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How 3 sets of landowners teamed up to protect 90 acres in western Washtenaw County

Published: Jul. 01, 2022, 10:49 a.m.



A group of landowners in western Washtenaw County teamed up to conserve their three properties, totaling 90 acres, with the Legacy Land Conservancy. From left to right are John and Carol McCullough, Frieda and Byron McCullough, and Jennifer and David Helmer. Provided by Legacy Land Conservancy

By [Lucas Smolcic Larson | lsmolciclaron@mlive.com](mailto:lsmolciclaron@mlive.com)

WASHTENAW COUNTY, MI - Inspired by the establishment of a nearby preserve in 2016, three families in western Washtenaw County teamed up to permanently protect 90 acres of their land from development, including conserving areas along the River Raisin.

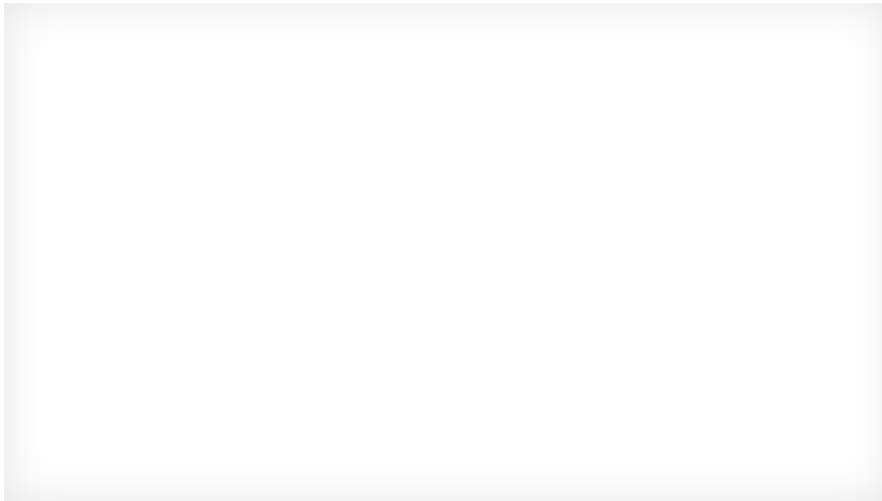
The Ann Arbor-based Legacy Land Conservancy announced the project in the Sharon Hills area near Manchester on Wednesday, June 29.

The participating sets of landowners — John and Carol McCullough, Byron and Frieda McCullough and David and Jennifer Helmer — came together after they saw the establishment of Washtenaw County's River Raisin Preserve just up-river from their land in 2016, the conservancy said in a news release.

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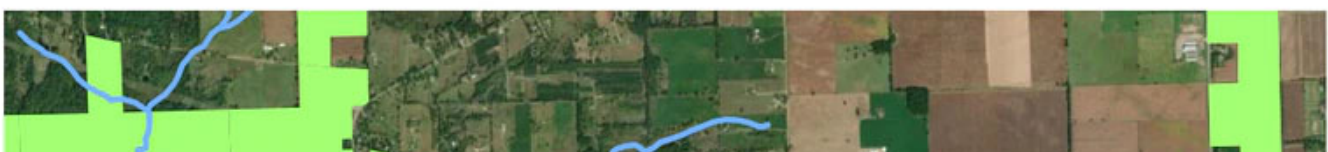
“Seeing the nearby land preserved years ago motivated us to find a way to protect our land too,” said John McCullough in a statement. “Thanks to Legacy, (the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission), and their partners, our vision is now a reality and the land we love is protected forever.”

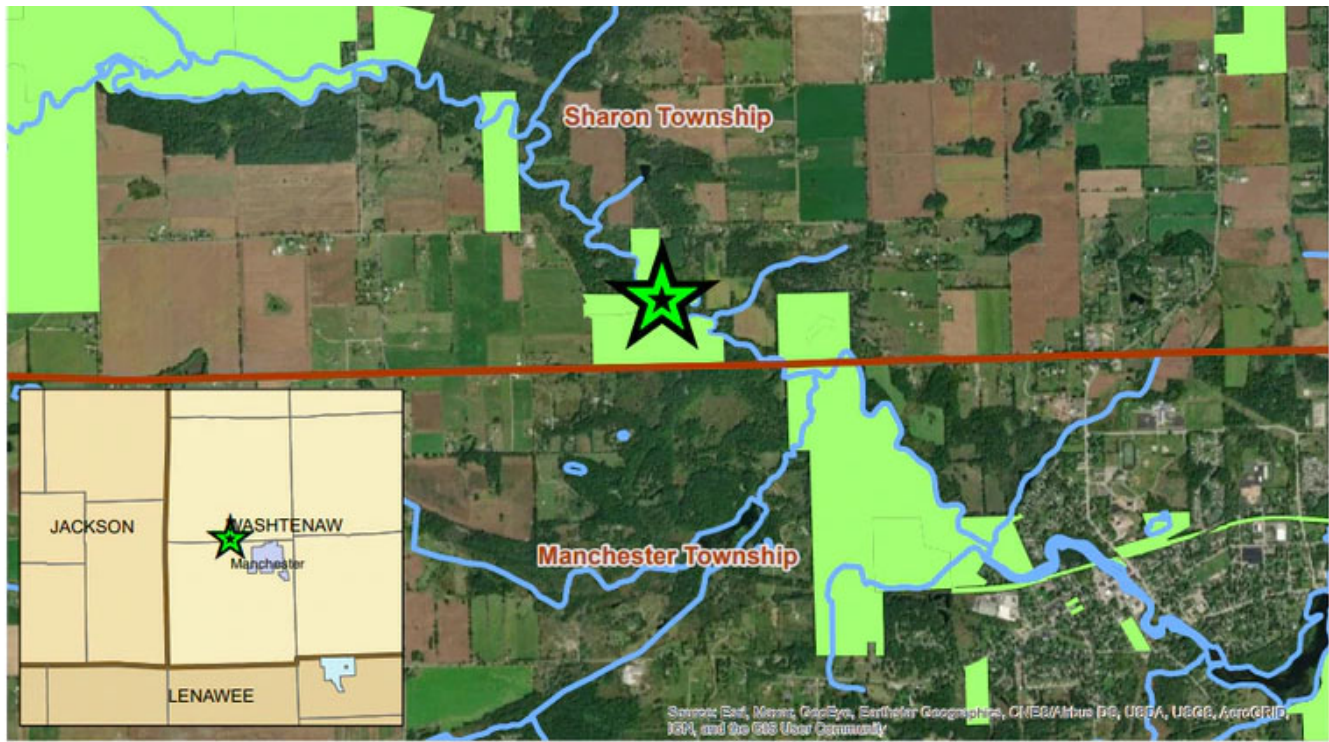
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The 90-acre McCullough-Helmer Project contains open prairie, multiple wetland areas and steep wooded slopes heading down to the River Raisin, now protected in perpetuity with conservation easements with Legacy Land Conservancy, which permanently protect privately-held land, the organization said.

That includes just under 4,000 feet of land bordering the river in Sharon Township in western Washtenaw County.





McCullough-Helmer Project



Date last updated: 5/27/2022



McCullough Helmer Project

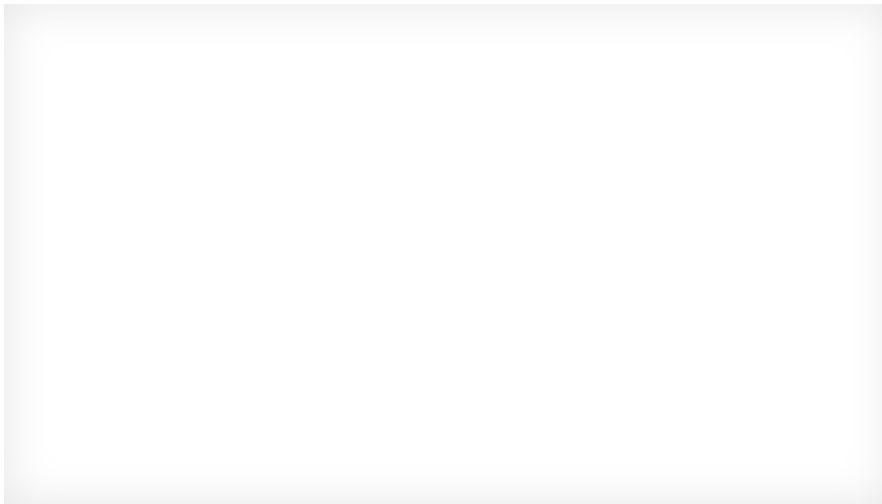
River Raisin

Other Conserved Lands



A map from the Legacy Land Conservancy shows the location of the McCullough-Helmer conservation project in western Washtenaw County and other conserved land in the Sharon Hills are near Manchester. Provided by Legacy Land Conservancy

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Conservationists say the project will play an essential role in reducing pollution of area waterways.

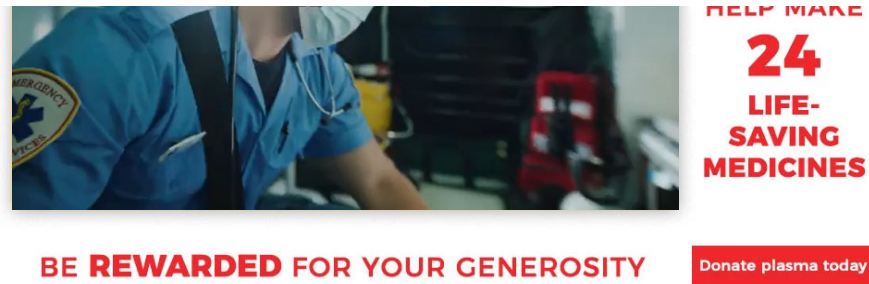
The effort is powered in part by funding from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) Non-Point Source Pollution Grant program, which aims to restore and protect waters from degradation that can occur when rainfall or snowmelt carries contaminants into a body of water.

“Land protection in the Upper River Raisin sub-watershed remains a high priority for the continued health of the larger watershed and Great Lakes Basin, said EGLE Watershed Project Manager Julia Kirkwood in a statement. “Keeping the forests intact and preserving the natural land cover ensures these lands will provide significant water quality benefits in downstream areas.”

That includes the river as it flows through urban areas like Monroe, before eventually emptying into Lake Erie.

The project adds to existing lands in the Sharon Hills greenway area along the river, including protected area in the Sharonville State Game Area, the Nan Weston Preserve, Sharon Mills County Park, and Washtenaw County’s River Raisin and Leonard preserves, in addition to existing Legacy Land Conservancy easements.

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An advertisement for plasma donation. On the left, a paramedic in a blue uniform with a "MEDICAL EMERGENCY" patch is shown. To the right, red text reads "HELP MAKE 24 LIFE-SAVING MEDICINES". Below the image, it says "BE REWARDED FOR YOUR GENEROSITY" and "Donate plasma today".

The county Parks and Recreation Commission partnered to secure funds for the project, according to Legacy, founded in 1971 and behind more than 9,000 acres of land conservation, including public preserves.

“Land protection is a group effort,” said Legacy Land Conservancy Executive Director Diana Kern in a statement. “Legacy is fortunate to work with amazing landowners and partners in order to protect land and help safeguard clean water in the River Raisin Watershed and surrounding waterways.”

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