



NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

Leaving a Lasting Legacy for the Northwoods

Old-Growth Forest Protection at Sack Lake



Sack Lake in Iron County.

The Northwoods Land Trust's (NWLTL) Old-Growth Forest Initiative aims to conserve some of the last pockets of old-growth forest by assisting private landowners and government agencies in protecting these remarkable habitats.

Less than one percent of old-growth forest remains in the northwoods of Wisconsin. Generally, old-growth forests are sites with stands of trees older than a 125-year average age. In the early 1800's, up to three-quarters of the Upper Great Lakes region was old-growth forest. To the settlers of that

Less than one percent of old-growth forest remains in the northwoods.

time, the cutting and burning of forests was a way of life; trees were seen as raw materials and forests as barriers to expansion. Today, old-growth forests serve as benchmarks for understanding the implications of disturbing the natural landscape and provide a glimpse into Wisconsin's past.

In December of 2019, NWLT acquired the Sack Lake Hemlocks Old-Growth Forest in the Town of Knight in Iron County from the State of Wisconsin Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL) through an exchange that allowed BCPL to acquire a different tract that is both more

(Continued next page)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- SACK LAKE HEMLOCKS OLD-GROWTH FOREST
- MORaine SPRINGS CONSERVATION EASEMENT
- HEMLOCK ISLAND CONSERVATION EASEMENT
- IN MEMORY
- FIELD NOTES & WISH LIST
- TED'S UPDATE
- QUESTIONNAIRE

MISSION:

The Northwoods Land Trust (NWLTL) promotes conservation by private landowners of natural shorelands, woodlands, wetlands, and other natural resources as public benefits for present and future generations in Vilas, Oneida, Forest, Florence, Iron, Price and northern Langlade Counties.



The accreditation seal recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent.

NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

519 E. Wall St.

P.O. Box 321

Eagle River, WI 54521-0321

Phone: 715-479-2490

Email: nwlt@northwoodslandtrust.org

Website: www.northwoodslandtrust.org

Follow us on Facebook 

Old-Growth Forest Protection at Sack Lake - *continued*

suitable for timber management and is adjacent to other BCPL holdings. (In an effort to consolidate land holdings, the BCPL has been selling or trading some tracts of publicly owned forestland in recent years, some that include vulnerable old-growth sites.)

The Sack Lake Hemlocks property includes 129 acres of land and 871 feet of natural shoreline on Sack Lake, a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources identified “wild lake.” NWLT acquired the property after a year-long process of discussions with BCPL, working out the logistics of the transaction, and raising grant funding from various private foundations.

BCPL, the original Wisconsin land agency charged with managing Wisconsin’s trust assets for the benefit of education, owned the Sack Lake Hemlocks property continuously since January 25, 1872 when the parcels were granted by the federal government in a Federal Swamp



American marten near the Sack Lake Hemlocks Old-Growth Forest. Martens were once found in nearly all forested counties in Wisconsin and were integral to the trapping and fur trade industry, but today are a state-endangered species.

~ Photo by Zach Wilson.

Land Patent. BCPL lightly and selectively logged the property in the early 1950’s leaving many of the old trees. Since then, the forest has virtually been untouched and has had ample time to develop stands of towering eastern hemlock, sugar maple and yellow birch. Forests of this old age are extremely rare in Wisconsin today.

“At BCPL, our school trust lands mission is to generate income for our public education beneficiaries in an ecologically responsible manner. The Northwoods Land Trust has provided BCPL some great help in realizing that mission. By conveying isolated but ecologically important parcels of school trust land to the NWLT, BCPL is able to use the proceeds to acquire consolidated parcels of timberland that are more suited to commercial timber production and revenue generation for our beneficiaries. The result is a win-win for everybody,” said Tom German, Executive Secretary of BCPL.

Retaining ‘old trees’ in our forested landscape preserves the genetic pool of the strongest and most disease resistant trees, those that have survived and adapted over centuries of environmental change. Cultural and recreational values are also retained in these beautiful forests as they attract hikers, birders, hunters, and budding scientists. As the new owner of the Sack Lake Hemlocks property, NWLT will manage it for its old-growth forest habitat and for the wildlife that thrive there, as well as for public access for hiking, hunting, fishing and nature observation.

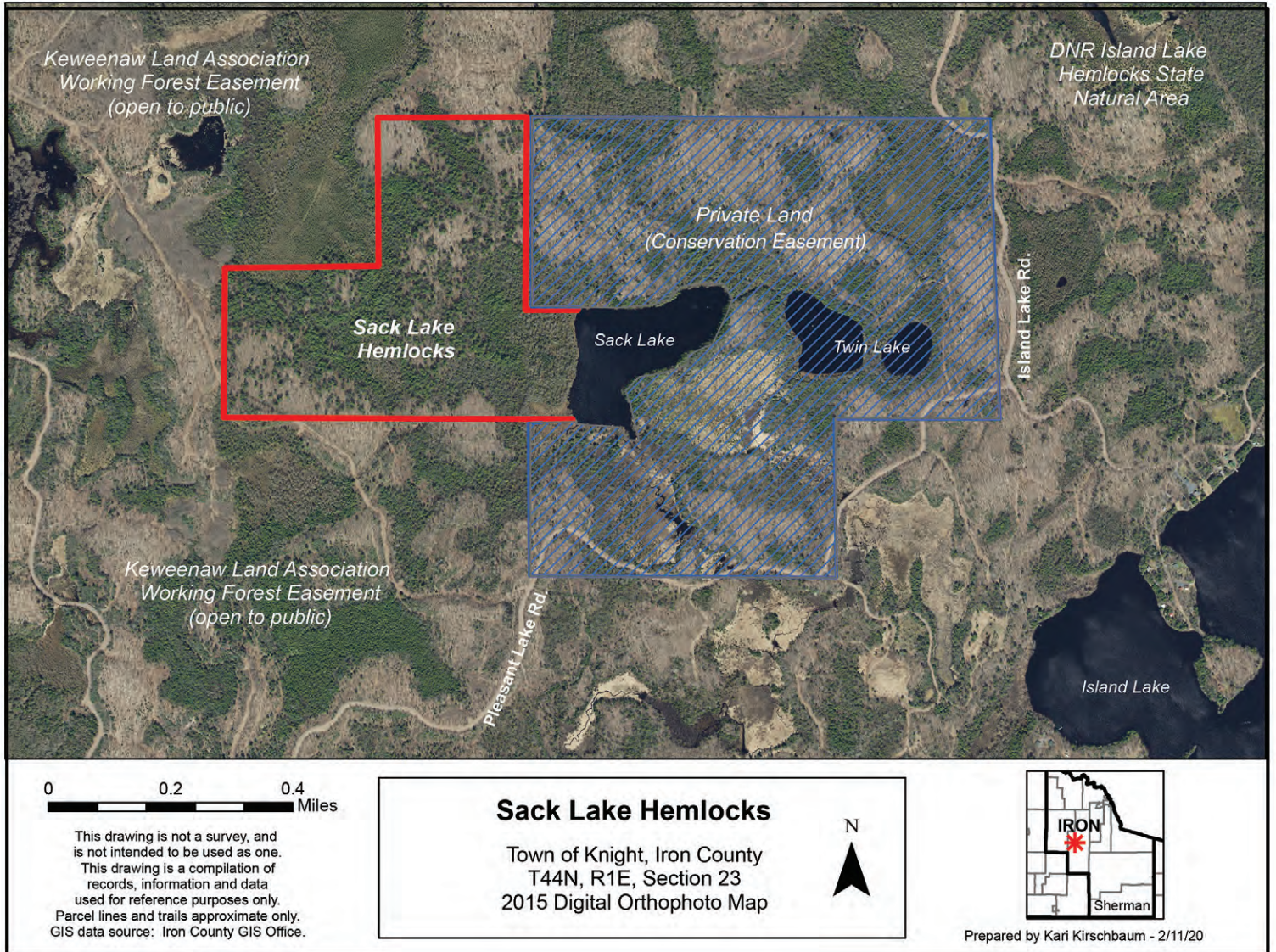
The biological diversity of songbirds, birds of prey, mammals and understory plants are protected along with old-growth forests. The Sack Lake Hemlocks



Kari Kirschbaum, NWLT’s Land Protection Coordinator, stands next to an old-growth sugar maple at the Sack Lake Hemlocks Old-Growth Forest.

Retaining ‘old trees’ in our forested landscape preserves the genetic pool of the strongest and most disease resistant trees, those that have survived and adapted over centuries of environmental change.

Map of the Sack Lake Hemlocks Old-Growth Forest



property has been identified as particularly important habitat for the American marten, a Wisconsin Endangered Species.

Zach Wilson of the Iron County Conservation Department has been using radio-telemetry to study American marten in Iron County. He has documented over 100 marten locations in the area surrounding the Sack Lake property, making protection of old forest habitat in this region vital for the persistence of marten in Iron County. Wilson notes that the area is also unique for other rare species such as Canada jay, black-throated blue warblers and wood turtles.

“The Board of Directors of NWLT is grateful for the cooperation of BCPL and for the support of project partners and funders, allowing NWLT to acquire this beautiful forest and wild lakeshore. We are particularly thrilled that the property is adjacent to a 215-acre privately-owned conservation easement, and together, the two properties protect the entire shoreline of Sack Lake,” said Ted Anchor, NWLT’s Executive Director.

Grant support for the permanent conservation of the Sack Lake Hemlocks Old-Growth Forest was provided by the Caerus Foundation, Inc., John C. Bock Foundation, Modestus Bauer Foundation, American Natural Heritage Foundation, Arthur L. & Elaine V. Johnson Foundation, James D. & Jane P. Watermolen Foundation, and Cellcom Green Gifts Program. 🌲

“Old-growth [forest] offers a time and scale perspective that is impossible to achieve in the short lives that we humans are given.” – *Our Living Ancestors: The History and Ecology of Old-growth Forests in Wisconsin and Where to Find Them* by John Bates. 🌲

Moraine Springs Conservation Easement

The Jacqueline Bassett family of Ironwood, Michigan and Las Cruces, New Mexico donated a conservation easement on December 11, 2019 to NWLT to protect 335 acres of land and over 11,000 feet of shoreline on several bodies of water in Presque Isle in Vilas County.

At the signing of the easement, Karen Mallum, daughter of the late Jacqueline Bassett, recalled that her mother was very concerned about the disposition of her property and she began working with NWLT on the idea of a conservation easement to conserve the property that she loved. “In fact, she was working on purchasing another 40 acres to expand it before her passing just a couple years ago. She fell in love with the land more than the idea of raising trout,” Karen shared.

When Jacqueline found the original 270-acre property for sale in the 1970’s it was a working trout farm where she raised trout for many years. “As time went on and properties came up for sale, she started collecting property, because she could see the area around her was being bought up



The family of the late Jacqueline Bassett celebrates the signing of the conservation easement at their property.

and subdivided. Over time she wound up with this larger property, not as an investment but as protection for her own land. She collected it to protect it,” said Karen.

Trout farming wasn’t the only business that the Bassett family ran from the Presque Isle property. In the late 1970’s to early 1980’s they had Moraine Springs Ski Touring, one of the early cross-country ski operations in the north country including groomed trails and a chalet.

Dave Beekman, Jacqueline’s son, recalled his time as a teenager on the property. “It was ideal in the winter when there wasn’t as much work to do for the trout farm. I camped a lot and would get on my cross-country skis and head into Ottawa National Forest in Upper Michigan.” By the early 1990’s all commercial use of the property had ended and the family used the property as a residence and enjoyed its woods and waters.

Siblings Karen and Dave relayed that their mom’s legacy was in preserving an intact landscape. “Everything is getting so chopped up and fragmented. Big tracks of land are disappearing and I think they’re important. Mom wanted to preserve what was around her as it was so that it didn’t fall prey to being chopped up into 5 or 10 acre pieces.” The 335 acres now conserved will remain as one tract to protect fish and wildlife habitat and maintain the quality of Moraine Lake and Moraine Springs Creek.

“NWLT is honored to partner with the Bassett family to protect this unique property forever. The Moraine Springs property is a wonderfully diverse mix of rolling hardwood forest, wetlands, springs, trout streams and lakeshore. The Bassett family’s donation of a conservation easement is an incredible way to honor the spirit and legacy of their mother,” shared Kari Kirschbaum, NWLT Land Protection Coordinator. 🌲



The spring feeds a trout stream that includes high-quality brook trout habitat and cold water necessary for their survival.



This spring pond in Presque Isle in Vilas County is now protected by the Bassett family and the Northwoods Land Trust.

Hemlock Island Conservation Easement on Wildcat Lake

On February 27th of this year, Richard and Carol Phillips of Seguin, Texas and Presque Isle, Wisconsin donated a conservation easement to NWLT. This conservation easement will protect forever all of Hemlock Island on Wildcat Lake in Presque Isle in Vilas County.

At the signing of the conservation easement, Carol recalled memories of her childhood when her family vacationed at Wildcat Lodge Resort on Wildcat Lake. After marrying Richard, their connection to Wildcat Lake grew deeper through annual vacations at Wildcat Lake. Carol and Richard raised their three boys to appreciate nature by canoeing along the lake's bays and islands. Eventually, the Phillips bought a cabin on Wildcat Lake.

In 2017, Richard discovered that the largest island, Hemlock Island, was privately owned and facing tax delinquency. The future of the island became of concern to the Phillips, so they started down the three-year path to acquire the property and protect it from development. The island was completely wild, and the Phillips were anxious that it remain so. The challenge in protecting the island was that it had been passed by inheritance to twelve separate owners.

The Phillips patiently worked through the process of contacting all twelve of the property owners. All agreed to sell their interest as they didn't have a personal connection to the region and supported the Phillips' plan to protect the island. After purchasing all twelve shares of the island with the support of the Northwoods Land Trust, the Phillips, as sole owners, donated a conservation easement to the land trust.

Carol said, "Ever since I vacationed at Wildcat Lodge as a kid, my favorite thing about Wildcat Lake was its extensive natural

shoreline and the wildlife it attracted. It means a great deal to me to be able to forever protect beautiful Hemlock Island and the wildlife it nurtures."

Hemlock Island is approximately 4.5 acres in size with 2,252 feet of natural shoreline, and is located in the Border Lakes region of Vilas County, an area that boasts extensive forests, wetlands, lakes, and streams along Wisconsin's northern boundary with Michigan. The Border Lakes region contains more than 100 lakes connected by a complex network of high-quality wetlands and streams, supporting a diversity of native fish and other wildlife.



Now all of Wildcat Lake's islands are protected thanks to the Phillips' donation of a conservation easement to the Northwoods Land Trust.

Although the island is not open to the public, it provides many public benefits including wildlife habitat for nesting birds and spawning fish, scenic value to residents and visitors to Wildcat Lake, protection of water quality by limiting runoff into Wildcat Lake, and complimenting protective efforts of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The State owns the lake's four other islands and the Northern Highlands-American Legion State Forest is located on the south end of Wildcat Lake.

"The Northwoods Land Trust is grateful to Richard and Carol for their determination to protect Hemlock Island for the health of Wildcat Lake, and the benefit of the fish, wildlife and people that enjoy the lake. Because of their tenacity and generosity, the island will remain wild and scenic forever," stated Kari Kirschbaum, NWLT Land Protection Coordinator. 🌲



Richard and Carol Phillips (in plaid shirt and holding the sign) signed a conservation easement with representatives from the Northwoods Land Trust to protect Hemlock Island on Wildcat Lake in Presque Isle, Wisconsin.

In Memory of Dan Wisniewski *By Bryan Pierce (Former NWLT Executive Director)*

NWLT lost a great conservationist and friend when Dan Wisniewski passed away on April 16th at the age of 73. Dan was an exceptional individual who truly exhibited extraordinary commitment to Wisconsin's land conservation movement. That commitment included everything from the most local land protection efforts, to county, state and even national level conservation initiatives.

Dan held a series of positions in state and local government for 35 years. He served on the staffs of three Wisconsin governors, including four years as Chief of Staff for Governor Tony Earl. Dan was instrumental in encouraging the support of each of the governors for a host of conservation programs including maintaining the authorization and funding for the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

Governor Jim Doyle appointed Dan to be Executive Secretary for the Wisconsin Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL) where he served for five years before retiring. At BCPL, he was responsible for the management of about 80,000 acres of forests and wetlands in northern Wisconsin.

Dan was well aware that some of the last remaining old-growth forest tracts and pristine wetlands owned by BCPL could be threatened. He shared that concern at a meeting of conservation partners hosted by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin in August of 2004. That meeting is where I first met Dan and where he also became acquainted with the work of NWLT.

Dan agreed to join the NWLT board of directors in 2005 and quickly became the chair of the conservation committee which evaluates and recommends approval of all of NWLT's conservation projects. He stated that "being on the NWLT board has given him the opportunity to be an active part of conservation at a most basic, grassroots level, helping people preserve the land they love."

When Dan started on the board, the land trust had just completed its 7th conservation easement and had protected a total of about 174 acres of private lands with about 1.5 miles of natural lake shorelines. Since that time Dan helped shepherd conservation projects to reach a current total of over 13,600 acres and 72 miles of lake and river shorelines permanently protected on well over 100 successful projects.

Among these projects are two critical old-growth sites NWLT acquired directly from BCPL to ensure their lasting protection - a 40 acre old-growth white cedar parcel on the Deerskin River in Vilas County, and recently the Sack Lake Hemlocks Old-Growth Forest (see page 1 for the full story). These purchases are just another way Dan was able to help permanently protect some of the "best of the rest" of remaining natural area quality habitats in northern Wisconsin.

Dan also volunteered his assistance with the Friends of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy, served on the Dane County Parks Commission, was appointed to the Wisconsin Stewardship Advisory Group, and helped at local, state and national levels with Trout Unlimited. Dan's efforts were recognized with lifetime achievement awards from Gathering Waters: Wisconsin's Alliance for Land Trusts and from the Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

Dan loved the rustic cabin he constructed on Spring Lake in Vilas County in the spirit of Aldo Leopold. He spent many days exploring the land and waters of the Northwoods, especially with a fly rod. His passion for trout fishing was well known. He made it his personal mission to get me out of the NWLT office each summer to fish the Deerskin and other trout waters.

Our hearts go out to his wife, Fran DeGraff, his five children and other family and many friends. We have all lost a great role model, conservation leader and friend. He truly made a positive, lasting impact in the Northwoods and far beyond. We will all miss him dearly. 🌲



In Memory

NWLT thanks the family of Edward M. Braun for naming NWLT as the beneficiary of memorial donations given in his memory. Mr. Braun passed away on January 6, 2020 after spending over 60 years in the Eagle River area, planting tens of thousands of trees on his family lands on Decker Lake and Dad's Lake in an effort to beautify the area and keep lakes clean.



Notes From the Field

- Landowners of our conservation easement properties often share wildlife sightings that they have detected on trail cameras including bobcat, wolves, bear, and fisher among others. This past year, one landowner near Minocqua even had a moose sighting!
- Conservation organizations are trending towards using more technology in land stewardship monitoring activities. Phones and tablets with digital mapping software are commonly used to make data collection more efficient and precise. NWLT is currently taking this leap with a database called Landscape that is designed for in-field and office use for land trusts with larger numbers of properties to monitor.
- Land protection of even small tracts of land can be extremely important. On a recent visit to a smaller sized property owned by NWLT, an active bald eagle nest was located. The small corridor of protected land will likely lead to a greater chance of nest success of this iconic bird so symbolic of the northwoods and our nation. 🌲

Special tax opportunity! The federal CARES Act allows taxpayers to deduct up to \$300 of their cash donations to qualifying organizations without having to itemize deductions on their 2020 Federal tax returns. (Since it's an above-the-line deduction, taxable incomes are reduced by up to \$300 while still claiming the standard deduction.) Please consider a donation of \$20, \$30 or \$50 to the Northwoods Land Trust to help protect local forests, shoreland and wetlands that provide permanent and lasting benefits during this time of uncertainty.

Visit www.northwoodslandtrust.org/donate

Thinking longer term? Many of our supporters have included the Northwoods Land Trust when planning for their estates. Legacy gifts can make a huge difference in helping the land trust conserve high quality properties in the northwoods. Making a gift through a will or family trust can be one of the finest ways to leave a legacy. Contact us to have our legacy booklet mailed to you.

Wish List

NWLT has the following needs and wishes for our office grounds and land stewardship department. Do you have a reliable, safe item in good working condition to donate?

- Trail construction tools including: pick ax, Pulaski, spud bar, post hole digger, spade shovels
- Lightweight chainsaw and safety helmets and glasses
- Cordless skilsaw or circular saw, with batteries
- 14-foot aluminum V-hull boat with a 9-15 HP outboard motor and trailer
- Canoe and paddles
- Picnic table
- Weather-proof or cedar flower planters

Please contact us in advance at (715) 479-2490 or nwlt@northwoodslandtrust.org if you have an item to donate or would like to make a purchase.

Thank you!



MEMBERSHIP IN THE NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

Leave a Lasting Legacy for the Northwoods

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone (w): _____

Telephone (h): _____

E mail Address: _____

Please make checks payable and mail to:

NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST, INC.

P.O. Box 321

Eagle River, WI 54521-0321

MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS

- Individual\$25
- Family.....\$35
- Supporter\$50
- Founder.....\$100
- Conservator\$250
- Steward.....\$500
- Land Legacy\$1000
- My additional contribution of \$_____ is also enclosed.

INTERESTS

- I have property I may wish to conserve, please send me the free landowner's guide.
- I am interested in becoming a volunteer to assist the NWLT.
- I am interested in contributing to NWLT in my will or other planned giving.



NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

P.O. Box 321 • Eagle River, WI 54521-0321

NONPROFIT
US POSTAGE PAID
EAGLE RIVER WI
PERMIT NO 47

Electronic Service Requested

BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF

Mary Schwaiger, President

Bob Martini, Vice-President

Pete Davison, Secretary

Atty. William Dickens, Treasurer

John Bates

Meta Reigel Brandt

Ron Eckstein

Dr. Terry Hatch

John Huppert

Atty. Mitchell Olson

Cathy Techtmann

Beth Tornes

Ted Anchor,

Executive Director

Kari Kirschbaum,

Land Protection Specialist

Troy Walters,

Outreach & Monitoring Coordinator

Trisha Moore,

Conservation Specialist

Carrie Rasmussen,

Development Coordinator

Leaving a Lasting Legacy for the Northwoods

Conservation Continues – We Need Your Input!

As the Northwoods Land Trust (NWLTL) closes in on our 20th year of conserving the Northwoods, we should reflect on our achievements while taking stock of how strange our world has become with the appearance of COVID-19. The good news is that as always, the work goes on.

We have several new land conservation projects in the pipeline and have received numerous inquiries since the stay at home order began. Our staff is mostly working from home and we have settled into this new-normal routine.

In the face of all the adversity, it's been inspiring to witness our Board of Directors, funders, and you, our members and supporters, committed to our mission of conserving the Northwoods as our legacy to future generations.

Given the uncertainties surrounding the COVID-19 virus, NWLTL is cancelling our in-person annual meeting typically held in June and instead will be creating an annual report. The report will be up on our website in mid-June.

The Northwoods Land Trust is looking for your input! We are in the process of updating our five-year strategic plan and we would like your feedback to help steer our conservation priorities going forward. There are two ways you can participate:

- 1) Included with this newsletter is a paper copy of our questionnaire. You can fill it out and send it back to us in the mail.
- 2) Go to our website at www.northwoodslandtrust.org to follow the link on our homepage to complete the questionnaire electronically. This is preferred as we can easily compile your feedback!

We appreciate and value your response as your input will help us focus our efforts into the future.

~ Ted Anchor, NWLTL Executive Director 

