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Private Choices, Public Benefits

While we understand how a healthy forest improves air quality or how a wetland protects drinking water, we don't always stop to consider that these public benefits are often the result of private decisions.

Protected land, regardless of ownership, provides the public with a variety of benefits. As with most Land Trust projects, these benefits accrue from the actions of private landowners.

And these public benefits are wide-ranging. Wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, water quality, preserved working lands, outdoor recreation and the protection of natural amenities that stimulate the local economy are just some of the public benefits that accrue to the larger community.

The conserved lands we enjoy today are a living testimonial to the dedication and foresight of private citizens who took action to permanently protect their land.

Economic and ecological benefits

Preserved natural settings make our communities

more appealing, enriching the lives of residents and creating a desirable environment for workers and



visitors. Protected lands can stimulate local growth without requiring additional municipal services.

Conserved natural land, regardless of ownership, fosters improved public health through an array of ecological services. Natural land helps protect aquifers, filter pollutants, ensure crop pollination, purify air, moderate climate, feed the nutrient cycle, provide renewable resources,

[Public Benefits, page 3](#)

An old friend protects the family farm

Sherburne County site hosts sandhill crane, rare tamarack bog

In 1935 Robert and Eva Wallace purchased 160 acres of farmland in Livonia Township, just a few miles north of Elk River. The sale price: \$4,000 - no small amount during the lean years of the Great Depression. Their sons Gerald, Clifford and Mahlon grew up there, farming the land and raising children of their own.

Today, the farm is owned by three families of Wallace grandchildren Deb (Wallace) Plude and husband Tim, Randy and Joyce Wallace, and Renay (Wallace) Leone and husband Gerry. They recently donated a



Patricia and Mahlon Wallace

conservation easement on 158 acres to the Minnesota Land Trust.

All around this part of Sherburne County homes are sprouting up, replacing the fields of corn and hay. The Wallace farm doesn't contain ancient stands of hardwood forest or play host to the last remnant of endangered species. To the passerby, the land might appear to be just another old family farm waiting to be replaced by the next development.

But there is much more going on here.

About one half mile to the west is Sand Dunes State Forest, public land which itself abuts the larger Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge.

Lying just east are 200 acres of land protected several years ago by a local family and the Land

By protecting their land, the Wallace grandchildren are adding to the existing framework of protected habitat.

Trust. Much of the surrounding landscape has been identified as a focus area of the Metro Wildlife Corridors program. By protecting their land, the Wallace grandchildren are adding to the existing framework of protected habitat.

Sarah Strommen, the Land Trust's regional conservation director, explains: "Whenever we can complete a project that is near, or adjacent to already protected land the benefits to conservation multiply. A larger complex of habitat is always better than an isolated piece."

The grandchildren have begun to restore much of the property. 9,800 trees were planted in 2001; an effort to create a riparian forest buffer zone. About 20 acres were placed in the Conservation Reserve Program and some of the wetland has been restored by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. And for Renay Leone, who now lives in the Twin Cities with husband Gerry, permanently protecting the land with a conservation

[Tamarack Bog, page 2](#)

So, what *are* the public benefits of protecting private land? This is no small matter. In the context of protecting a dwindling amount of high-quality natural and scenic land and shoreline, most of which lies in private ownership, we sometimes need to be reminded of the broad range of public benefits that result from these decidedly private actions. In this issue of [News and Views](#) we illustrate some of the public benefits that accrue from the protection of private lands.



We also wish to report our progress thus far. Heading into the fourth quarter of our fiscal year, which ends June 30, the Minnesota Land Trust has completed 25 land-protection projects and is poised to complete several more by the end of June. This represents a measurable increase over previous years and has been made possible by our members, whose support translates into direct action on the ground.

Besides our more traditional land-protection activities, we continue to work with local communities as they thoughtfully consider their natural and scenic resources within the context of growth. This includes another first for us: the completion of two conservation developments outside of the Twin City metro area (one in Duluth and the other near Collegeville). This growing part of our mission shows that this strategy holds promise for out-state as well as Twin City communities that wish to retain their sense of character.

I am also pleased to report that the Minnesota Land Trust has been awarded the Charities Review Council "Meets All Standards" Seal, indicating that we meet all 16 of the Council's Accountability Standards.

Nonprofit organizations earn the Seal by voluntarily participating in the Council's Accountability Wizard. This online tool is available to all nonprofit organizations soliciting in Minnesota and addresses a

nonprofit organization's performance in four critical areas: Public Disclosure, Governance, Financial Activity and Fundraising. By participating in the Accountability Wizard, nonprofit organizations can demonstrate responsibility, integrity and transparency to their constituents.

And I want to welcome, once again, the over 200 new members who joined the Minnesota Land Trust in 2006 and the 100 new members who have joined only recently. Your support, and that of all our members, has helped the Land Trust to increase the amount and quality of land under protection -- and for that we are always grateful.

Looking ahead, the Minnesota Land Trust has submitted its application relative to a national program of land trust accountability. Different from the Charities Review Council program mentioned above, this endeavor places additional emphasis on the quality of our land projects and our transactional processes. You'll find more on page four.

As always, I welcome your feedback as well as your continued support! Thanks for all you do to help us accomplish our mission.

Sincerely,

P. S. Please take note of the special fundraising matching opportunity mentioned on the back cover of [News & Views](#). All increases in giving will be matched through June 30. I hope you can help!

Tamarack Bog, continued from page one

easement was significant for another reason.

Renay was the Minnesota Land Trust's first executive director and the person responsible for laying the groundwork of the organization's present success. David Hartwell, who worked alongside Renay as board chair, offered these kind words: "The protection of the Wallace family land is clearly important for conservation and the public benefits are obvious, but what makes this project especially meaningful is the family behind the decision. Renay has done so much for conservation in Minnesota. Protecting their own land is the ultimate demonstration of the family's personal dedication to land protection."

Renay was the Minnesota Land Trust's first executive director and the person responsible for laying the groundwork of the organization's present success.

And the public benefits are plentiful. Already mentioned is the farm's proximity to a significant amount of land that is already protected. On the

land itself, a large tamarack bog provides perfect habitat for sandhill crane, a protected species in Minnesota. The bog's wet, spongy ground and poorly drained soil also serve as high-quality water filters, allowing rain and snowmelt to seep slowly and safely back into the earth. The roots and stems of wetland plants form a dense mat where biological and physical processes occur to purify ground water supplies.

Granddaughter Deb and husband Tim still live on the farm, keeping a few cattle, some sheep and tending to the never-ending chores of farm life. The land is a touchstone to their family's past; protecting it provides ecological benefits that we can all enjoy.

2006 Volunteers of the Year!



Roxanne and Mike Schlasner receiving award.

We are very happy to introduce Mike and Roxanne Schlasner of Rochester, Minnesota as the recipients of the 2006 *John Peck Volunteer of the Year Award*. The Schlasners, along with their daughter Kathryn have volunteered and supported the Land Trust for several years. Clint Miller, from the Land Trust's Red Wing office nominated them for their dedicated service as conservation easement monitors: "The Schlasners are quiet leaders, providing a tremendous service to a number of conservation groups in the southeast".

The Schlasners are active with other organizations too, including the Prairie Enthusiasts and the Nature Conservancy. "They are some of the most generous and giving people I've ever met", added Miller.

The award, which honors the Land Trust's long-time volunteer Land Protection Specialist John Peck, was presented at the October Landowner and Volunteer Recognition Event held in Red Wing, MN.

Rum River project protects more shoreline

Site is located along 8-mile stretch known for high biodiversity

While canoeing down the Rum River a few miles north of Milaca, you may not notice anything out of the ordinary. And that's exactly the way its owners want it to remain.

In an ever-developing landscape, Bill and Paul Hjort, along with their spouses Laura and Tricia, have permanently protected their 85-acres along the Rum by donating a conservation easement to the Minnesota Land Trust.



"Some people think we are crazy to tie up our river frontage with an easement" Bill Hjort remarked. Yet the Hjort family thought the idea of preserving the wild and scenic value of their land was more important, and wanted to make sure future generations could someday enjoy the natural land they cherish. Jane Prohaska, the Land Trust's executive director praised the Hjorts adding "This is another example of the important role that private landowners play in the conservation of

Minnesota's natural and scenic heritage".

Other inhabitants appreciate the Hjorts' decision, too. The property is home to a variety of resident and migratory bird species, including neo-tropical migratory birds like warblers. These birds migrate thousands of miles from their nesting sites in the northern U.S. and Canada to their winter habitats in Mexico and South America. The Rum River has for centuries been a part of this historic flyway.

There's other wildlife, too. Bill Hjort sees badgers and grey wolves, as well as the familiar whitetail deer.

The significance of the Hjort property is due to its location and ecological integrity. This section of land is connected to other forested areas that provide an uninterrupted river corridor for wildlife to thrive. The Minnesota County Biological Survey for Mille Lacs County identified this property as part of an 8-mile stretch of the Rum River with "high biodiversity significance." The tract includes 72 acres of forest, 8 acres of highly productive wetlands, and five acres of surface water including 3,828 feet of river shoreline. The only structure on the property is a small, rustic cabin; a startling contrast to the new, large-lot development just to the east.

The Minnesota Land Trust holds conservation easements on three other Rum River properties protecting 360 acres of land and approximately three miles of river's edge. The Hjorts hope that their actions will help others along the Rum to protect their property and ensure that the Rum River continues to run wild.

Public benefits, continued from page one

and help hold soils in place by controlling storm water and minimizing flooding. The collective value of these ecological services can be seen as a form of "natural capital" that generates diverse returns -- many of them not measured in the marketplace. While economists do not assign an exact dollar figure to the absolute

Protected lands provide a degree of wildness that is vital to the health and well-being of countless species -- including our own.

worth of natural lands, people increasingly recognize that their full value extends well beyond market prices.

In contrast, developed lands lose their capacity to filter water naturally and actually accelerate the release of soils and contaminants into nearby waters. This growing load of pollutants (especially from diffuse or "nonpoint" sources) makes water treatment difficult and more expensive.

A 2002 study by the American Waterworks Association and the Trust for Public Land found that for every 10 percent increase (up to 60 percent) in forest cover surrounding water sources, water treatment and chemical costs decreased approximately 20 percent. Many communities now view land protection as the most affordable means of safeguarding their drinking water supplies.

Recreational benefits

Recreational opportunities are perhaps the most tangible benefits that protected lands offer. Whether hiking along scenic trails, camping in a remote preserve, or fishing in a healthy river, people rely on natural areas to help them renew their spirits.

While protecting private land does not typically translate into public access, many of the conserved lands we enjoy today are a living testimonial to the dedication and foresight of private citizens who took action to permanently protect their own land.

Preserving community character

Protected private land can also help preserve the character of a community. Iconic landmarks that define a community's historic and cultural identity are often privately owned. Conserving the scenic beauty of a community improves its livability, attracting new businesses, residents and seasonal visitors. According to a National Park Service survey, corporate executives ranked "quality of life for employees" as the third most important factor in locating their business.

Preserving private lands help communities maintain a degree of wilderness that is vital to the health and well-being of countless species -- including our own. Thanks to the private decisions of



families and individuals, we all benefit from a future where human and natural communities remain intact, preserving habitat for *all* the organisms that thrive there.

Minnesota Land Trust helps advance national accreditation program

How do you put the trust in the Minnesota Land Trust? While it strives for excellence in its programs, the Land Trust is now working towards formal recognition of its commitment to accountable public service through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. The Minnesota Land Trust is one of only 22 land trusts from around the country that were selected to apply for the accreditation pilot offered through the Commission.

The accreditation process will evaluate several aspects of the Minnesota Land Trust's operations, including board accountability, fundraising and land transactions. "We are excited that many non-profits land trusts are stepping up to the plate to demonstrate that their operations are sound and that they are truly operating in the public's interest" says Jane Prohaska, the President of the Minnesota Land Trust. "While the application represents a substantial investment of our time and resources, we feel it is important that the public have trust and confidence in our work. And we are very appreciative that the Land Trust Accreditation Commission is providing conservation organizations with a mechanism to recognize excellence."

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission is an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, based in Washington, D.C. The Commission is governed by a board of diverse land conservation and non-profit management experts from around the country. The accreditation commission will have independent, decision-making authority and is separately incorporated as a subsidiary of the Land Trust Alliance.

While the application has been submitted, the work has just begun. As part of its application process, the Commission accepts signed, written comments from the public regarding pending applications.

Comments must relate to the Minnesota Land Trust's compliance with the accreditation *indicator practices*. These practices address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of indicator practices see www.lta.org/accreditation/practices.htm.

To learn more about the accreditation program and to submit a comment, visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org. Comments may also be faxed or mailed to:

Land Trust Accreditation Commission,
Attn: Public Comments:
(fax) 518-587-3183;
(mail) 112 Spring St., Suite 204, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.

Comments on the Minnesota Land Trust's application will be most useful if received by the Commission by June 22.

Church Island protected forever

Local residents and congregation work together to protect historic island

Church Island, with its natural beauty and character, is an iconic landmark of Bay Lake. Located in Crow Wing County, one of the fastest growing areas in the state, Bay Lake is one of Minnesota's premier destination points for summer tourists.

A few years ago, a group of Bay Lake residents met with representatives of Church Island to talk about the island's future. Everyone wanted the island to remain as it is -- the scenic backdrop of Bay Lake and the host of Bay Lake Camp, a relatively rustic camp located on one end of the island and operated by the island's owners, First Lutheran Church of St. Paul.

The solution: purchase a conservation easement from First Lutheran Church. This would guarantee that the 59-acre island would continue to serve as part of the lake's natural and cultural setting. Protecting the shoreline would contribute positively to the lake's water quality and provide enhanced public recreation opportunities on the island.

To that end, a fundraising strategy emerged that succeeded in drawing support from members of First Lutheran Church of St. Paul, Bay Lake Camp alumni and the residents around Bay Lake and nearby Deerwood. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also contributed to the purchase of the easement and will hold and monitor the easement into the future. The Minnesota Land Trust was honored to assist the Bay Lake community and First Lutheran Church of St. Paul to help coordinate fundraising and work with the DNR to create a conservation easement that expanded public benefits while protecting the island in perpetuity.

For the DNR, protecting Church Island fit nicely with their on-going efforts to protect fish and wildlife habitat and enhance recreational opportunities on Minnesota's waters.

History of Church Island

According to First Lutheran Church, their history of Church Island dates back to 1909, when Mr. Adolph Landstrom donated the large



Bay Lake with 59-acre Church Island

59-acre island to the Swedish Lutheran congregation on the hill near downtown St. Paul. After logging the island of its timber, Mr. Landstrom - a Swedish immigrant himself - had no further use for it.

In the early years of owning the island, the congregation was unsure what to do with it. Several options were explored including selling the island outright or mining it for its iron ore potential. However neither of these options seemed to hold much merit. In the end, the congregation decided to construct a summer camp on the island. The first 145 campers arrived

for the Fourth of July weekend in 1926.

98 years later a conservation easement now secures the future of Church Island -- both as a camp for future generations of children but also as a permanent natural feature of Bay Lake.

Has your gift been matched?

\$45,000 in funding available!

The Minnesota Land Trust has accepted a challenge to raise new and increased charitable support from individuals and small family foundations.

Any amount representing an increase over your previous gift to the Land Trust will be matched dollar for dollar. First-time gifts from new members will be matched in their entirety.

In order for the Minnesota Land Trust to count your gift towards the match, we must receive it before June 30, 2007. The total amount available for matching is \$45,000 and has been made available by a generous local family foundation.

Please consider helping the Land Trust to leverage this entire amount and increase our ability to protect more land.

If you would like a reminder of your previous gift amount, please contact Katie Donald at the Minnesota Land Trust at: 651-647-9590.

Land Trust gear & books

Land Trust logo clothing

Denim shirts...\$25

Caps...adjustable fit,in khaki...\$10

T-shirts, all-cotton, navy blue....\$10

Knit golf shirts, all-cotton, in khaki....\$25

Books

Land Protection Options; \$5

Preserving Family Lands, Vol. I, II, III; \$25

The Conservation Easement Stewardship Guide; \$25

Appraising Easements; \$35

Working Forest Conservation Easement; \$30

The *NEW* and completely revised edition of The Conservation Easement Handbook; \$50

For Land Trust landowners

"Protected Forever" signs, exclusively for your Minnesota Land Trust-protected land.

Small sign, \$5; Large sign (10" x 17"), \$10

Call us at (651) 647-9590 to order.

Other news...

The Minnesota Land Trust has successfully met all 16 accountability standards as established by the Charities Review Council.

Legal compliance
Financial and annual reporting
Accomplishments
Reporting consistency
Board meetings
Conflict of Interest policy
Board compensation
Board/Staff positions
Board term limits
Use of funds
Reserve limits
Financial health
Board fiduciary oversight
Ethical fundraising
Voluntary charitable giving
Soliciting practices

You may view the Land Trust's full report at:

<http://www.smartgivers.org/SmartGiversReview/411713652.html>



News and Views is published by the Minnesota Land Trust. If you would prefer not to receive the newsletter, please clip out your address label and return it in the envelope included in the newsletter or call our office at (651) 647-9590.

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Address Correction Requested

As a nonprofit, membership-based organization, the Minnesota Land Trust depends on the financial support of foundations, businesses and individuals like you.

If you are not already a member of the Minnesota Land Trust, we invite you to join us by making a donation today! Enclosed is a gift envelope for your convenience.

You can also donate by credit card on our secure website:
www.mnland.org

If you have any questions about your membership status or would like to make a donation over the phone, please call 651-647-9590 or email us at mnland@mnland.org.

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