

NEWS



A newsletter for landowners of properties protected with conservation easements

2018 Monitoring Season is Underway!

By the time you read this, all of our volunteer monitor training sessions will be complete and the 2018 monitoring season is underway. As our portfolio of conservation easement grows, we are striving to get an earlier jump on our monitoring in order visit all of the properties in a timely manner, so look for a staff member or one of our certified volunteers to be contacting you in the coming months. As always, landowners are encouraged to join the monitor on the visit. This is a great time for landowners to ask questions or let the Land Trust know about any planned changes to the property. Our staff and volunteer monitors enjoy visiting with landowners and walking the land.



Stewardship Associate Andrew Moe monitoring a conservation easement in Pope County.

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QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

CONTACT THE STEWARDSHIP STAFF!

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A Primer on Vernal Pools and Their Stewardship

A “Vernal Pool,” You Say?

Vernal pools (also known as ephemeral pools) are seasonal wetlands that provide essential habitat for wildlife. They serve as the primary breeding ground for several species of amphibians and invertebrates and important foraging habitat for many reptiles, mammals and birds. They can be found in a number of locations, including fields, marshes, ditches, river floodplains and gravel pits, but are most commonly found in isolated depressions within forests. Despite being an overlooked habitat type, vernal pools are abundant—there are more than 250,000 in Minnesota alone.

One of the main reasons vernal pools are good breeding habitat is because they are often isolated from other waterbodies and are dry during long periods

during the year. Consequently, they are free of fish—a significant predator of eggs and larvae. Vernal pools are also characterized by the presence of certain species. In Minnesota, common inhabitants include blue-spotted salamander, wood frog, western/boreal chorus frog, and fairy shrimp. Vernal pools are also recognized as important habitat for the state threatened Blanding’s turtle.

Locating Vernal Pools on Your Land

The best time of year to search for vernal pools is mid to late spring once the snow has melted and the ground has begun to thaw. Springtime reptile and amphibian movement depends on weather conditions, so keep an eye on the forecast during this time—prolonged air temperatures above 40°F and warm rains will trigger arousal from hibernation. A great way to prepare for vernal pool identification is to familiarize yourself with vernal pool species and their appearance at different life stages (e.g., egg, larval & adult). ➔



BETH WESTERBACK

Forested vernal pool

When heading out to look for vernal pools, dress accordingly with rubber boots or waders and don't forget to use your ears! Listening for chorusing wood frogs in early spring can lead you in the direction of a potential vernal pool.

TIP: Google "wood frog chorus"- a YouTube video is the first result and provides both the sound of wood frogs calling and a good depiction of a forested vernal pool.

Adult amphibians do not linger in vernal pools very long after breeding, so be prepared to look for eggs, larvae and juveniles as well. Fairy shrimp are small crustaceans (0.5–1.0 inches in length) and tend to blend in, especially in pools with leaves on the bottom, so be patient and still in your observations. Finally, always be mindful that, while some temporary disturbance is inevitable, strive for minimal disruption of the pool and minimize handling of animals.

I Think I Found a Vernal Pool, Now What?

From a stewardship perspective, there are a number of habitat management best practices to consider when managing land where vernal pools are present:

- When conducting any work near vernal pools, operate equipment only when soils are frozen (winter) or very dry (summer) to avoid creating ruts and skid roads that collect or change the flow of water. These disturbances can influence the timing of wet/dry periods in a vernal pool, altering the species that can breed there.
- Avoid overharvesting in or around vernal pools. Removing the shade of the tree canopy can heat up the air,



JOHN WHITE

Wood frog with egg mass.

soil and water in the pool, change the period of time that water remains in the pool, and influence which species can survive there.

- Consult a licensed forester (and your easement!) before conducting a timber harvest on your property. Understand and follow all laws pertaining to tree harvesting near wetlands and waterbodies.



JOHN P CLARE

Blue-spotted salamander

For More Information and Resources:

For those interested in obtaining assistance with wildlife habitat management specific to your own land, be it vernal pool-related or otherwise, consult with your local MN Department of Natural Resources or Soil and Water Conservation District office. For more information regarding vernal pools and specific management strategies, there are a number of great resources available online from the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension.

STEWARDSHIP & CONSERVATION BY THE NUMBERS

549

Sites Monitored in 2017



1,400+
Volunteer hours in 2017

113 VOLUNTEER MONITORS

65% of Sites Monitored by Volunteers / **35%** by Staff

51,700

Total Acres Protected

53 COUNTIES

with a Conservation Easement

1,252,277 Total Feet of Shoreline Protected



2017 Landowners of the Year Jon and Lori Peterson (center) with Executive Director Kris Larson (right) and Stewardship Associate Andrew Moe.

2017 Landowner of the Year

For Jon and Lori Peterson, farming is a family affair. Jon's grandparents bought the family farm nestled in the scenic bluffs and valleys along the Root River in the 1920s. Since that time, the Peterson family has made farming their way of life for close to a century. Their son (and next door neighbor) Taylor is now the 4th generation to farm in the area.

The Petersons are also integral members of the Minnesota Land Trust family. While Jon and Lori are passionate about farming, they are equally passionate in their belief that a working farm can provide conservation benefits. To that end, they have had their entire farm operation certified organic. They use rotational grazing practices with their livestock, produce organic dairy and laying hens, and actively manage the surrounding forest.

In 2004, the Petersons completed their first conservation easement with the Land Trust, protecting just over 200 acres. In 2008, they completed two more easements, and their fourth in 2011. All told, the Petersons have permanently conserved over 700 acres of their idyllic land with the Land Trust and have been good stewards to boot.

In recognition of their ongoing commitment to land conservation and stewardship in Minnesota, it was our pleasure to recognize the Peterson family at the 2017 Treasured Places event in Winona last September. A special thank you to Jon and Lori, as well as to all of our wonderful landowners who continue to go the extra mile for conservation.

THINKING OF SELLING OR TRANSFERRING YOUR PROPERTY? More and more conserved land is selling – meaning there is a whole new generation of landowners who are learning about conservation easements and their rights and restrictions. It is a good idea to let the Land Trust know when you are selling and for you to direct your realtor and any potential buyers to us. We can provide information about the conservation easement and can answer questions from buyers. After closing, please provide us with a copy of the recorded deed and contact information for the buyer. Remember, even if ownership is transferring within the family or being transferred into a trust, the Land Trust should be notified in order to maintain accurate ownership records.



A prescribed burn on a Land Trust conservation easement in Rice County.

LANDOWNER RESOURCES:

Need an update to your land management plan?

Wondering about how to go about tackling a tough invasive?

We maintain a collection of online resources on our website for you to consult as you plan your next project.*

For Land Management Information:
www.mnland.org/landmanagement

For Potential Cost-Sharing Assistance Programs:
www.mnland.org/landprograms

*Don't forget to consult you conservation easement as well to ensure any necessary approvals are obtained prior to beginning your land management project. If you are unsure, contact us!

ATTENTION: SURVEY UPCOMING

Every few years we like to touch base with our landowners to gauge how our stewardship program is working in your eyes. This year we are going to conduct the survey electronically, so look for an e-mail upcoming with a link to the survey. If you would rather fill out a hard copy, contact Kristina Geiger and she can get one mailed out to you. She can be reached by phone (651) 917-6295 or kgeiger@mnland.org.



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



A Lasting Legacy

Whether it was going on your first fishing trip, spotting a rare bird, or just enjoying a quiet walk in the woods – chances are some of your fondest memories were made outdoors enjoying the land and waters that make Minnesota so unique.

As you plan for your future, you can ensure those experiences exist for the next generation of Minnesotans, and build in them the same connection to the outdoors that you have. By making a planned gift that reflects your love for our state's natural places, you help preserve those places, and those experiences – forever.

Explore planned giving options at mnlnd.org/plannedgiving or call Director of Development and Communications Alex Tsatsoulis at 651-917-6289 to discuss today.

Treasured Places

An appreciation event for landowners, volunteers, and conservation partners.

**JOIN US AT
TREASURED
PLACES
THIS FALL!**

Keep an eye on our email newsletter for upcoming information regarding the date and location. If you would like to sign up to receive e-news, contact the Land Trust.

We hope to see you there!



Landowners Larry Gates (center) and Dag Knudsen (right) with Executive Director Kris Larson at the 2017 Treasured Places event.