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Land Trust Conservation Efforts Progress on Many Fronts

First Des Plaines bird count a success

Efforts continue to implement a site conservation plan for 450 acres of the Des Plaines Watershed located in the Village of Pleasant Prairie. With the Kenosha/Racine Land Trust leading the way, a group of nonprofit and government organizations developed the plan in 2002.

The Des Plaines plan includes building support for acquiring, restoring, and preserving the 450-acre target area. Under the leadership of Katrina Wardrip and a grant she obtained from the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative, K/RLT has expanded the education and outreach components of the plan. Katrina and Lori Artiomow have made presentations to several local groups; mailed two newsletters highlighting the Des Plaines and its natural resources to Pleasant Prairie residents; and organized a bird monitoring program on 650 acres of the 2000-acre Des Plaines Watershed.

The Land Trust thanks Katrina and nine volunteers who braved heat, insects, and head-high vegetation last month to do the first ever bird survey on this portion of the Des Plaines. Seventy species were identified and 1,397 individual birds counted. Eleven of the species are listed as either threatened, species of concern, or species of greatest conservation need. These include great egret (1 counted), great blue heron (17), common moorhen (3), American woodcock (1), yellow billed cuckoo (2), willow flycatcher (9), wood thrush (2), brown thrasher (1), field sparrow (3), eastern meadowlark (3), and least bittern (1). One goal of our site conservation plan is to increase the numbers of these birds by improving their habitat. Knowing which species inhabit the area is an important first step.

K/RLT Seeks Conservation Buyers

Some large farms currently or soon to be on the real estate market are excellent candidates for conservation. Recently, several people have asked K/RLT to help preserve these parcels. The alternative is subdivisions.

Selling to conservation buyers is a new approach for the Land Trust in preserving such farms. Generally, these farms are 60 to 120 acres with some wetlands and wooded areas. The goal is to find from one to four buyers for each farm. Each new owner could build one home and out buildings as they please and would place a conservation easement on the remainder of the land, prohibiting further development on their share. Other easement requirements would preserve existing natural lands and keep the remaining land

in agriculture use or convert fields to natural land or some other compatible use such as raising horses.

Interested conservation buyers should contact Chuck Haubrich at 262-534-5116 for additional information.

Smart Growth planning thrives in Raymond

Successful businesses “plan the work” and “work the plan.” Communities where people want to live do the same. Despite the state Joint Finance Committee’s attempt to kill the Smart Growth law, local rural communities see it in their best interest to continue developing Smart Growth plans. (Governor Doyle vetoed the JFC decision in the final budget, thereby keeping Smart Growth on track). These communities understand that a plan can preserve their natural, cultural, and historical resources and thus their rural lifestyles.

As an example, the Town of Raymond recently passed a conservation subdivision ordinance with six-acre density. Recognizing that open space and low development density are critical to maintaining its rural lifestyle, the community opted for the lowest density to date in Racine County - other recent plans generally specify five-acre density - and for a 60 percent open space requirement. Kudos to the citizens of Raymond for doing the hard work needed to preserve the character of their community.

K/RLT attended three of the Raymond land use committee meetings to share our experiences on conservation subdivisions in Caledonia and Dover. We have signed conservation easements preserving 150 acres in seven subdivisions and are working on sixteen more. It is gratifying working with communities that recognize the importance of preserving open space as they develop.

Considering a Prairie on Your Property?

Join K/RLT, the UW Extension, and our other partners for a prairie walk and bus tour of three prairies in different stages of development. You will learn how to start and maintain a prairie from experts with many years of experience. Whether your prairie will be 100 square feet or several acres, these experts will help get you started.

The Saturday, August 27, 2005, event starts at 8 a.m. with a classroom discussion at the Seno Woodland Education Center, located five miles south of Burlington on Hwy P. A bus tour of three prairies follows from 9 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. The cost of \$30 per person includes coffee, snacks, and the bus tour.

To register, contact Rose Skora by phone at 262-886-8460 or 262-857-1945, or by email at rose.skora@ces.uwex.edu

Sponsors of the prairie tour include K/RLT; Seno Center; and Racine/Kenosha UW Cooperative Extension, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and County Land Conservation.

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