

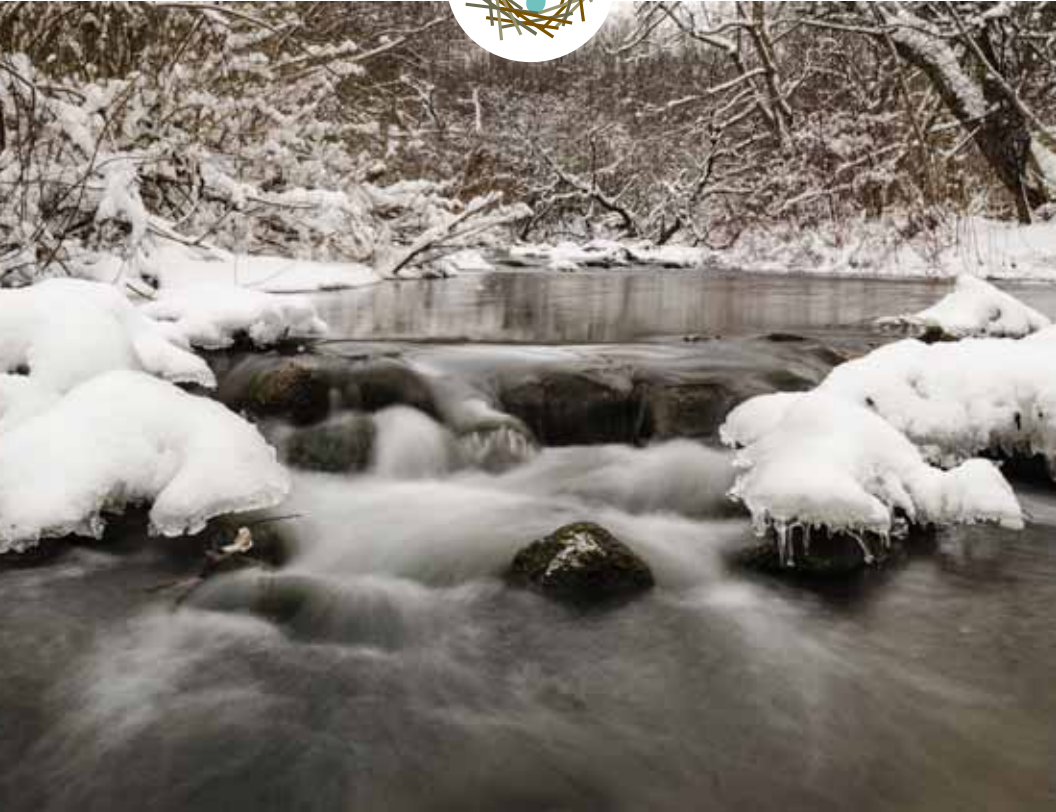
THE UNDERSTORY

The newsletter of Legacy Land Conservancy
Annual Report 2016–17

Winter



2018



Building capacity for faster pace, greater impact | pages 2–3

Outreach reveals new conservation opportunities | pages 12–13

YOU can help stop Japanese stiltgrass! | pages 14–15

LEGACY
Land Conservancy

Building Capacity for Faster Pace, Greater Impact

With the Emerald Arc capacity-building campaign wrapping up this year, it's a good time to look back and see how far we have come. Over the 5-year fundraising effort that kicked off with an ambitious \$5 million goal, Legacy's supporters stepped up with more than \$7.4 million in cash and planned gifts. That allowed us to leverage more than \$12 million in partner and public support that directly fueled land-protection projects. These leveraged dollars include \$1.8 million in USDA funding for landowners over the next 5 years, funding that Legacy took the lead in securing through a program that combines an additional \$1.8 million committed by our regional partners in addition to Legacy.

As an investment in our ability to protect more land more quickly, the Emerald Arc campaign has already shown impact. Over the course of the 5-year campaign, Legacy was able to add 3,400 acres of protected land to our portfolio—that's 40 percent of the total land protected in our first 46 years!

Organizationally, Legacy has grown in size as well, moving to a larger office to accommodate the 11 full- and part-time staff members. Our planned growth mirrors the growth of pressures in our service area. Conversion of land around us is not slowing down; for instance, Washtenaw County is the fastest-growing county in southeast Michigan. Jackson and Washtenaw County businesses alike are attracting investment and talent by building desirable communities with assets that include protected farms, forests, and waterways. As a community partner in maintaining and enhancing sustainable communities, Legacy will continue to address the demand for protecting vital natural resources.



Robert Huffman



Staff Photo

So, after this brief look back, it is already time to look to the future and focus on protecting the best of our region’s natural and agricultural lands. This will take coordination, collaboration, and cooperation between private landowners, state and federal agencies, local government bodies, and nonprofits like Legacy.

It’s an exciting time; in just four years, Legacy will celebrate our 50th anniversary. What “success” looks like at any milestone depends on all of us. Our list of private landowners looking to protect their land is growing rapidly. We at Legacy are committed to honoring those decisions with land protection agreements that are as forward-looking as they are permanent. We know we can count on your support to help us make this a reality—just look at what you’ve already achieved!

With much appreciation,

Douglas L. Koop, Executive Director

On the cover



*Winter river scene,
by John Lloyd*



LEGACY'S YEAR IN REVIEW

Land Protection

8

PROJECTS CLOSED FOR THE FISCAL YEAR



5 projects involving local partnerships



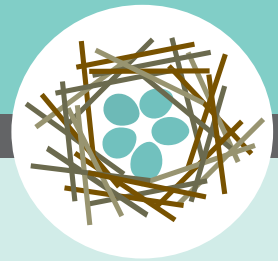
448.85

TOTAL ACRES PROTECTED

169.78 acres of farmland

146.4 acres of wetland

15,728 feet (2.978 miles) of river and creek shoreline



Stewardship

VOLUNTEER HOURS

382 hours devoted by all volunteers helping to accomplish Legacy's work

415 hours spent by staff and volunteers on invasive-species remediation work

93 volunteer hours devoted to invasive-species remediation



890



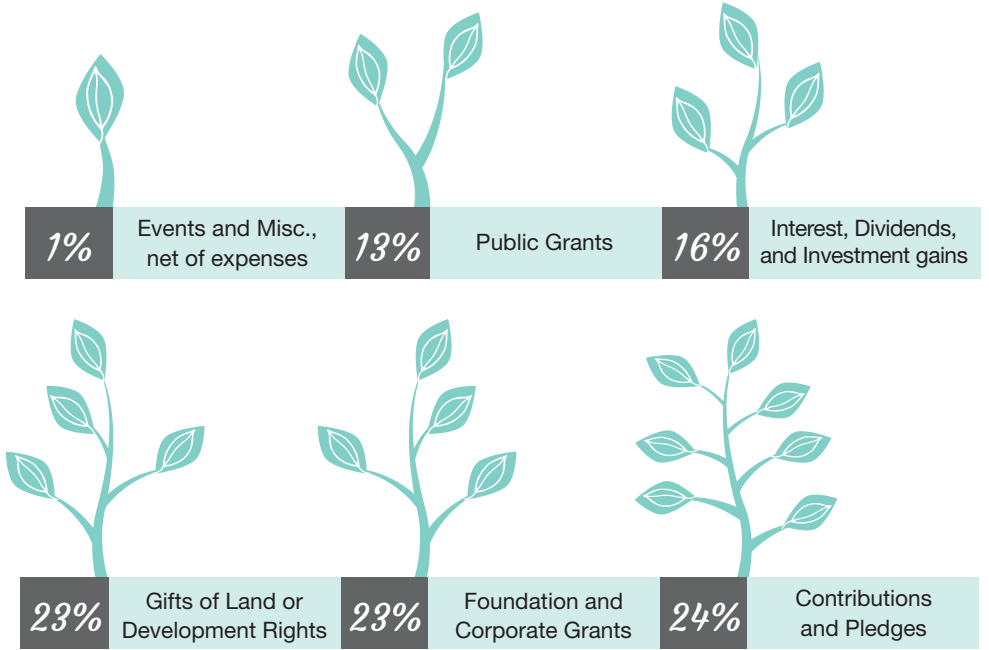
NEW ACTIVITY FOR 2017 • SEED COLLECTION

88 total hours

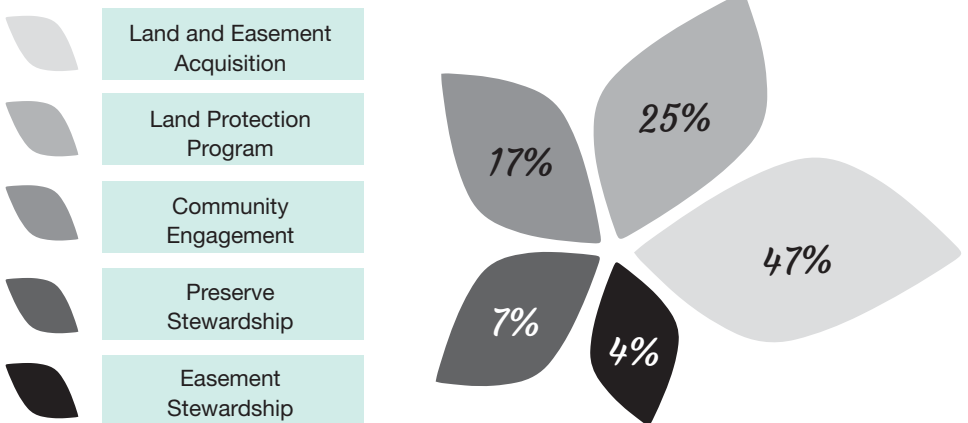
68 volunteer hours



Revenue 2016–2017



2016–2017 Program Expenses



Legacy Gains **MOMENTUM**

Legacy continued to increase our capacity in 2016–17, expanding to 11 staff members and a larger, better-situated office. Much of our capacity-building impact burgeoned behind the scenes, as Legacy staffers negotiated more complex land deals and worked to strengthen community partnerships.

Legacy added three more conservation easements—permanently protecting 158 acres, valued at \$317,598 in development rights. We also assisted Washtenaw County in the closing of five farmland conservation easements, adding 291 acres to protected land in our community.

Anticipating future access improvement projects, Legacy purchased additions for the Beckwith and Reichert Nature Preserves, also enhancing the properties' ecological value. Public access to our preserves is part of an increased effort to engage our community. The results of this work are promising; for instance, attendance at our 4th annual Cranes, Colors and Cabernet hike reached an all-time high.

It's been a great year for building local partnerships and cementing established relationships. For instance, we teamed up with Eastern Michigan University to conduct a long-term prairie restoration study at the Lloyd and Mabel Johnson Preserve and worked with Washtenaw County to create baseline reports and perform photo-monitoring for their newly acquired properties. SmithGroupJJR also became a more active member of our Eco Stewards Program.

The financial percentages listed on pp. 4-5 don't tell the whole story. Legacy undertook several projects that involved assisting fledgling organizations. For example, the creation of the Leslee Niethammer Saline River Preserve would not have been possible without Legacy's participation. Legacy collected tax-deductible contributions on behalf of the Friends of the Saline River to keep the momentum going with a community-wide fundraising campaign. Legacy staff also helped with the land purchase, and offered guidance to the Friends of the Saline River while they worked to achieve a 501(c)(3) nonprofit designation: (See also pp. 10-11 and 17 for additional partnership news.)

Invisible in the financial numbers is the hard work of our highly trained photo-monitor volunteers. While the Easement Monitoring Program only represents four percent of Program Services expenses, it is an extremely critical part of our mission. Volunteers are the mainstay of the program, joining staff in monitoring 100 percent of our easements every year.

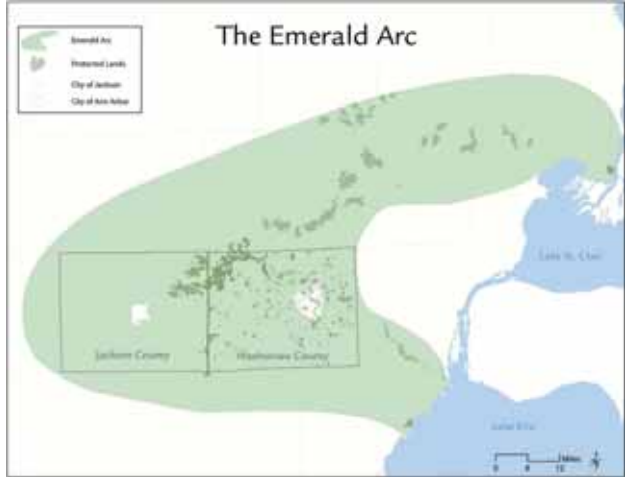
Volunteers benefit Legacy in other significant ways as well. We are grateful for a dedicated group of volunteers who help manage our restricted funds (Forever Fund, Endowment Fund, and vital reserves). Their guidance helped us grow these funds by 16 percent over the fiscal year. Their work is another resource that does not appear on any balance sheet, but contributes to another successful year for Legacy.

Every name cited as a supporter in this Annual Report represents a commitment to land protection that provides resources to fuel our impact. Thank you.

the is all around you.

Emerald Arc update

Enduring Vision for Southern Michigan



The work began more than 80 years ago: efforts to set aside a swath of natural land that would be accessible to the rapidly growing population of Southern Michigan. Throughout the last century, many individuals and organizations helped to protect a collection of undeveloped lands arching from Lake St. Clair to Lake Erie, a sort of “Emerald Arc” gracing our corner of the state.

In the early decades, public agencies played a role in this effort by conserving land such as the Huron-Clinton Metroparks and state land in Waterloo and Pinckney: still prized resources today. In time, however, development pressures intensified, and the need arose for conservation methods that could respond—in ways that governmental entities could not—to continue the work of conservation in the Emerald Arc.

In 1971, Legacy’s predecessor land trust was formed to address community conservation needs. Over four decades we built a portfolio of expertise in protecting priority areas and, project by project, conserving smaller pieces of land to stand together as blocks of protected areas. In 2012, Legacy committed to continuing our record of delivering conservation with a bold strategic plan: the Emerald Arc, Legacy’s vision to protect 25,000 acres of land in Jackson and Washtenaw counties.

The Emerald Arc vision launched a new phase for Legacy, and highlighted a need to build capacity and keep pace with conservation demand. Our Emerald Arc fundraising campaign was launched in 2012 and successfully concluded in 2017. As Executive Director Doug Koop notes on pp. 2-3, resources garnered during the campaign enabled Legacy to add staff and dramatically increase our conservation impact. Roughly 40 percent of the acreage protected over Legacy’s 46-year history was conserved during the Emerald Arc campaign!

The tempo continues to accelerate as we create impact designed to last forever. Thank you to all who support this vital sprint toward conservation for the future!



Staff Photo

Students in Eastern Michigan University's Writing in Ecology class relax after a workday at the Lloyd and Mabel Johnson Preserve.

Building Partnerships

Legacy's Stewardship team spent more time this year fostering relationships with local organizations, including Eastern Michigan University (EMU), Project Grow, the Neutral Zone, and SmithGroupJJR.

In 2016, Legacy and EMU formalized a partnership allowing Assistant Professor Emily Grman to conduct ecology research on a 1.5-acre plot of retired farm field on the Lloyd and Mabel Johnson Preserve. Grman's studies examine weed suppression, native biodiversity, and performance of various seed mixes. The project provides hands-on learning for EMU students and will contribute to the science of grassland restoration in southern Michigan.

"This project is tackling an important question in ecology and it will provide valuable information to the scientific community as well as research opportunities for EMU students," Grman said. "I'm very grateful to Legacy staff for working with me on this arrangement."

In return, EMU biology students will devote at least one workday a year to stewardship needs at Johnson Preserve. The workdays

have proven popular, and EMU is planning to increase the number and spread them throughout the academic year. The workdays include such activities as helping Legacy staff remove invasive species or improve trails.

"Working with the volunteers is one of the best parts of my job," said Land Steward Allene Smith. "I love working with the EMU biology students because they geek out over the same phenomena that always attracted me to a career in biology, and that's fun to see in young people."

The Johnson Preserve is also home to a garden overseen by Project Grow, a nonprofit that provides community garden space. Starting in the fall of 2016, Project Grow installed test garden plots on half an acre of Johnson Preserve near the parking area. The plots were designed to determine infrastructure needs for long-term viability. The preserve's heavy clay soil is hard to work with, and Project Grow is testing the effectiveness of amending with composted leaves. If the test plots prove viable, the program could expand. We are grateful to

Project Grow for mowing the trails around the prairie plots.

During this past summer, a group from the Neutral Zone—Washtenaw County’s teen center—held a week-long day camp at the Johnson Preserve. Four teens from Project GreenZ, an environmentally-themed Neutral Zone group, spent time with Legacy staff adding a 2,000-foot trail through the woods. The teens also helped remove invasive species. The stewardship team is hoping to welcome Project GreenZ back next summer.

SmithGroupJJR held its first workday in September as part of Legacy’s Eco Steward Program. Employees and their spouses helped Legacy construct 100 feet of boardwalk at our Creekshead Nature Preserve in Salem Township. Specialists in landscape architecture, engineering, and planning, the SmithGroupJJR volunteers used their expertise to make swift work of the boardwalk addition.

The Eco Steward Program is a site-adoption program intended to engage volunteers in restoration on Legacy’s preserves through long-term projects. Volunteers are given a patch of land to care for that is scalable to the amount and type of work the volunteer is interested in. Legacy staff meet with the

SmithGroupJJR helped construct boardwalk at our Creekshead Nature Preserve



Eco Steward on-site as needed for individual training and to discuss upcoming plans and progress on their adopted land; we also provide all tools and materials required for Eco Steward projects. Volunteer Eco Stewards complete work at their own pace, reporting their volunteer hours through Legacy’s online volunteer portal.

For more information on the Eco Steward Program, contact:

stewardship@legacylandconservancy.org

The Neutral Zone’s Project GreenZ teenagers created a 2,000-foot trail at the Johnson preserve.



Evolving Partnerships

Legacy and the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission (WCPARC) have long been partners in land conservation. Six years ago, the relationship was formalized when WCPARC contracted with Legacy for staffing support with farmland easements. In a sign of mutual progress, this past fiscal year WCPARC developed easement expertise in-house, while continuing to benefit from Legacy’s guidance.

“Legacy has played a critical role over the last 6 years to help WCPARC protect over 17 farms, totaling over 2,500 acres of land,”

said Ginny Trocchio, the WCPARC Superintendent of Park Planning and Natural Areas. “We look forward to new avenues for collaboration moving forward.”

The formal relationship began in 2010 after the county-wide Natural Areas Preservation Program (NAPP) millage was renewed by voters, at the same time adding farmland easement acquisition to WCPARC’s mandate. Seeking support and expertise for this new activity, WCPARC turned to Legacy, a local land trust with years of experience acquiring conservation easements. The arrangement with WCPARC was initially fulfilled by Legacy’s Executive Director at the time, Susan Lackey; Legacy’s Land Protection Manager, Robin Burke, began providing staffing to the agency about a year later. Through May 2017, Burke spent half her time assisting WCPARC.

The Doll family’s sesquicentennial farm—in the same family for over 150 years—was permanently protected through Washtenaw County’s NAPP in 2017 with technical assistance from Legacy.





“My favorite work for NAPP was the conversations with farmers at their kitchen tables,” Burke said. “What I’ve learned from making personal connections in the farm community will carry forward in my Legacy-led work. After all, people—our neighbors, our communities—are the core of land conservation.”

Burke met regularly with WCPARC staff and made recommendations to the NAPP’s Agricultural Lands Preservation Advisory Committee (ALPAC). She routinely shared best practices for the program, evaluated nominated farmland using ALPAC’s ranking system, guided prospective landowners through the process, and helped to draft conservation easements. Burke was also responsible for leveraging NAPP funds by applying for federal Agricultural Conservation Easement Program—Agricultural Land Easement (ACEP—ALE) grants. Once the easements were approved, Legacy’s stewardship team contributed baseline documentation reporting as well as annual conservation easement monitoring.

Under a new contract, these stewardship services will continue, a mark of respect for Legacy’s accredited status and familiarity with best practices. Meanwhile, WCPARC has hired staff with the needed expertise to acquire conservation easements.

The change has a positive impact on Legacy’s growth as well: Burke is now able to spend 100 percent of her time on Legacy-led easements, programs, projects, and conservation planning.

Robin Burke and Pam Bierzynski, Legacy Office Systems Associate, visit a WCPARC farmland easement property.



Staff Photo

OUTREACH REVEALS NEW CONSERVATION *opportunities*



For Legacy’s land protection team, the theme of the past year was landowner outreach. One of our primary goals was to build increased understanding of land protection benefits and options among landowners in portions of the River Raisin watershed. We focused our outreach efforts on landowners with properties that directly affect the quality of the River Raisin and its tributaries in Jackson and Washtenaw counties.

While working to enhance awareness in this watershed, we also successfully protected 46 acres and 2,000 feet of river frontage along the River Raisin and initiated a robust partnership with the Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan council to protect their 105-acre Camp O’ the Hills in the watershed. When completed in early 2018, the protection of the camp’s 40 acres of wetlands, 45 acres of forest, and 1,200 feet of shoreline along two lakes will sustain the natural filtration, soil stabilization, and scenic beauty that the camp enjoys in Jackson County’s Irish Hills. Fundraising for this project continues through June 30, 2018.

Legacy’s work with GSHOM ensures the 105-acre Camp O’ the Hills in the River Raisin watershed will be permanently protected.



0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles

 Camp O' the Hills
 W.J. Hayes State Park





Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan

The protection of Camp O' the Hills will safeguard 1,200 feet of lake shoreline.

Our outreach efforts are paying off—upon hearing of our work in the area, a landowner asked us to help protect 100 acres of pristine fen wetlands. Prairie fen wetlands are globally rare and considered one of Michigan's biological treasures. Dominated by sedges and grasses, fens provide habitat to hundreds of native Michigan plants and animals. Prairie fens also form the headwaters of many of southern Michigan's rivers and lakes.

The property is estimated to represent approximately 20 percent of what remains of Michigan's high-quality pristine fen. The project is one of the most exciting in Legacy's history. We are elated to have the opportunity to protect this amazing property for all time.

None of what we accomplish at Legacy would be possible without the interest and

commitment of the landowners we serve. Legacy has identified properties across Jackson and Washtenaw Counties that are the highest priority lands for conservation, and successful protection agreements arise when the owners of that land pursue their dedication to preserving it.

Our outreach has led to a surge in interest from landowners; never before has Legacy's pipeline of future projects teemed with so many exciting properties and committed landowners. Legacy has already protected 8,400 acres of land in Jackson and Washtenaw counties.

Legacy's leadership has approved the protection of 15 properties that represent:

- 1,200 acres
- Five projects in Jackson County
- Ten projects in Washtenaw County
- 240 acres of wetlands
- 250 acres of forest
- 630 acres of farmland
- 10,000 feet of river or lake shoreline

Our goal for the upcoming year is to preserve a significant amount of the 1,200 acres that our outreach efforts have placed in the pipeline. Our next step is to secure funding to complete these projects. We are already working to secure funds from state and federal agencies, corporations and foundations. Support from passionate individuals can really make the difference! We invite the continued participation from every donor to see these projects home.

YOU *Can Help* STOP *Japanese Stiltgrass!*

Andrea Matthes

The primary infestation of Japanese stiltgrass in Scio Township, Washtenaw County, consisted of approximately 1,500 square feet of dense growth in a partially shaded area.

Flowers

1-3 stalks at end of stem

Appear late summer through early fall

Leaves

2-4" long, 1/2" wide

Pointed on both ends

Silvery off-center midrib

Smooth edges

Stems

Often multiple stems

Branch at base

Mostly hairless

Sprawl in mature plants

Roots

Thin and weak

Pulls easily

'Stilt' roots grow from lower stem



2 cm
Japanese Grass or Eualia

Belying its disruptive potential, Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) can look innocuous upon first glance. Its delicate leaves and jointed stems resemble a miniature version of bamboo, and in young populations its sprawling growth habit lends itself to a somewhat fragile look. But Japanese stiltgrass is anything but innocuous, and it's been spotted in southeast Michigan.

Like all invasive plants, Japanese stiltgrass decreases the overall biodiversity of the areas it occupies. A mature population results in dense, expansive mats of vegetation that deer and other browsing mammals don't seem to eat. Seeds are small and highly mobile, often finding their way to waterways through runoff. The tiny seeds are quite persistent; it is estimated that each seed can remain viable in the soil for up to five years.

In the summer of 2017, this new threat to Michigan's native ecosystems was identified on a private property near Ann Arbor. Before this discovery, the plant's U.S. population was limited to the southern and eastern U.S., with only a few counties in northern Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois reporting its presence in 2017.

Since the discovery of Japanese stiltgrass in Washtenaw County, Legacy has joined the Michigan DNR, The Stewardship Network, Washtenaw County Parks, and other local partners to coordinate public education efforts and to survey public lands for stiltgrass populations.

Land managers are scouting local public lands, but that leaves a lot more area to cover. Here's where you can make a difference: survey your yard or woodland, educate your neighbors, and post an informational flyer in your neighborhood. Below, you'll find some general

guidelines for identification, along with a list of more exhaustive resources.

We are on the leading edge of an expanding invasion. With a quick, collective response we might be able to impede the northward spread of Japanese stiltgrass.

- If you think you've found it, email photos and location information to Greg Norwood, norwoodg@michigan.gov or report via the Michigan Invasive Species Information Network website at <https://www.misin.msu.edu/>.
- Management methods include hand-pulling and herbicide application. Pull and bag plants BEFORE flower formation. The best method for disposal of plant material is still a matter of debate; for now, send bagged plants to a municipal landfill.
- Native look-alikes include whitegrass (*Leersia virginica*), smartweeds (*Polygonum spp.*), and northern shorthusk (*Brachyelytrum aristosum*). Consult additional resources below to ensure proper ID!

Resources:

Field Guide to the Identification of Japanese Stiltgrass, the River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, and the UGA Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health: <http://www.aces.edu/>

"Invasive Japanese stiltgrass found near Ann Arbor," Michigan Department of Natural Resources: <http://www.michigan.gov/>

"Japanese stiltgrass," Midwest Invasive Species Information Network: <https://www.misin.msu.edu/>



Leslie J. Mehrhoff

Japanese stiltgrass leaves come to a point at both ends and often have a silvery stripe or mid-rib near the middle. Photo courtesy Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org.



Earth Day Woodland Stewardship at the Beckwith Preserve

Sunday, April 22, 10 am–1 pm

Beckwith Nature Preserve, Stockbridge

Join Legacy for a stewardship workday at Beckwith Nature Preserve in honor of Earth Day. Please dress for the weather, wear sturdy shoes, and bring a water bottle. Learn more or register for this event at stewardship@legacylandconservancy.org or (734) 302-5263. Must register for parking information.

Japanese Stiltgrass—The Michigan Invasion

Saturday, July 7, 10am–12pm

Private residence in Scio Township

The first instance of Japanese stiltgrass in Michigan was found in Scio Township by a private resident in 2017. This is a quickly-spreading herbaceous invasive. Help keep additional populations from cropping up by learning what to look for and how to eradicate it. Andrea and Jim Matthies have opened up their home as a classroom for residents and professionals alike to learn. Workshops held in partnership with The Stewardship Network. Register for this event by July 6 to Dana at dana@legacylandconservancy.org.

Oak Wilt Workshop

Friday, August 24, 2–4pm

Location TBD

Oak Wilt has been showing up more and more in our area and most of us are just starting to learn how to deal with it. Come learn from experts how to identify and treat Oak Wilt and hear an update from local practitioners on their Oak Wilt projects. This workshop is in conjunction with The Stewardship Network and Professional Stewards Hikes. To register for this event, contact stewardship@legacylandconservancy.org or 734-302-5263 by August 21.

Bidding “Happy Trails” to Huron Waterloo Pathways Initiative



Paul Wiklanski

Border-to-Border trail between Dexter and the Hudson Mills Metropark

In early 2015, the Huron Waterloo Pathways Initiative (HWPI)—a brand-new volunteer-run group—asked Legacy Land Conservancy to serve as a fiduciary partner. As a qualified 501(c)(3) with a trusted reputation in the community, Legacy offered an ability to oversee the care of HWPI’s assets and legal compliance that was vital in the first years of the effort to accelerate the development of non-motorized trails in Washtenaw County. Legacy’s Executive Director also served on HWPI’s Board of Directors.

Because Legacy stepped up to help manage HWPI’s donations and finances, donors were able to make tax-deductible gifts to HWPI. Instead of performing administrative tasks, HWPI’s volunteers were able to focus on awareness-building, fundraising, and coordinating trail-related efforts. Legacy and HWPI were compatible traveling companions for more than two years, during which time HWPI secured substantial public and private funding, including a great upwelling of support to memorialize a beloved community member with the “Karen’s Trail” initiative.

By spring, 2017, HWPI had entered a new stage in its organizational development, and graduated to a new fiduciary relationship with the Michigan Fitness Foundation (MFF). Legacy’s Annual Report reflects this change with a transfer of approximately \$680,000 of HWPI assets to MFF.

As detailed on HWPI’s website (<http://huron-waterloo-pathways.org>), the group is working with the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission’s Border-to-Border Trail team, other state and local government agencies, and Stantec, a professional consulting firm, to develop non-motorized trail segments in four development zones. “These trail segments will ultimately complete The Loop, which is now considered a spur trail of the Michigan Iron Belle Trail, a state-wide trail system,” the site asserts.

Land protection and trails go hand-in-hand, so our two-year collaboration with HWPI has been a great boost to our region’s quality of place! As donors continue investing in our community’s places to play, we are confident that both Legacy and HWPI will benefit.

Thank you!

We sincerely appreciate our generous supporters. This list includes gifts received in our last fiscal year, July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2017. If you believe we have made an error, please contact Diane Dupuis at 734-302-5263 or diane@legacylandconservancy.org.

Your support fuels Legacy's work!

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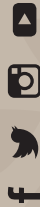


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