

1/2/06

More Folks Working to Save their Family Farms

In my last article K/RLT announced the acceptance of a conservation easement on the Schmitz family farm in Wind Point. Motivated by the article, two additional people contacted the Land Trust about preserving their farms. In both instances the farms have been owned and loved by their families for over 100 years, and the current generations do not want to see them developed. The article also encouraged another family, which had previously expressed an interest in preserving their 150 year old farm, to act now.

Conservation Buyer Update

Several parties have asked to participate in our conservation buyer program. A conservation buyer purchases large acreage, builds a home, and then places a conservation easement on the remainder of the land to prohibit further development. Although no land has come on the market which meets the needs of these parties, a 235 acre wooded parcel is available which can be split as many as six ways.

A former dairy farm, this natural area now consists of 170 acres of woods and 65 acres of prairie and wetland. About 40 years ago, 176,000 trees were planted, as a first step in restoring the land to a natural state. Work was also done to enhance the wetlands. Located near Burlington, the property fronts a 50 acre private lake. Interested parties should contact Chuck Haubrich at 262-534-5116 for additional information.

New Volunteers Build Land Trust Capacity

K/RLT is pleased to announce the addition of three new board members and a committee volunteer. Coming from different backgrounds these people bring diversity and considerable technical expertise to the organization.

Chris Evans, who heads the Geoscience Department at UW Parkside, joined the board as a director. Chris' experience in the environmental sciences considerably strengthens K/RLT land stewardship and environmental assessment capabilities. In addition, her classroom projects on Land Trust easement sites will provide valuable information on restoring the sites, while teaching upcoming generations the importance of land preservation.

Another addition from academia is Peter Wardrip, a researcher at Northwestern University. Peter and his wife Katrina spent two years in Armenia as Peace Corps volunteers. Living in a poor country like Armenia, Peter became keenly aware of the importance of preserving land for the common good, the same message K/RLT brings to our community. Peter's experience reminds us of the importance of our mission and energizes our board to make it happen.

Emily Miota, SE Wisconsin manager for the League of Conservation Voters, has also joined our Board. Emily keeps us up-to-date on legislative matters vital to the environmental community and leads our partnership efforts with like minded organizations.

Finally, Nick Spittlemeister recently joined our Land Protection Committee where he will provide GIS (graphic information system) expertise and assist the Des Plaines Preservation Sub-committee. Nick recently graduated from Northern Michigan University with bachelor degrees in Plant Biology and Geography. He has lived next to the Des Plaines River in Pleasant Prairie for his entire life, so is enthusiastic about joining the Committee working to protect it.

Mary Ellen Helgren Johnson Park Restoration

Five years ago K/RLT purchased four acres along the Root River near Spring Street and donated it to the City of Racine as an addition to the Root River Parkway. The land was dedicated to the memory of Mary Ellen Helgren Johnson who was a known and respected leader in Racine on preserving the environment. Her intellect and compelling arguments in the newspaper and public meetings resulted in many citizens becoming supporters of environmental protection.

This spring K/RLT will begin a project to restore the Parkway site. A plant survey has already been done. Next steps will be to remove invasive plants and replace them with native species. Land Trust volunteers will lead the effort, but anyone from the community is welcome to help. Contact the Land Trust at 262-552-6861 if you would like to help.

If you would like to help K/RLT protect open spaces and natural areas, please consider becoming a member. To obtain membership information, including our Fall/Winter Newsletter and brochure, write to the land trust at P.O. Box 085153, Racine, WI 53408-5153 or call us at 262-552-6861. Additional information is available on the web at www.krlt.org.

Chuck Haubrich is president of the Kenosha/Racine Land Trust, president of the Seno Woodland Education Center, and a director of Gathering Waters Conservancy, the Wisconsin land trust coalition.