

May 26, 2018

Gathering Waters: Wisconsin's Alliance for Land Trusts
211 S. Paterson St. Suite 270
Madison, WI 53703

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my great honor and privilege to nominate the Waukesha County Land Conservancy (WCLC) for the Gathering Water's 2018 Land Trust of the Year Award.

During my career at the DNR, I have had the privilege of working with WCLC to protect important lands in Waukesha County. WCLC was founded in 1992 as an all-volunteer organization and remained all volunteer until 2015, when its first executive director was hired. Despite being an all-volunteer organization for most of its existence, the WCLC protected over 2,600 acres, making it one of the most successful all-volunteer land trusts in Wisconsin. Those WCLC members and supporters are among the most dedicated and driven conservationists I have had the pleasure of working with.

Their passion for protecting land and water resources has driven them to accomplish much in the past twenty-five years. Here is a summary of some of those accomplishments:

- Protecting over 2,900 acres of some of the most environmentally significant land and water in Waukesha County, including two State Natural Areas.
- Successfully transitioning from an all-volunteer organization to a professionally staffed one over the past three years.
- Securing an \$886,000 in-lieu fee grant to restore the fifty-two-acre Davis Nature Preserve on the Mukwonago River to a highly functioning wetland.
- Building one of the best internship programs for land trusts in the state, engaging over seventy-five college students in the past two and a half years. These students have provided over 7,000 hours of volunteer service, helping to protect and steward WCLC's lands.
- Establishing a new strategic plan to strengthen the WCLC's ability to protect more land and ensure the organization's long-term sustainability.

WCLC has protected many environmentally sensitive properties, including 38 owned properties and 27 easements. Those properties include rare oak ecosystems, high-quality wetlands, and upland forests that provide habitat for rare wildlife and bird species such as the red-headed woodpecker, eastern whip-poor-will, and cerulean warbler. It owns two high-quality, diverse state natural areas—Martin's Woods and Eagle Centre Prairie—protecting species of special concern as well as endangered, threatened, and rare species. Martin's Woods includes over 249 plant species, and Eagle Centre Prairie is a rare oak savanna that contains the threatened Kitten Tail. Kevin Doyle of the WDNR found that this area of Waukesha County and the Southern Kettle Moraine, with large areas of protected land, have been identified as the best opportunity for Kitten Tails in the state and, possibly, the world.

In the past three years, the WCLC has transitioned to a professionally staffed organization with a highly qualified team supported by one of the best intern programs in the state for land trusts. More than seventy-five interns and student volunteers have contributed over 7,000 hours of service and have made a tremendous impact by helping in all areas of the organization, from land acquisition, land stewardship, development, and education to information technology.

In 2017, the WCLC secured an \$886,000 grant contract from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to restore its fifty-two-acre Davis Property to a highly functioning wetland. That grant was one of the first of several awarded by the Wisconsin Wetland Conservation Trust (WWCT) Program with assistance from The Nature Conservancy. The grant includes a \$300,000 endowment for long-term stewardship to ensure the wetland is perpetually maintained. The Davis Nature Preserve is adjacent to the Mukwonago River, which is one of the cleanest rivers and highest quality diverse habitats for rare fish and mussels. The river is home to fifty-nine species of fish, seven of which are listed as endangered, threatened, or of special concern. In addition, the Mukwonago is one of the most diverse mussel habitats in Wisconsin.

The Waukesha County Land Conservancy has a rich past, a strong present, and a compelling future. I know of no organization more deserving of the Land Trust of the Year Award. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Daniel Kaemmerer

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