

# LEGACY

## Land Conservancy Journal

A publication of Legacy Land Conservancy • Volume 10 • Number 2 • Summer 2011



## Legacy's River Priorities

By Susan Lackey, Executive Director

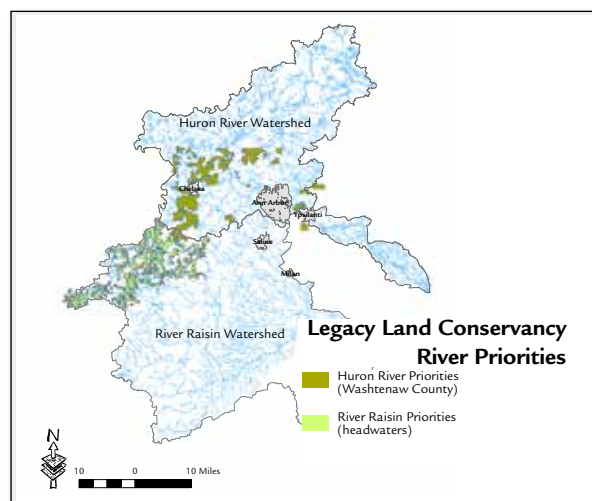
Our community is most often defined by our rivers. The Huron River and the River Raisin meander through our towns and rural areas, providing a sense of peace to those who view them, paddle them, fish them or otherwise enjoy their bounty. They are also a critical part of our environment and infrastructure, providing drinking water throughout the region, and capturing storm water and spring run-off.

We have learned from our friends at the Huron River Watershed Council and River Raisin Watershed Council that the lands directly adjacent to the rivers may not be those most important to the quality of the rivers. Lands that surround headwaters, tributary streams and other sources of water to the main stems of the rivers are often more critical to water quality. These are the

lands that make up the bulk of Legacy Land Conservancy's commitment to river lands protection.

The accompanying map shows our river priorities in the Huron and River Raisin watersheds. Protection of these properties will help to form an arc of protected land that will permanently contribute to water quality, while providing the 5 million residents of southeast Michigan with a peaceful place to visit.

**Huron River Priorities:** Working with the Huron River Watershed Council, we have determined that our priority lands will score 600 or more on the Watershed Council's 'BioReserve Study' (<http://www.hrwc.org/our-work/programs/bioreserve>), comprise 20 or more undeveloped acres and lie on a first or second order stream, or where such a stream would exist if the natural drainage had not been interrupted. By using the work of our partners, we are developing a common definition of 'most important' for protection. This includes about 350 parcels, located primarily (but not exclusively) in northern and western Washtenaw County. Our work in this area extends



the efforts of the founders of the original Washtenaw Land Conservancy, who saw the Huron as being the most critically important resource in the area. Many of our early projects – Bandemer Park, additions to Bird Hills, etc., were undertaken to protect the integrity of this river, which is considered one of the state's cleanest urban rivers.

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# Blame it on Jean

By Janet Crone

Blame it on Jean. When my husband Charlie and I returned to Ann Arbor almost 10 years ago, I knew nothing about land conservancies. My friend Jean introduced me to the Washtenaw Land Trust (now Legacy Land Conservancy), explaining that it was a private, nonprofit, and necessary organization preserving land via conservation easements. Her experience includes working with conservancies as staff and more recently as a volunteer, so she knew what she was talking about.

The Crone family spent the 1990s in the Kalamazoo area, within spitting distance of the W.K. Kellogg Bird Sanctuary (founded to protect the Canada goose, which seems a doubtful blessing today) and Michigan State's experimental forest. Our three children grew up hiking the forest, cross-country skiing out our back door, and, thanks to the pre-Pfizer Upjohn Company, had more hands-in (the "i" is not a typo) experience with the digestion of cows than seemed prudent for future non-scientists.

From west Michigan, Ann Arbor appeared the big city. Restaurants! Traffic! - especially on football Saturdays. Cultural offerings! What I didn't expect was the abundance of natural areas. Ann Arbor has city parks, to be sure. But the area also offers quick access to preserves, vistas, and farms. Charlie almost stepped on the pictured newborn while searching for morels at an undisclosed location within walking distance of our home. Recently, I drifted the Huron River with a friend, and came to the conclusion that staying home in south central Michigan on the 4th of July weekend is the surest way to experience the outdoors in solitude. Good friends who live just minutes outside of downtown Ann Arbor have placed an easement on their 40-acre parcel that includes woods, meadows,



and wetlands, so that wildlife will still be near for future generations.

The last few years have been difficult for Michigan. And it's hard to be concerned about the distant future when the next mortgage payment or meal is an issue. In spite of this, Legacy Land Conservancy raised over

\$500,000 as the nucleus of the Forever Fund, to be used when (not if) legal protection of an easement is needed. In a business where many organizations are 100% volunteer, Legacy not only has professional staff, but has increased its staff. As one of the first in the nation, if asked by prospective donors if Legacy Land Conservancy is accredited, we can proudly say, "Yes we are!"

In its 40-year history, what evolved into Legacy Land Conservancy shares responsibility for the permanent protection of 4,655 acres. The long term vision is 25,000 acres to maintain our part of Michigan as a premier place to work, play and just be.

You can help us achieve these goals. Volunteer to serve on one of Legacy's committees. Consider a financial gift, whether it is a current or future one. Bring a friend to the next workday or fundraiser, or simply send a copy of this newsletter. Be a Jean.

*Janet Crone works with Radius Garden Tools. She is the Chair of Legacy's Board of Trustees.*



**LEGACY**  
Land Conservancy

#### **Legacy Land Conservancy**

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#### **Legacy Land Conservancy Board of Trustees**

James C. Adams, Robert Aldrich, Rosanne Bloomer, Janet Crone, Margaret Engle, Robert Ewing, Joseph Fazio, Jennifer Fike, Paul Glendon, Robert Helber, Heather Price, Kristin Schleick, Scott Simonds, Adam Smith, Charity Steere, Robert Tetens.

#### **The Legacy Land Conservancy Staff**

Susan Cooley, Susan Lackey, Erika Taylor, Dana Wright.





## Board Changes:

At the end of Legacy Land Conservancy's 2010/11 fiscal year, the nominating committee recommended and secured board approval of two new board members:



**Charity Steere**

Conservationist and resident of the Waterloo Recreation Area



**Jennifer Fike**

Executive Director of Food Systems Economic Partnership and member of the Michigan Agriculture Board

In addition, the committee recommended and secured the nominations of officers:

President - Janet Crone

Vice President - Adam Smith

Secretary - Kristen Schleck

Treasurer - Robert Aldrich

## Notes from the Land

Good land protection takes time, and no one understands that better than Elisabeth Rees of Ann Arbor.

Betty was the first landowner I talked to when I joined Legacy six years ago. She was determined to protect the property she has owned in Bridgewater Township since the 1950's - 10 acres on Columbia Lake. The question was: what then? It wasn't quite right for a park or a preserve, but she didn't want it to simply be a small protected parcel with a house in the middle. Betty wanted something more for her land.

This spring, Betty achieved her goal. In March, she signed a conservation agreement, ensuring that her land would be protected - forever. By the time you read this, the 'what then'

portion of her dilemma will also be answered, when St. Aiden's Episcopal Church accepts a gift of the land for the Elisabeth J. Rees Spirituality and Nature Education Center.

Betty's land is protected today because she cared, and because she sought out advisors who cared. In her case, this included her financial advisor, her attorney, her priest and the Legacy staff. She took her time, educated herself and remained determined and optimistic. Today, she knows that she has been not only a good steward of her land, but has also ensured that future generations will be nurtured by her vision and foresight. They - and we - have much to thank her for.

## From the Beginning to the Present: A Brief History of Legacy Land Conservancy - part 3

By Barry Lonik

The land conservancy in its various forms operated out of Bill Martin's office and my house until 2001 when space became available in the NEW Center on N. Main St. in Ann Arbor, where it is still located today. At the end of that year, I resigned as executive director to be an at-home parent for my son Wesley, then two years old.

In my ten years running the conservancy, I oversaw the organization as it became an established and professional part of the local environmental community, to my great satisfaction.

Legacy Land Conservancy continues to protect some of the most scenic, agriculturally productive and biologically diverse lands in our area. In addition to Creekshead, four other preserves have been established: Sharon Hills, Beckwith, Woodland and Johnson. Legacy actively manages those



easements also continues, with frontage on three major rivers (Huron, Saline and Raisin), other high quality natural areas, and prime farmland.

Critical to the success of a land conservancy in today's world is the development of partnerships. Legacy has developed a terrific arrangement with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to play an integral role in adding properties to our local "big wild," the Waterloo and Pinckney State Recreation Areas, including the earmarking of acquisition dollars from the State of Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. In addition, Legacy has worked with the local public programs

properties to remove invasive species and make them accessible for public study and enjoyment. The acquisition of conservation

(Ann Arbor Greenbelt, Washtenaw County Parks and Scio, Webster and Ann Arbor Townships) where voters approved property tax millages to fund the purchase of land and easements. The conservancy's expansion into surrounding areas like Jackson County will add loads of new opportunities for land conservation.

It's remarkable for me to see all that's been accomplished, and yet there's so much more to do for us to retain our landscapes, our water quality, our wildlife, our agricultural economy. Legacy Land Conservancy is poised to be an essential part of the efforts that will make those dreams become realities. Can't wait to see what's happened when Legacy turns 50!

*Barry Lonik was Legacy Land Conservancy's first executive director and is now a private contractor for land conservation.*



# Legacy's River Priorities

*continued from page 1*

**River Raisin Priorities:** Land protection is a team effort, and the Upper River Raisin project is proof of that. A partnership of local interests (see box) has identified 17,000 acres of important lands using a slightly different process than was developed for the Huron that accounts for the more rural and undeveloped nature of the River Raisin headwaters. Priorities here include the presence of water or wetlands, size of parcel (20 acres or more) and presence of significant amounts of pre-European settlement



vegetation. The Upper River Raisin is known by many as the 'crookedest river in Michigan', a tribute to the relative lack of channelization for drainage purposes. As a result, soil and agricultural runoff has been limited. The overarching goal of this program is to ensure the upper reaches of the Raisin are as clean in 100 years as they are today.

## River Raisin Partnership

Legacy Land Conservancy  
Raisin Valley Land Trust  
Stewardship Network  
River Raisin Watershed Council  
Washtenaw County Parks  
and Recreation  
Lenawee County Conservation  
District



*This is the first in a series of articles on Legacy Land Conservancy's high priority areas – the 'most important lands' that form the core of the 25,000 acres Legacy intends to protect for people to enjoy in 100 years.*

## For the Love of the Land

By Charity Steere

Over the past 8 years I've had about the best assignment Legacy Land Conservancy has to offer – a seat on the Land Protection Committee. That's the group of volunteers that does the first assessment of land projects proposed by Legacy staff. This is also the group who does the last evaluations of projects before they go to the full board of trustees for final review. So the committee gets to see every plausible or near plausible protection project from start to finish. Although many of us would like to "protect it all" (that's me in the front of that group), it wouldn't be responsible to do that. But it sure is fun to see all the possibilities. More fun is to see how those possibilities add up.

Recently, a friend asked me, "What is your very favorite land project?" Of course a "favored child" leapt immediately to mind, but after reflecting a bit, I realized that my favorite project is all of them. In fact, my favorite is the positive influence that Legacy's land projects as a group make on our community, for all of its people, such as:

- The projects that permanently protect the rural gateways to several small towns in our area.
- A globally endangered fen habitat with its endangered inhabitants, protected forever.
- The young farmers who can finally acquire the farmland



they have been searching for because of conservation agreements on the properties.

- The new home for Therapeutic Riding Incorporated.
- The public urban nature preserves and parks acquired by or with Legacy.
- Improved access to hundreds of acres of land in the Waterloo Recreation Area through Legacy MDNR collaboration.
- Additional waterfowl habitat.
- A farmer's widow who can retire, secure in the knowledge that the land her family has farmed will stay in agricultural production.
- An "off-the-grid" small farm demonstrating green technologies to the public.
- A successful Community Supported Agriculture farm.
- Projects that protect critical watersheds.
- Unimpeded views of our beautiful farmlands.
- Trailway protections.

Each of these is only a small project, but add them all together and they start to make a HUGE difference in the quality and character of our community, each in its own way. Over 4,000 acres is a lot of ground, but as the virtues of each project add up, it makes MUCH more difference to the people of our community than merely protecting ground. I'm really proud to be a part of that difference.

*Charity Steere is a conservationist, a resident of Waterloo Recreation area, and a member of Legacy's Board of Trustees.*



# REI Funds Legacy's Stewardship Program for the Beckwith Preserve

By Drew Laird

In 1998 my parents, Frances and Campbell Laird, donated the 30-acre Beckwith Preserve to Legacy Land Conservancy (formerly the Washtenaw Land Trust). Frances' father, Dr. Sidney Beckwith, purchased the property in 1948, when it was cornfields, pasture, a silver maple swamp, an oak woodlot with a portage creek running through the northwest section.

Over the time Dr. Beckwith owned the property, the pastures naturalized into meadows and two pine and spruce forests were planted. Since then the trees have grown tall, native plants have repopulated, including a rare orchid and the purple twayblade, and the area has become a refuge for wildlife.

Birds are numerous on the property including bluebirds, chickadees, hummingbirds, goldfinches, grosbeaks, Pine Warblers, and Cooper's Hawks. This spring, a wild turkey nested behind an adjacent farm building. The mother turkey sat on the nest for three weeks and hatched fourteen of the seventeen eggs.

During the winter a pair of Great-Horned Owls nested in the preserve and raised a pair of owlets. The two young owls have become avid hunters in the forest at dusk, their shrill whistles echoing through the dark pines. The preserve hosts numerous mammals, including deer and fox. Rare in southeast Michigan, pine martens have also been spotted. This spring,



two fawns were seen exploring the forest.

Unfortunately, the area has also become a refuge for invasive plant species. In the 1970's Dr. Beckwith was encouraged to plant autumn olive which has spread throughout the preserve. He planted two Japanese barberry plants next to the

house and they have colonized the woods as well. Tree-of-heaven, bush honeysuckle and buckthorn have also invaded aggressively.

Last fall, Legacy began an ecological restoration project on the Beckwith Preserve. Since then thousands of invasive plants have been removed and replaced with native species such as: grey dogwood, pawpaw, maple-leaf viburnum, baneberry, swamp milkweed and clematis. However, the banks of Portage Creek still need significant

work due to heavy erosion from deer traffic and nearly inaccessible invasive plants on the steep slopes.

Thanks to a grant from REI, Legacy is empowered to complete the Portage Creek restoration project. The \$5,000 grant will pay to remove the remaining invasive species, stabilize the soil and purchase additional plants to rejuvenate the fragile banks.

Legacy appreciates REI's gift in support of these efforts to restore the ecology of this special place.

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*Drew Laird has a MS in resource policy from the University of Michigan. He currently lives in Stockbridge, adjacent to the Beckwith Preserve. Drew's Family home is surrounded by lands protected by Legacy Land Conservancy.*



REI is a national outdoor retail co-op dedicated to inspiring, educating and outfitting its members and the community for a lifetime of outdoor adventure and stewardship. Founded in 1938 by a group of Pacific Northwest mountaineers seeking quality equipment, REI is committed to promoting environmental stewardship and increasing access to outdoor recreation through volunteerism, gear donations and financial contributions. REI Ann Arbor is proud to partner with Legacy Land Conservancy to restore natural spaces like the Beckwith Preserve. By working together, we will help ensure these outdoor places are available for future generations. Find out more about REI's commitment to stewardship at <http://www.rei.com/stewardship>



# A City Kid Learns to Treasure Farm and Open Land

By Sarah Newman

Growing up in the heart of the Midwest, in St. Louis, Missouri, I learned to love farms the easy way. Getting up at dawn to milk the cows, feeding the chickens, and weeding the garden were the adventures of my summer vacations with relatives. My parents had grown up in the small farming communities of southern Illinois, where their extended families still lived on, and loved, the land. At our big family reunions on Cousin Thelma's farm, I heard stories of my mother's early childhood escapades. My summer visits, riding

through the countryside with my dog Mike and my maternal grandfather,

a Farm Bureau insurance salesman, seemed tame by comparison. But how I treasure those memories now! Papaw, Mike and I, together on the front seat of Papaw's 1945 Chrysler, would drive all day, stopping at farms and country stores for him to chat with the farmers while Mike and I played with the kids and the farm animals.

My first chance to live in the country and to learn first-hand about the issues of farming communities did not come until 1997, when I moved to the Town of Danby in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York. The Town of Danby was experiencing the same pressure from developers that our farms surrounding Ann Arbor experienced over the past 15 years. Fortunately, the recently established Finger Lakes Land Trust was ready to help Danby's farmers preserve their farms for future generations. It also provided me the perfect opportunity to protect my wooded land (50 acres that had not been farmed for over 50 years). By donating the land to the Land Trust, I could benefit the Trust financially, receive a substantial tax exemption, and preserve the land with a conservation easement restricting building on the property to only one dwelling.

Imagine my delight when, within weeks of returning to live in Ann Arbor in 2003, our citizens voted to support the Ann Arbor Greenbelt, and I discovered the Washtenaw Land Trust, now Legacy Land Conservancy. How lucky we are to have this incredible organization to help us achieve our community's long-term goal to preserve farms, wetlands, and open spaces.

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*Sarah Newman is a retired professor from the University of Michigan. She is an energetic and dedicated volunteer for both Legacy Land Conservancy and the City of Ann Arbor Parks Department.*

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**HISTORIC FARM SAVED FOR A NEW GENERATION:** Thanks to you and other visionary families, the Frederick Farm has been protected for future generations. The permanent protection of this land was possible because of a unique partnership between Legacy Land Conservancy, Ann Arbor Greenbelt, Lodi Township and the heirs of Irwin Frederick. In turn, the Michael and Hope Vestergaard family have been able to purchase the land, making way for a new generation of farmers dedicated to providing humanely raised livestock for the local retail market.

This project was completed with the support of Toyota and the Americana Foundation. To push the project over the finish line, Americana Foundation issued a challenge to attendees at our 40th Anniversary event. The foundation matched contributions to the project that resulted from that evening's closing 'mission moment'.



# Upcoming Events

## Stewardship Workday - Sharon Hills September 24, 1-4pm

Sharon Hollow Rd. south of Tolen Rd.,  
Grass Lake

It's National Public Lands Day! You can make a difference close to home. Volunteers will remove invasive shrubs from our preserve to make room for native wildflowers. All ages welcome to join. Legacy will provide tools, snacks and water refills. Volunteers should dress for the weather and bring a water bottle.

## Volunteer Thank You(!) Picnic September 25th, 12-2pm

Bandemer Park off of Lake Shore Dr.,  
Ann Arbor

All volunteers (past and future too!) invited to join us for this just-for-fun picnic. Legacy will be grilling up lunch; come hungry!

## Five Hikes in Five Days October 5-9 12-1:30pm

*Wednesday the 5th - Sharon Hills Preserve  
on Sharon Hollow Rd. south of Tolen Rd.,  
Grass Lake*

*Thursday the 6th - Beckwith Preserve on E.  
Main St. East of the Maple St. intersection,  
Stockbridge*

*Friday the 7th - Johnson Preserve, south of  
intersection of Platt and Ellsworth on Platt,  
Ann Arbor*

*Saturday the 8th - Woodland Preserve,  
south side of Joy Rd. between Jennings Rd.  
and N. Delhi Rd., Ann Arbor*

*Sunday the 9th - Creekshead Preserve on  
Curtis Road between Brookville and Spring  
Creek Lane, Ann Arbor*

Legacy is hosting a special tour of five of our preserves over the course of five days. Join us to participate in one or all of these guided hikes focusing on the history of the land and stewardship practices at each

of the preserves. See our website for more information about hike locations.

## Stewardship Workday - Johnson Preserve October 22, 1-4pm

*South of intersection of Platt and Ellsworth  
just south of Lillie Park on Platt, Ann Arbor*

Do you like to build? Portions of our new trail loop are under water in the spring. Help us construct a boardwalk to make our trail easier to traverse; all volunteers welcome! Dress for the weather and wear your work gloves! Meet us at the cell phone tower.

Please call to register for all of our events at 734.302.5263. Workday participants should wear long pants, full shoes, and bring a water bottle. More information can be found about these events on our website: [www.legacylandconservancy.org](http://www.legacylandconservancy.org)

**Past Events:** (Top left) Charity Steere, Mary Ann Nirdlinger, Ed Nirdlinger, and Bill Steere at Barry Lonik's Annual Barn Dance Event. The remaining photos from 40th Anniversary Celebration at Misty Farms - including a performance by the Chenille Sisters.





**LEGACY**  
Land Conservancy  
*Protecting and Preserving  
Southern Michigan Since 1971*



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## How Can You Leave a Legacy?

Could there be a more lasting way to make a difference than a legacy of permanently protected farmland, fields, streams, prairies and waters? By including Legacy Land Conservancy in your will or estate plan, you are helping to leave a legacy for future generations.



### Types of Bequests

Through your will or revocable living trust, you can designate assets to Legacy Land Conservancy. The asset(s) you specify will pass to Legacy Land Conservancy and your estate can take a charitable deduction for the amount of your bequest.

- **Specific Bequest:** You describe exactly what you want to leave to a specific individual or organization and the designated source.

If you want to leave a specific dollar amount from a specific source or a particular item or a specific parcel of land, this is the type of bequest that you would use.

- **General Bequest:** This does not specify the source from which your bequest should be paid. This gives your executor the flexibility to honor the bequest from any available source.

- **Residuary Bequest:** This is honored after all other bequests have been made, and all debts, expenses and taxes have been paid.

- **Contingent Bequest:** This is fulfilled if certain conditions are met. For instance, if your primary beneficiary does not survive you, you can indicate your next choice through a contingent designation.

### Benefits of Making a Bequest

- **Personal Satisfaction** - Have the satisfaction of completing your estate plan and providing for the people and organizations that matter the most to you.

- **Freedom and Flexibility** - Change your mind and your bequest at any time.

- **Tax Savings** - Possible federal estate tax savings.

- **A Lasting Contribution** - Make a significant contribution toward saving our lands.

- **Leave a Legacy** - Your gift will ensure our natural world will be protected for the future.

If you would like more information on making a bequest, please contact your attorney. Also, please contact [susancooley@legacylandconservancy.org](mailto:susancooley@legacylandconservancy.org) or call (734) 302-5263 if you have already included the Legacy Land Conservancy in your estate planning or if you intend to do so.

### Our Mission:

Legacy Land Conservancy's mission is to serve Southern Michigan by protecting its forests, prairies, farms and waters today and forever.



**LEGACY**  
Land Conservancy

*Protecting and Preserving  
Southern Michigan*