



Minnesota Land Trust
2356 University Avenue West
Suite 240
St. Paul, MN 55114
www.mnland.org

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Minnesota Land Trust Earns National Accreditation

The Minnesota Land Trust is one of the first land trusts in the country to be awarded accredited status by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance.

Thirty-nine land trusts received accreditation at a special inaugural awards ceremony during the National Land Conservation Conference in Pittsburgh, PA in September. The annual conference is the largest gathering of land conservationists in the country. As an accredited land trust, the Minnesota Land Trust has successfully demonstrated that the organization meets national standards for excellence, upholds the public trust and ensures that its conservation efforts are permanent.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission was established in 2006 to operate a national voluntary accreditation program to verify that land trusts are in compliance with a set of indicator practices selected from Land Trust Standards and Practices. As part of the accreditation process, the Minnesota Land Trust voluntarily submitted itself to a rigorous, external and independent review of its practices. Through this review, the Land Trust Accreditation Commission confirmed that the Minnesota Land Trust operates in an ethical, legal and technically sound manner that ensures the long-term protection of land in the public

interest. Applying for accreditation helped the Minnesota Land Trust to evaluate and streamline its processes and implement several important policy updates.

The Minnesota Land Trust's status as one of the first accredited land trusts in the country demonstrates its role as a national leader in the land trust community. We are thrilled that the Commission has recognized the Minnesota Land Trust as an organization that meets national quality standards for protecting important natural places in perpetuity.



News and Views is published by the Minnesota Land Trust using paper from Forest Stewardship Council-certified sources.

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For more information, visit www.fsc.org

The Minnesota Land Trust depends on the charitable support of individuals, foundations and businesses. If you are not already a member of the Minnesota Land Trust, we invite you to join by making a tax-deductible contribution by using the enclosed envelope.

You can also donate online at www.mnland.org or by calling 651-647-9590.





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MINNESOTA LAND TRUST
 2356 University Ave. W.
 Suite 240
 St. Paul, Minnesota 55114
 Phone: (651) 647-9590
 Fax: (651) 647-9769
 E-mail: mnland@mnland.org
 www.mnland.org

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The Value of Protecting Islands

Minnesota may have more than 10,000 lakes, but an equally impressive statistic is the number of islands. Rainy Lake alone has over 1,600. Lake of the Woods counts 14,552. These water-locked chunks of Minnesota's geography have remained free of extensive development, but that might be changing.

With over 10,000 lakes and thousands of miles of rivers, islands are a common feature of Minnesota's waters. From an ecological perspective, Minnesota's islands may not be as complex as their tropical counterparts in the world's oceans. Yet our islands possess attributes that make their protection worthwhile.

Islands provide lakes with additional shoreline, and undisturbed shoreline is critical to the ecology of the lake.

Despite their charm, islands have experienced limited development historically. Living on an island, let alone building on it, requires a boat in summer or thick ice during the winter. With these challenges to human occupation, islands have gone largely undeveloped, serving instead as the scenic backdrop to the

surrounding lake. Often, islands become one of the lake's defining features – an amenity shared and enjoyed by those living on the mainland or those plying the surrounding waters.

Yet the challenges of island development may become less of an issue as less and less mainland shoreline is available to meet the demand for lake development.

The Land Trust is actively working to protect land, including islands, and has completed island-based projects recently in Rainy Lake and Bay Lake.



Islands, like this Land Trust-protected example in Burntside Lake, often serve as the defining feature of the larger lake.

Historic Island Home of Ernest Oberholtzer Protected

The Minnesota Land Trust and the Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation announced the permanent protection of the Review Islands, the Rainy Lake home of conservationist Ernest C. Oberholtzer. Completion of this project ensures that the islands' important historic, scenic and conservation values will remain in place forever.

Ernest Oberholtzer was born in Davenport, Iowa in 1884 and lived to become a central figure in the wilderness protection of the international border lakes region that today includes Voyageurs National Park and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. "Ober," as he was known, came to love the region as a young Harvard graduate.

Eventually settling on Mallard, one of the "Review Islands" lying near International Falls, Ober constructed a series of unique buildings using native materials that blended with the rugged granite and pine landscape. Ober lived on Mallard Island for 50 years, where his status as a soft-spoken conservationist and friend of the Ojibwe became well known.

Following his death in 1977, colleagues of Oberholtzer and supporters of his conservation ethic formed the Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation to preserve his "North Woods legacy." Today, the Foundation hosts a variety of educational, literary, and conservation-based programs. Each summer Mallard Island becomes a unique cultural center for a busy schedule of visiting groups of writers, photographers and musicians. Volunteers work to keep the island and its buildings in good shape, authentic to Ober's last years.

The Review Islands themselves comprise 18 acres and approximately 10,000 feet of shoreline. Lying like ships in review, Mallard Island is joined by three others: Hawk, Crow and Gull. All four islands are now protected by the Minnesota Land Trust.



Ober with Ojibway friend Billy Magee and "Snippy"
 Photo: The Minnesota Historical Society

Funding for the project consisted entirely of private donations from members of the Minnesota Land Trust, the Rainy Lake Conservancy and the Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation.

Beth Waterhouse, executive director of the Oberholtzer Foundation notes, "It was with four years of study and much discussion that the Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation board of directors made the decision to work with the Minnesota Land Trust to protect all four

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Thanks to you, the Land Trust completed 37 new land projects in our fiscal year that ended June 30. That's 4,100 acres that will remain healthy for wildlife, water and people. This was a record year for us and was made possible by the commitment and generosity of landowners choosing to protect their land, and the growing number of donors supporting conservation.



While all 37 projects are important, we have chosen to highlight a special project in Rainy Lake – the Review Islands -- in this issue of News and Views.

While islands like these exist in abundance in our 10,000 lakes, they are particularly vulnerable as mainland shoreline becomes developed out to its maximum limits. This particular project carries additional significance as the historic home of legendary conservationist Ernest C. Oberholtzer. The Land Trust thanks the Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation board of directors for making the decision to protect this historic property, and also the Rainy Lake Conservancy whose members supported the project financially.

Speaking of legendary conservationists, the Land Trust wishes to honor a contemporary conservation hero of our own: John Baird. John is the recipient of the 2008 John Peck Volunteer of the Year award. As a founding Land Trust board member, John has exemplified the spirit and actions of a true conservationist during his lifetime. Congratulations, John!

I am also pleased to announce that the Land Trust was itself the recipient of an award. In September, the Minnesota Land Trust was one of 39 land trusts from across the country to receive accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. While voluntary accreditation by a third party imparts distinction, the process itself helped the Minnesota Land Trust to evaluate and streamline its processes and implement several important policy updates.

Also worth noting, congress passed legislation in May that extends the expanded tax incentives to landowners who donate a qualified conservation easement. If someone you know is interested in protecting their land, they should contact the Land Trust as soon as possible in order to take advantage of these incentives before they expire at the end of 2009.

And at the State level, you will have an opportunity to vote for long-term conservation funding this fall through a statewide referendum: The Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. Please see the brief article below which contains additional details to help you make an informed decision. Remember, leaving the ballot question unanswered results in a "no" vote.

This fall, our dedicated army of volunteers is fanning out throughout the state to help us monitor our protected properties. This important aspect of our work ensures that your investment in protecting land remains solid. We are always in the recruiting mode for additional volunteers, so if you enjoy spending quality time in our great outdoors I encourage you to consider joining us for our spring 2009 monitoring season.

In closing, I want to thank you again for your generosity. The work that led to a record number of new projects last year has produced a new crop of potential projects for this year. Your continued financial support will quickly find its way to one of them.

Vote Yes to Protect the Minnesota You Love

Constitutional Amendment to Appear on November Ballot

The Minnesota Land Trust is pleased to be part of a broad-based statewide coalition of more than 200 organizations supporting the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment. This amendment, appearing on the ballot on November 4, will dedicate funding to preserve clean water, protect game, fish and wildlife habitat, arts and parks and trails.

Minnesota's land, water, and wildlife face more threats today than ever before:

One quarter of the state's wildlife species are threatened by habitat loss and pollution.

Over one million acres of wooded lands, natural areas and farmland will be lost over the next 25 years.

Less than 1% of native prairie remains.
40% of the lakes and rivers we have tested are polluted or impaired.

To make matters worse, Minnesota's investment in land conservation is at an all-time low. Conservation funding dropped 47% in the past five years alone, and Minnesota now spends just 1.1% of its general budget on natural resources. In fact, Minnesota's investment in land conservation, at just five dollars per person annually, is about half of that of Wisconsin.

To address these threats and safeguard Minnesota's highly valued natural resources, the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment would increase the state sales and use tax by three-eighths of one percent—pennies or less a day from all of us. One-third of the funding would be dedicated to clean water, another third to natural areas and wildlife, about 14% to parks and trails, and the remaining

funds would be directed to arts education and cultural legacy. Funding would last for 25 years and could only be used to supplement, and not replace, traditional sources of funding for natural resources.

Minnesota's outdoors are vital to our way of life. We must act now to protect the places we hike, bike, fish, swim, and hunt for our children and grandchildren. This November 4, you have a once in a lifetime chance to make a long-term investment in Minnesota. Vote Yes on The Clean Water, Land and Legacy amendment and protect the Minnesota you love for future generations.

The following text contains the actual ballot question language:

"Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to dedicate funding to protect our drinking water sources; to protect, enhance, and restore our wetlands, prairies, forest, and fish, game, and wildlife habitat; to preserve our arts and cultural heritage; to support our parks and trails; and to protect, enhance, and restore our lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater by increasing the sales and use tax rate beginning July 1, 2009, by three-eighths of one percent on taxable sales until the year 2034?"

More information is available at the Vote Yes website:
www.yesformn.org.



Latest Lake Emma Project Provides Complete Protection

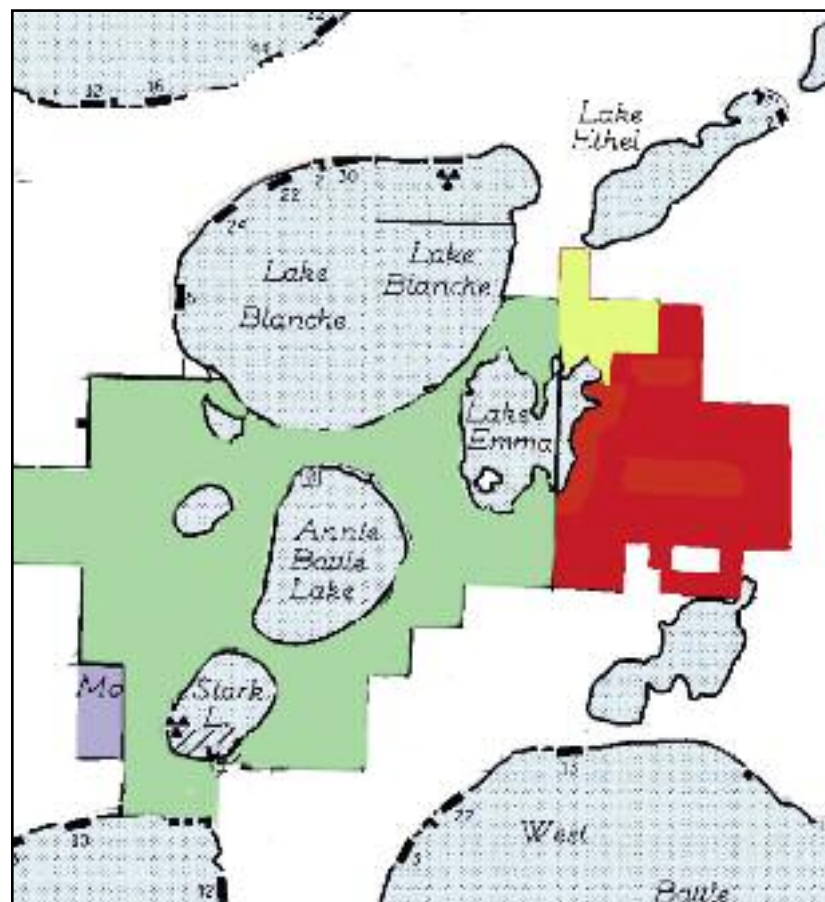
The Minnesota Land Trust announces the completion of a third conservation project that completes the long-term protection of all private shoreline along Lake Emma in Otter Tail County. With the active cooperation of landowners Christopher and Nancy Green of St. Michael, Minnesota, the remaining 1,900 feet of privately owned shoreline will be protected with a conservation easement held and monitored by the Land Trust.

With the completion of this project with the Green family, the Minnesota Land Trust has now protected the entire eastern shore of Lake Emma. Sarah Strommen, regional conservation director for the Land Trust notes, "This is the capstone project of our work on Lake Emma, most of which lies within Glendalough State Park. With two earlier projects completed in 2006 and 2007, we are thrilled that the Greens have joined their neighbors to ensure the preservation of this important shallow lake. This will be a real benefit is to visitors of Glendalough State Park who can now count on Lake Emma to remain healthy for fish and waterfowl as well as their own recreational pursuits."

Lake Emma possesses several unique characteristics that contribute to its significance as a target of conservation. It lies in the heart of the historical prairie pothole region characterized by smaller, shallow lakes that support migratory waterfowl as they pass through Minnesota. These smaller lakes play a critical role in filtering ground water; their bordering vegetation helps to absorb chemicals found in runoff water. Lake Emma and the surrounding woodlands of Glendalough State Park provide important habitat for both resident wildlife and migrating songbirds, waterfowl and shorebirds.

Funding for this project was made available from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources

(LCCMR). The Land Trust has been working since 2001 with a number of conservation partners through the Minnesota Habitat Conservation Partnership to restore fragmented landscapes and connect high-quality habitat for the purpose of sustaining fish, wildlife and plant populations.



Latest Lake Emma project, outlined in yellow, lies adjacent to previous Land Trust projects (in red). Glendalough State Park represented by green.

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islands with a conservation easement. Our mission already protects the islands and limits development, and we know that the current building codes on Mallard's granite spine would do the same. Yet we wanted to make a statement to future boards of directors, to the State and the community about the importance of what Ober called 'the university of the wilderness.' There is nothing like it, and it is worth saving in the formal sense by entering into this agreement and collaborating with the Minnesota Land Trust to preserve the islands."

While this is a signature project for the Minnesota Land Trust, it is not their first project on Rainy Lake. In 1997, the former owners of nearby Windsong Island protected their island property with the Land Trust and a third project, also in the vicinity, is underway.

"The Review Islands project is important for many reasons," says Jane Prohaska, president of the Minnesota Land Trust. "Ober was such a driving force behind the protection of the wilderness and keeping this historic site protected is important for symbolic reasons alone. In addition, protecting the islands and others like them preserves the rugged nature of Rainy Lake, which is the reason people come here in the first place. The Review Islands lie just outside the boundary of Voyageurs National Park – the only national park in Minnesota."

The Review Islands will remain under the ownership of the Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation, which continues to conduct its mission-based programs. The Minnesota Land Trust will visit the property annually to ensure that the terms of the easement remain intact.

Local reaction has been positive. Waterhouse notes, "We have been fairly quiet about this decision. Those who notice the "protected forever" signs or have seen written notice of this decision have been entirely positive— to them it seems quite in line with what they already know about Mallard Island."

John Baird - Volunteer of the Year

The Minnesota Land Trust is pleased to announce that it has selected John Baird as the 2008 John Peck Volunteer of the Year. John is a well-known conservation leader in Washington County, where his family has lived for generations.

Since the Land Trust's early days, John has worked tirelessly on behalf of the organization in a number of capacities. He is a founding Land Trust board member and currently serves on the Land Trust's conservation committee, assisting with review and selection of new land protection projects. He also has a long tenure as a volunteer easement monitor.

John and his wife Nancy also demonstrated their commitment to land conservation and the Minnesota Land Trust by protecting their property, Sandy Hills Farm, with a conservation easement in 1996. The Bairds protected additional land in 2001 and 2002.

The John Peck Volunteer of the Year Award was established in 2005 to honor the extensive volunteer contributions of John Peck to the Minnesota Land Trust. John and his wife Linda have made significant contributions to conservation. John continues to serve the Land Trust as a volunteer land protection specialist and coordinator of Central Minnesota volunteers.

John Baird will be presented with his award at the Landowner and Volunteer Appreciation event held on October 11, 2008 in Lake Elmo, Minnesota.