fund awarded its largest grant to date to a charitable organization. This award is part of COL’s new “Partners in Conservation Program” and is a matching grant. For every dollar raised by COL and earmarked for the program, The Pokagon Fund will donate two dollars for a total of up to \$300,000 each year for three consecutive years. The total grant award is up to \$900,000.

Mary Dunbar, Executive Director of The Pokagon Fund states, “We have come to understand and appreciate the value of preserving natural space — to protect the natural flora and fauna and enhance the experience of kayakers, birders, and hikers. We honor COL’s achievements and are delighted to continue our support.”

Proceeds from The Pokagon Fund’s grant can be used to protect land in New Buffalo, Chikaming and Three Oaks Townships. This will be accomplished either through establishing preserves – properties owned outright by Chikaming Open Lands – or by entering into conservation easements with private landowners who retain ownership of their land.

The Pokagon Fund’s generous grant is a milestone for COL. After participating in the preservation of over 1,000 acres in the past decade, this grant launches the organization well into a new decade of land preservation. Chris Thompson, COL Executive Director states, “The work of COL is diverse. This grant from The Pokagon Fund will go a long way to helping us realize our goals in land conservation within the three designated townships, but there are so many other facets to our work and we rely on our members and other organizations for support. Stewardship, outreach, and education are all vitally important to the life of the organization. And our work includes many other townships in southwest Michigan. We will continue to rely on our members and friends to keep us strong and ensure that COL thrives into the future.”

The value of our newest preserve, The Woods, was applied toward this grant and there are other properties in the conservation pipeline that will fit into this program as well. This summer was a busy time as we were able to initiate new land protection projects. We are pleased with the community’s interest in protecting land from future development and we are equally pleased to be able to enter into these agreements. We look forward to the time when we can tell you all about these wonderful properties. We can tell you that the patchwork quilt of emerging protected properties is getting greener all the time. This Pokagon Fund grant and the ongoing support and commitment of our members and friends makes it all possible. Thank you!



COL now has six fully-owned preserves! Being able to create these preserves increases green space and our access to tranquility and recreation in nature. Also created is the need to maintain these areas through stewardship. In some cases, invasive species need to be controlled, in others trails designated and cleared. As you can imagine, this takes time and financial resources. Aside from the initial preservation, stewardship is one of the most important functions of COL. Our work doesn't end with the creation of these spaces, it continues!

In light of this great stewardship need, we have appointed "lead stewards" for each of the preserves. We hope you'll take a moment to read updates about each of the preserves and the stewards who are taking the lead in maintaining them. And please note, we are thrilled to be able to encourage the public to visit the Louis J. Sima Marsh by boat and Robinson Woods on foot, where trails are clearly designated. The other four preserves are more delicate and we ask you to visit only with a COL staff or Stewardship Committee member. If you are interested in becoming part of the land stewardship effort, we welcome your participation! Please contact the office for more information.

The Louis J. Sima Great Lakes Marsh — New Buffalo

Mike James is the lead steward of our largest preserve. He is also chairman of the stewardship committee and a new board member! Great things are happening in the Sima Marsh as we finish up phragmites treatments spanning the entire marsh and small spot cattail treatment to allow native plants to flourish. The marsh will be mowed in the winter as an alternative to burning it. Last year a water trail was created and if you traverse this trail in kayak, boat, or canoe, you'll see signage to help you along the way. On a recent outing, we were delighted to see so many people enjoying the great Sima Marsh!



A collection of photos from the Louis J. Sima Marsh

Dayton Wet Prairie — Bertrand Township

Judith Brown and Sue Petterson share responsibility as lead stewards for this very unique ecosystem. Once part of a much larger wetland system, Dayton Wet Prairie now encompasses 40 acres. Dayton Wet Prairie is being treated for invasive species such as reed canary grass, cattails, and buckthorn. It will be burned later in the fall to help with native plant regeneration.



Views of Dayton Wet Prairie

Grand Beach Marsh — Grand Beach

Jim Ball, new member to the stewardship committee, is a steward of Grand Beach Marsh. We are currently searching for another lead steward here. Grand Beach has been the focus of some of our stewardship days this summer. We are working to remove the invasive bittersweet vine there.



Grand Beach Marsh

Robinson Woods — Chikaming Township

Bob Tatina, Nancy Baird, Don Meckley, and Buffy Dunham are the lead stewards for this preserve. Bob Tatina has been working several times a week in the woods to create a thorough management plan which is very important in order to understand stewardship implications for COL. This summer a couple of stewardship days were held there to remove invasive woody plants like honeysuckle, multiflora rose, and privet.



Views of Robinson Woods

The Woods Preserve — Harbert

Judith Brown is working with the donor families on this newly acquired preserve. Mrs. Brown is working with the families to coordinate stewardship efforts on the preserve and on their surrounding properties.

Wilson Woods — Chikaming Township

Peter Van Nice is the lead steward for this preserve. Wilson Woods has been treated for invasive species and is pretty much clear of them all. The brush piles are to be taken care of soon and we can't wait to see what kinds of plants come up in the spring!



Views of "The Woods" dedication ceremony and Wilson Woods



Outreach



Prolific wildflowers carpeted Warren Woods, and Pat Underwood from Love Creek Nature Center helped us find them. So many beautiful flowers, so little time....

This year's outreach events were interesting and very well attended! Events included the Wildflower Road Show, Voyager Canoe by night, Live Bat Encounter, Nature of the Beach, fall color walk, and of course COL's second annual benefit, Mingling at Middlebrook. Thank you for your participation this year and be on the lookout for January/February outings as we venture into the snowy abyss on cross-country skis at Love Creek Nature Center (see below). Thanks also to the Kip Miller and Pat Underwood, naturalists at Love Creek, for helping us provide unique programming this year! For more photos, please visit our website's photo gallery.



This year's Bat Encounter with the Organization for Bat Conservation's Rob Mies was a huge success! Everyone was delighted to learn about these wonderful mammals. Rob brought 4 live bats and lots of energy to teach us all about them.



Rob brought 4 live bats and lots of energy to teach us all about them.



From the geology of the beach and how it was formed, to the creatures living there, "Nature of the Beach" was a blast! We even saw a velvet ant, a rare sight for that time of year.



This year, we introduced the Louis J. Sima Great Lakes Marsh by Voyager Canoe in a whole new light — by moonlight, that is! Even though we had to delay this excursion due to inclement weather, it was well worth the wait.

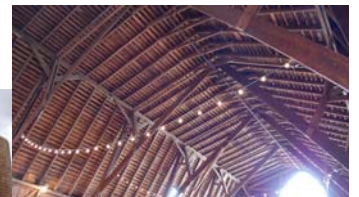


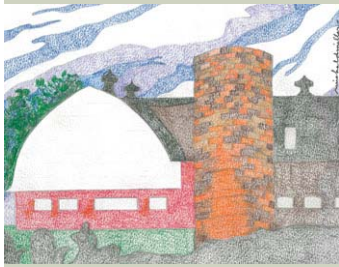
Cross-Country Skiing this winter! Mark your calendars: January 14 and February 4 (Saturdays), we'll hit the trails at Love Creek for some hiking and cross-country skiing. We'll plan to meet at Love Creek at 11:00 am. Check the website for updates or cancellations due to weather. Bring some food to share for a bit of social time afterwards.



Mingling at Middlebrook — COL's Second Annual Benefit

This very well-attended event took place at Middlebrook Farm near Three Oaks and featured products from Middlebrook Farm, Local, Greenbush Brewery, and Founders Winery. There were wonderful raffle prizes and great views of the cows! For more views and info, go to the website for a full summary.





2011 Benefit Donors/Business Members



Chikaming Open Lands wishes to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations for their generous support of our Mingling at Middlebrook benefit! A full list of donors will be published in the Spring, 2012 newsletter. Please accept our sincere apologies for any unintentional errors or omissions and let us know by calling (269) 469-2330 or e-mailing us at info@chikamingopenlands.org so that we may correct them in future publications.

Benefit Land Protectors

(\$250 tickets or donated \$250+ to benefit)

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Mr. & Mrs. David Eblen
Stan & Ann Dudley Goldblatt
Ms. Deone Jackman
Mr. Jim Hutter
Mr. Alan Palmer & Mr. Bill Lindblom
Mrs. Russell J. Parsons
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Thanks also to everyone who purchased raffle tickets!

We would also like to acknowledge our current Business Members, and to encourage all of our members to thank them for supporting Chikaming Open Lands!

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Upcoming Events:

Cross-country skiing @ Love Creek Nature Center

January 14, 11:00 am

February 4, 11:00 am

Included in this newsletter:

Land Stewardship and Land Protection Updates

Outreach Recap

Membership News — including Year-End Appeal