

Camp O' the Hills Permanent Protection

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I heard something's changing at Camp O' the Hills—what's the story?

A: The Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan Council (GSHOM) is making a commitment to permanently protect their 105-acre camp; Legacy Land Conservancy is helping GSHOM to achieve this goal.

Q: Who is Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan Council (GSHOM)?

A: In 2008, Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan was formed as a merger of five Girl Scout Councils stretching from Van Buren County to Saginaw Bay, including the Girl Scouts Irish Hills Council. GSHOM is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit charity, and is governed by a dedicated Board of Trustees. GSHOM's Board Chair is based in Jackson.

Q: Who is Legacy Land Conservancy?

A: Founded in 1971, Legacy Land Conservancy—also a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit—is Michigan's oldest local/regional land trust. Legacy's mission is to secure for current and future generations a land base for nature, agriculture, fresh water and recreation in Jackson and Washtenaw counties, and beyond. Legacy is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, and achieves the conservation goals of a supportive community by working with private landowners—such as GSHOM—as well as many organizations, including the Jackson County Conservation District and the River Raisin Watershed Council.

Q: What is a conservation easement?

A: A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a private landowner and a land conservancy. Conservation easements keep land in private ownership, while limiting the type and amount of development on a property, and often restricting other uses that would damage natural features. For those who choose to use a conservation easement, it is an extension of the care they've given their land for years.

Conservation easements are permanently attached to the deed of a property, so all future landowners are bound to the restrictions of the conservation easement. The conservation agreement applies to the landowner and all future owners of the land. Both the landowner and the conservancy will act to ensure the terms of the easement are met, now and through all generations of future landowners.

Q: Why does GSHOM want a conservation easement? What does Legacy get out of this?

A: GSHOM has made a commitment to keeping Camp O' the Hills a vibrant and successful camp. This is why GSHOM is interested in a conservation easement—it is a commitment to safeguard this land. The financial incentives that GSHOM derives from protecting the land can be invested in camp programming. By working with Legacy Land Conservancy, the Girl Scouts are making a commitment to protecting this unique site for young people to experience the natural world, and for girls to develop leadership skills for life.

Legacy is often asked, "How does Legacy benefit from protecting the land?" The answer is simple: Legacy is fulfilling its mission every time it completes a conservation easement. Legacy is dedicated to seeing that Michigan's important natural areas, farmland, and heritage are protected forever. Legacy is supported by public and private grant-makers as well as individuals. With this support, Legacy connects its professional expertise with landowners and communities, so that together, we can create a positive impact on our landscape and our future. This project is a true win-win-win for supporters, landowners, and future generations!

Q: Who has a say in whether GSHOM ever sells the camp? Will it always be a camp?

A: Just like with any other private property, only the owner gets to decide when to sell land protected with a conservation easement. Neither Legacy nor any other group has a say. Future owners might use the property somewhat differently than it is used today, but the conservation agreement ensures that industrial uses, multiple permanent residences, and major changes to the landscape are never allowed.



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Q: You say the easement agreement is forever, but I know organizations don't always last forever. What happens if Legacy isn't around someday?

A: "Forever" is a very long time. That is why Legacy has prepared contingencies in the event that it ceases to exist. If Legacy were no longer here, a court would assign the conservation easement to a similar conservation organization. The conservation easement cannot be changed in this event; the successor organization would carry the same responsibilities Legacy carries today.

Q: Will Camp O' the Hills be open to the public?

A: No, the camp will not be open to the public. The camp will still be owned and operated by the Girl Scouts for their programming. However, the Girl Scouts are planning to welcome neighbors to experience the camp via a guided tour. See below for contact information if you are interested in attending. This is a great opportunity for the community to see exactly what will be protected by this conservation easement!

Q: I live near the camp. How will the property's protection affect me?

A: The conservation easement is limited to the legal boundaries of the camp, and does not impose any obligations or changes on neighbors or other homeowners in the area. You and the region's wildlife will continue to benefit from the property's natural features, which provide habitat, pleasant scenery, and natural water filtration.

Q: What's the connection between this conservation easement and water quality?

A: Camp O' the Hills is nestled between frontage on two popular lakes, caring for 350 feet of shoreline on Timber Lake, and 850 feet of shoreline on Wamplers Lake. Saving the remaining forest along the shoreline is the best way to protect a lake's long-term water quality—enjoyed by all who fish and swim on the lake. In addition, this property's 70 acres of wetlands help maintain water quality through natural filtration.

Our waters are only as healthy as the lands that surround them. Michigan's Department of Environmental Quality recognizes this relationship, and has awarded Legacy a \$150,650 grant to help purchase a conservation easement on the property.

Q: How can I help protect Camp O' the Hills?

A: You can help spread the word about this exciting project so that anyone who might take an interest in the project's success is aware of the funding need and the timeline for completion. You can also make a donation to help fund the project.

Donation forms are available from Legacy Land Conservancy. Call 734-302-5263 for more information on making a gift, or go to Legacy's website, www.legacylandconservancy.org, to make a gift online or to download the donation form.

Q: Who can I contact if I have more questions?

About **protecting land:**

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About how to **visit** the Camp:

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