

LEGACY Land Conservancy

Annual Report Autumn 2016



Woodland Nature Preserve. Photo: Margo Mehringer

Thank you for a record-setting year

By Katrina Folsom, Communications and Engagement Coordinator

Nine land projects totaling **1,637** acres.

That's what YOU helped accomplish in 2015-16. These 1,637 acres are a big step forward. This is 50% more acres than we've ever helped protect in just one year! So your investment in our capacity—more staff and funding for projects—is already paying off, big time.

Legacy's Emerald Arc looks forward to a future treasuring 25,000 acres of permanently protected working farms, fresh water, and places to play in Jackson and Washtenaw counties. The Emerald Arc fundraising campaign kicking off that 25,000-acre vision ends in June 2017 and we still need a little bit to reach that goal. We hope you'll consider donating to keep up the momentum!

Here are some highlights of two newly protected properties:

Michigan's 103rd state park

You can bet that when we encountered an opportunity to protect a significant block of land for the public—more than

1,100 acres—on the border of Jackson and Washtenaw counties, we were determined to make it happen. Little did we know it would take *over a decade* to accomplish. But it was worth the effort. Legacy helped coordinate the various parties involved, negotiate terms, and secure funding. Now, Michigan has its 103rd state park!

Watkins Lake State Park and County Preserve is already a popular place to

watch wildlife, especially during seasonal bird migrations. Watkins Lake itself is one of the best local inland lakes to observe canvasback ducks and other waterfowl. The park is open to the public, but currently has limited parking. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation are collaborating to create a park master plan and public-access points.

The new park adds to the publicly accessible lands stretching from Hayes State Park to northern Oakland County—a

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The new state park and county preserve features Watkins Lake and the beautiful rolling meadows shown in this photo, as well as hardwood forest and wetlands.

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A record-setting year

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key part of the Emerald Arc. Among other benefits, the Emerald Arc holds extensive recreation land easily accessible to the nearly five million Michigan residents living within a 90-minute drive.



Jim White showed the land protection team the pond and Walden West's many other lovely features.

Thoreau's legacy lives on

Legacy was delighted to help protect the lovely "Walden West," a 119-acre property in Lenawee County that features rare fen habitats. Ann Arbor residents

Jim and Mary White donated a conservation easement, which permanently protects the land in a natural state, to Legacy Land Conservancy and Raisin Valley Land Trust. After establishing the conservation easement, the Whites donated the land to Adrian College to serve as a living classroom.

Jim and Mary called the property "Walden West" based on naturalist/activist Henry David Thoreau's book *Walden; Or, Life in the Woods*. It was a "formative book" for the Whites, and this property is similar in tranquility and beauty to Thoreau's retreat. "I used it in a very Thoreau-like way," said Jim, a retired law and English professor. "I would go to my rustic cabin there to escape and read and write about once a week."

Jim and Mary are pleased that their property will be a place for students and professors to learn about the natural world and themselves. "I hope a wide range of teachers and students will use it—and love it," Jim said.



"I don't believe I have encountered a greater diversity of habitats in 119 acres anywhere else in the world," said Dr. Jeffrey Lake, a biology professor at Adrian College. This fen is among the property's unique habitats.

Peeking beneath the surface

By Doug Koop
Executive Director



When I sought to follow a legend—Susan Lackey—at Legacy Land Conservancy, I wasn't quite sure what I was getting myself into. Over the past eleven years, from my position as executive director of the Little Forks Conservancy in Midland, I'd followed Legacy's significant growth during Susan's tenure. But I've since discovered that what I saw on the surface only hinted at how effectively Legacy protects land.

My arrival coincides with a major increase in Legacy's capacity—thanks to supporters like you! Alongside some truly wonderful volunteers, our staff:

- Juggles negotiations on 12-15 new land projects at a time
- Monitors over 100 conserved properties
- Stewards five nature preserves
- Collaborates with partners to protect land, host events, and build support for conservation
- Earns the support of individuals, businesses, and foundations who see the value of land conservation

This is an energizing, dynamic environment. I'm thrilled to be part of it. Legacy's dedicated staff, board, donors, and volunteers are carrying out the community's conservation vision. I hope you have the pleasure of helping to make it happen.



LEGACY
Land Conservancy



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The story behind the numbers

If we had space to show the detail underlying these charts, what would you see? The great story behind this financial snapshot is what you, as a community of supporters, have accomplished this past fiscal year at Legacy. Our day-to-day work is a dynamic array of actions and results **made possible by your resources.**

Notably, in 2015-16 Legacy was involved in protecting **1,637 acres.** This is quadruple the number of acres protected the prior year, and 50% more than our next-highest yearly total, reached back in 2007.

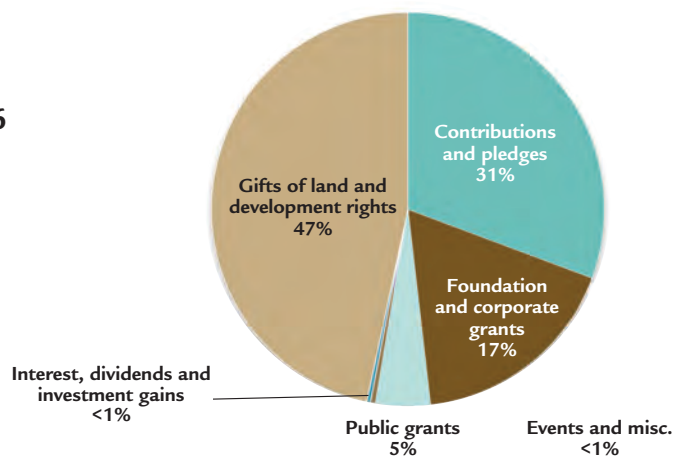
The **dramatic increase in land conservation** is attributable to two factors. One is Legacy's unique ability to assemble strong community **partnerships.** We worked with several private landowners as well as Washtenaw County, Michigan's departments of Natural Resources and Environmental Quality, Adrian College, and the US Department of Agriculture to craft agreements tailored to each land owner and each vision for future use.

The other factor is a **capacity-building** campaign (ongoing through next June) that allowed Legacy to add two full-time positions and two part-time positions this past fiscal year. Robust community partnerships and sophisticated land-protection agreements all take time and expertise to nurture and bring to satisfactory conclusion.

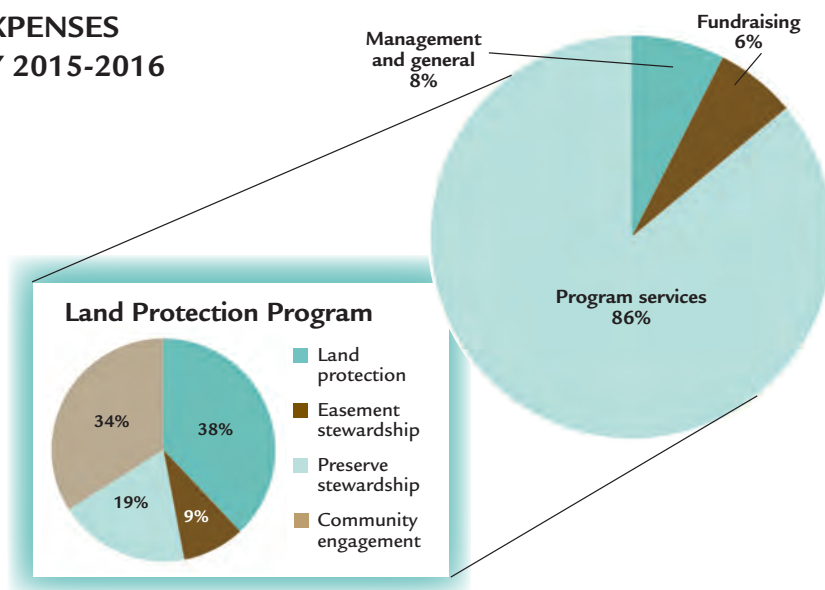
In addition, when we protect more land, we add to our responsibility to **take care of that land.** Your support for Legacy's behind-the-scenes activity—for the detail behind these numbers—is what preserves the scenic vistas, working farms, water quality, and access to nature that characterize our communities, now and for future generations.

Lots of ingredients to pack into a few pie charts!

REVENUE FY 2015-2016



EXPENSES FY 2015-2016



Statement of Financial Position

ASSETS

Current Assets and Investments	\$ 2,872,410
Fixed Assets (net of depreciation)	\$ 13,000
Pledges Receivable (non-current)	\$ 226,237
Land Held for Resale	\$ 260,000
Preserves	\$ 4,152,503
Conservation Easements	\$ 76
Land Options	\$ 30,500
Total Assets	\$ 7,554,726

LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable	\$ 29,652
Accrued Expenses	\$ 54,816
Total Liabilities	\$ 84,468

NET ASSETS

Unrestricted Operating	\$ 270,046
Board Designated	\$ 1,122,304
Unencumbered Land	\$ 2,379,853
Temporarily Restricted	\$ 1,043,413
Permanently Restricted	\$ 2,654,642
Total Net Assets	\$ 7,470,258

Total Net Assets \$ 7,470,258

Total Liabilities and Net Assets \$ 7,554,726

Statement of Activities

REVENUE 2015-2016 FY

Contributions and Pledges	\$ 626,025
Foundation and Corporate Grants	\$ 356,725
Public Grants	\$ 91,845
Events and Misc.	\$ 8,158
Interest, Dividends, and Investment Gains	\$ 6,511
Gifts of Land or Development Rights	\$ 951,500
Total Revenue	\$ 2,040,764

EXPENSES

Program Services—Land Protection	\$ 1,653,616
Management & General	\$ 144,371
Fundraising	\$ 123,975
Total Expenses	\$ 1,921,962

Change in Net Assets (Net Income) \$ 118,802

Net Assets, beginning of year \$ 7,351,456

Net Assets, end of year \$ 7,470,258

Based on draft audited financial statements at time of printing. Final audited financial statements prepared by Dennis, Gartland, Niergarth, CPAs, are available at legacylandconservancy.org.

Every group starts somewhere

Achieving more for the community *together*

Other than permanent land protection, what's the value of having a strong land conservancy in your community? As a 45-year-old organization with deep local roots and a professional staff, Legacy has helped volunteer-led groups working on related issues to establish and fast-track significant new land-use initiatives. Legacy played that role for two groups recently:

- **Huron Waterloo Pathways Initiative**, which is working to build a network of paved trails in western Washtenaw County
- **The Friends of the Saline River**, which helped to create and now manages a new nature preserve along the Saline River

We applaud the good work of these two new groups and the many individuals and organizations who have stepped up to support their efforts. Learn more about them below. As you'll see, YOUR ongoing support for Legacy benefits the whole community. You enable us to carry out our focused mission—preserving land—while achieving related goals by helping committed neighbors make great strides on compatible projects. Thank you!

Building pathways to enjoy the land and water

By Jeff Hardcastle

Chair, Huron Waterloo Pathways Initiative

After a wonderful trail connecting Dexter to the Hudson Mills Metro Park opened, I was among a small group of Dexter and Chelsea residents who gathered to talk about building a trail connecting our towns. The recreational pathway along the Huron River was so exciting that we were motivated to expand it!

Since that meeting in November 2014, we've formed a volunteer-run organization—Huron Waterloo Pathways Initiative (HWPI)—to support development of a regional trail network. We realized early that **connectivity is key**. Most of the funding for trails originates at the state level, and the state's priority is to link existing recreational resources.

Fortunately, western Washtenaw County is endowed with many recreational resources,



Huron Waterloo Pathways Initiative (HWPI) was inspired by the multi-use path from Dexter to Hudson Mills Metropark, the location of this photo. HWPI board members (front, from left) Jeff Hardcastle, Linda Mahan, and Rob Mahan enjoy a ride with family members Lucas and Emily Kizer (back).

including two major state recreation areas (Waterloo and Pinckney), the Huron River Greenway, multiple metroparks, major hiking and mountain biking trails, and many lakes.

Connecting trails is closely related to Legacy Land Conservancy's Emerald Arc work to connect protected lands. So we were delighted when Legacy's executive director at the time, Susan Lackey, suggested we work together. Legacy is celebrating its 45th anniversary this year, so they clearly have significant expertise to offer a new organization like ours. Legacy stepped up to help manage our donations and finances. That paved the way for our volunteers to

focus on awareness-building, fundraising, and coordinating trail-related efforts.

The regional plan that has developed over the past year is known as "The Loop" (see map at huron-waterloo-pathways.org). It will comprise 44 miles of paved multi-use pathways connecting the communities of Dexter, Chelsea, and Stockbridge, and the Waterloo and Pinckney State Recreation Areas. The new trails will link with the Lakelands and Border-to-Border trails to tie in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and other communities. This trail system will be a major destination within an hour's drive of more than 3 million Michigan residents!

In just over a year HWPI raised more than \$500,000 in private donations, secured \$1,800,000 in state funding, and completed feasibility studies on more than 15 miles of trail. With a little luck, the first phase of construction will begin during the summer of 2017.

HWPI has been able to move rapidly as the result of successful collaboration with like-minded organizations such as Legacy. Land conservation and trails help make our region a wonderful place to live.



HWPI board member Greg Peter describes the planned regional trail system to a booth visitor at an event in Chelsea. Photo: Rob Mahan

A grassroots success: Leslee Niethammer Saline River Preserve

By John W. Stanowski
President, Friends of the Saline River

After 12 years of waiting, an ad hoc committee in York Township that was formed to establish more community recreation areas had to act fast.

In 2014, a beautiful 17-acre property bordering the Saline River—identified as a perfect candidate for parkland—came up for sale. To ensure it would be preserved, the Mayor Pro Tem of Saline, David Rhoads, purchased the land with his own resources, thereby holding it while I, as York Township Supervisor, became involved. Together, the township worked out the details and began planning to buy the land from David. Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission and Legacy Land Conservancy offered financial assistance totaling \$52,000, which was a good start, but we needed to raise an additional \$60,000.

The cities of Saline and Milan joined with York Township in our quest to establish a nature preserve on the property. The partners envision a trail into the new preserve leading from Curtiss Park south through Salt Springs Park. We formed the “Friends of the Saline River” to carry out our ambitious plan and manage the preserve.

While waiting for our application as a nonprofit organization to be approved, we needed to begin raising money. As a long-established regional nonprofit, Legacy offered to collect tax-deductible contributions on behalf of the Friends to keep the momentum going with a community-wide fundraising campaign. Thanks to the many individuals and organizations who donated, on July 27, 2016, the Friends purchased the property!

The new **Leslee Niethammer Saline River Preserve** is named in memory of

David Rhoads’ wife, long-time Director of the Saline District Library. “I wanted to recognize her for all the great things she did for the community,” David said.

We are pleased to have harnessed wide community support for permanently protecting this nature preserve. Next up: trails, hand rails to assist in walking down to the valley floor, a bridge to connect to the Saline parks, and eventually a navigable route for paddlers between Saline and Milan. Find us at FriendsOfTheSalineRiver.org and on Facebook.



The new preserve (labeled ‘Nature Preserve’) joins four City of Saline parks along and near the Saline River, from Curtiss Park southward. The Friends of the Saline River group plans to connect it to the existing parks. Map courtesy of Jim Peters.

Don’t miss the forest for the garlic mustard

By Alex Peters, Summer Stewardship Crew Member



Alex Peters and Nathan Wells worked hard all summer to maintain and improve Legacy’s preserves.

On a hot day, the shady woods feel comfortable and cool. My eyes search for the Legacy Stewardship Crew’s public enemy number one: a two-foot-tall, spindly

plant with toothed triangular leaves and a distinctive odor. Three of us stoop to rip garlic mustard out by the roots and stuff it into bright orange bags. Bending over, pulling, and stuffing continue for hours, and acres. By eradicating invasive species, we hope to restore the landscape that functioned here for centuries before exotic invasive plants moved in.

Working on invasive species management, I systematically scan the ground for problem plants, yet by focusing on these components of the land, it’s easy to lose sight of the landscape and overlook the larger ecosystem.

Appreciating how we interact with the entire landscape—fostering a personal

connection to the land—is one of the most important aspects of land stewardship. Walking through the forest with all senses tuned to our environment allows us to step outside ourselves for a moment.

So after searching for invasive plants, I remind myself to take another look at Michigan’s beauty at least once a day. Walking through the forests, meadows, and wetlands on Legacy’s preserves, I feel awe and increasing respect for the natural forces that created these landscapes.

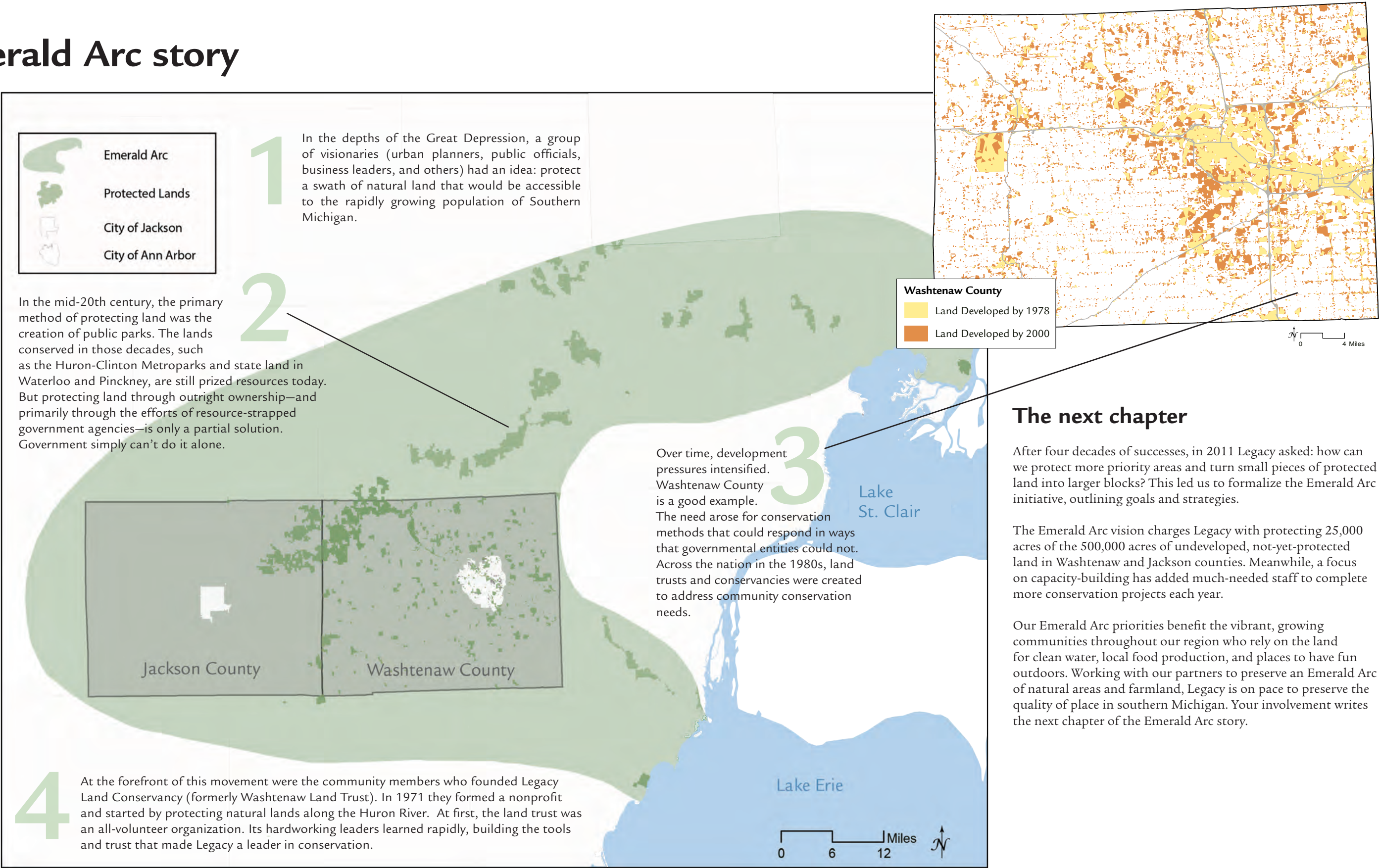
The next time you find yourself in the natural outdoors, pause to appreciate the beautiful, functional landscapes surrounding you.

The Emerald Arc story

The Emerald Arc is Legacy’s vision to protect 25,000 acres of land in Jackson and Washtenaw counties. Land protected by Legacy benefits our communities, now and into the future, by helping to:

- safeguard fresh water, for drinking and recreation
- preserve working farms, for their economic impact and rural heritage
- protect places to play, as natural areas, wildlife habitat, and scenic vistas

The Emerald Arc is also a larger vision for all of Southern Michigan. We are eager to help spread the word, but spreading the word on something so complex and transformative can be tricky. You know what they say: a picture is worth a thousand words. So we have crafted maps and graphics that help bring the Emerald Arc vision into focus.



Thank You!

We sincerely appreciate our generous supporters. This list includes gifts received in our last fiscal year, July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016. If you believe we have made an error, please contact Diane Dupuis at 734-302-5263 or diane@legacylandconservancy.org.

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Special thanks to all land- owners who protected their land last year

Marie Coppa
Larry and Stephanie Doll
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David and Karen Ufer
Jim and Mary White

Legacy Society

*By making plans to benefit Legacy
Land Conservancy with future gifts—
accomplished through bequests, estates,
trusts, insurance policies, beneficiary
designations, and other planned giving
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continue to make a difference for land
conservation far into the future.*

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**In Memory of
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**In Honor of Anne and
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In Honor of Julia Henshaw
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**Merry Christmas to Joe and
Jude Jarecki!**
Bill and Charity Steere

In Honor of Susan Lackey
Bob and Jane Grover

In Honor of Adam C. Smith
Martha Coscina

Susan Lackey Fund for Sustaining Stewardship

By the time Susan Lackey, Legacy's Executive Director for 11 years, retired last June, she had built up an extensive network of partners with a shared vision. Together, they made great progress protecting woods, wetlands, prairies, and working farms across Southern Michigan.

The Susan Lackey Fund for Sustaining Stewardship was established to ensure our communities enjoy the benefits of Susan's work. It supports interpretive programming, signage, trails, and amenities such as parking and benches at Legacy's nature preserves. We are accepting donations to this fund through the end of 2016. If you'd like to contribute, please visit legacylandconservancy.org or use the enclosed envelope.



Sue made the rounds in person and as "Sue on a stick" at her retirement open house in June. Here she is having an out-of-body experience with Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Director Bob Tetens and Legacy Trustee Simon Whitelocke!



LEGACY
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Questions or comments? Contact Katrina at
kfolsom@legacylandconservancy.org or 734-302-5263.



Wildlife abounds at Kensington Metropark, where volunteer John Lloyd photographed this great egret's mating display.



CHOCOLATE & CHEER

Drop by for an open house co-hosted by
Legacy and Huron River Watershed Council.

Thursday, December 15, 4-6 PM
NEW Bldg, 1100 N Main St, Ann Arbor