

Home, Land Security: How the land trust is helping local communities

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By Chuck Haubrich

At a recent land trust conference Curt Meine from the International Crane Foundation spoke about Home, Land Security. Notice the comma in the phrase? Meine was not talking about the type of Home Land Security that virtually all Americans are concerned about these days. Instead his topic questioned why we are not showing equal resolve for protecting our irreplaceable land and water assets.

Understandably we are all concerned about protecting our country from another devastating attack, and government has responded by spending hundreds of billions of dollars annually to prevent it. At the same time government provides a tiny fraction of this amount for conservation, leaving a great deal of funding and organizational effort to local initiatives such as those of the Kenosha/Racine Land Trust. And while local organizations would like more financial support, this approach is not all bad. Since such groups understand the local situation best and can rally support from their communities, they are often the most cost effective means of developing conservation programs.

Land use planning

As an example, K/RLT has developed an educational program on the role of conservation subdivisions in land use plans. State law requires that all communities have a land use plan with consistent, supporting ordinances by 2010. Due to the pressure of development, most communities are already working on their ordinances. The K/RLT program shares what we have learned on seven conservation subdivisions where we have accepted an easement or have one pending. We have already shared our experience with the towns of Rochester and Yorkville and have presentations scheduled for Dover and Norway. Much of the negative impact of development can be prevented with good land use planning. Consequently, the Land Trust plans to focus even more on helping communities with their land use plans.

Wetland protection

Another area of local concern is wetland protection. About 50 percent of wetlands in Racine and Kenosha have been drained since the original settlers arrived. The deep-water reservoir has also dropped 200 to 300 feet and continues going down at a rate of several feet a year. Is it any wonder? While the water accumulated slowly from the wetlands above and other sources over thousands of years, high capacity city wells draw several hundred gallons a minute around the clock every day. Thus it is vitally important to protect our remaining wetlands and, possibly, restore drained ones. If you want to learn more about wetland protection and restoration, attend the Wetland Restoration Workshop described later in this article.

The mission of the Kenosha/Racine Land Trust is home, land security. Every day we work to protect the irreplaceable land and water resources in our communities. With a membership of just a hundred, we have permanently protected 270 acres of woodland, farmland, and wetland. Just think what we could accomplish with a larger group of people committed to protecting local resources. If one in every thousand people in the Racine/Kenosha area joined, membership would grow to 500. Please consider becoming a member of the Kenosha/Racine Land Trust, so you too can help protect our land and water resources for your family and future generations.

Hands-on Wetland Restoration Workshop Coming July 24

This summer, the Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA) is partnering with the Kenosha/Racine Land Trust and several other local conservation organizations to offer a local workshop on wetland restoration. Landowners, land managers, and anyone interested in learning the process of restoring wetland habitats are invited to attend.

Alice Thompson, co-author of WWA's *Wetland Restoration Handbook for Wisconsin Landowners*, will cover the basics of wetland ecology, what to look for in a potential restoration site, restoration techniques, and regulations and permitting. This hands-on, field-based workshop is a great way to get your feet wet this summer while learning how you can restore wetlands on your own property.

Here are the workshop particulars:

- < Date & Time: Saturday, July 24, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- < Start Location: Gateway Technical College, 3520 30th Avenue, Kenosha
- < Transportation will be provided to several undisturbed and restored wetlands in the afternoon
- < Registration Fee: \$40 for WWA members, \$50 for nonmembers (includes lunch and a copy of the *Wetland Restoration Handbook*)

For more information or to register for the workshop, go to www.wiscwetlands.org or contact Laura England, WWA Outreach Programs Director at 608-250-9971, laura@wiscwetlands.org.

Chuck Haubrich is president of the Kenosha/Racine Land Trust and a director of Gathering Waters, the Wisconsin land trust coalition. For more information about K/RLT,s efforts to protect open spaces and natural areas and how you can help , write to the Kenosha/Racine Land Trust at P.O. Box 085153, Racine, WI 53408-5153, call 262-552-6861, or visit <<http://www.krlt.org/>>www.krlt.org.