

NEWS



A newsletter for landowners of properties protected with conservation easements

2021 Monitoring Season Update

Our volunteer monitor trainings are now complete and you can expect to be contacted by a staff or volunteer monitor in the coming months regarding your annual visit. Please be advised that, even with the good progress on the vaccination front, our guidance in 2021 is for contactless monitoring visits. If both you and the monitor are comfortable with meeting in person, please continue to observe public health recommendations of meeting outdoors with physical distancing and masking. Regardless of whether you meet in person or not, monitors will contact you to schedule their visit and field any questions, concerns, or plans you might have.

In addition, our remote monitoring program will return this year and is expected to be a permanent fixture in our monitoring program going forward. Last year we monitored 25% of our protected

properties using satellite or aerial imagery. In 2021, we anticipate a similar proportion of remote visits, but in person monitoring visits will continue to be the predominant visit type. As a reminder, here are a couple things to note about remote monitoring:

- Staff will be in touch with all landowners whose properties will be monitored remotely to address routine easement-related questions and concerns
 - Staff will continue to visit each property in person every 5 years, at a minimum
- Whether your property is visited by one of our monitors or monitored remotely this year, we look forward to connecting with you to hear how things are going! Please direct any questions about monitoring to Director of Conservation Stewardship Sue Steinwall ssteinwall@mnland.org / (651) 917-6280 or Stewardship Program Manager Andrew Moe amoe@mnland.org / (651) 917-6293.

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QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

CONTACT THE STEWARDSHIP STAFF!

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

Treasured Places

We are thrilled to announce that Treasured Places, our annual appreciation event for landowners, volunteers, and conservation partners will be returning live and in person this year at Camp Olson YMCA! Join us on **Saturday, September 18** in Longville for a day of celebration at an iconic Minnesota summer camp recently protected by a conservation easement.

We'll make more detailed announcements regarding the day's events as the date draws closer - sign up for our email newsletter for the latest updates at www.mnland.org. We hope to see you there!

JOIN US AT
TREASURED
PLACES
THIS FALL!



A wagon ride tour of a protected property in Wabasha County as part of the 2017 Treasured Places event.

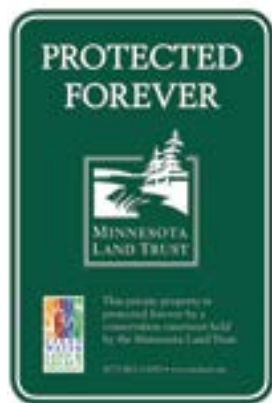
We are always keeping our eyes out for learning opportunities and direct assistance that may benefit our landowners.

LAND MANAGEMENT CORNER

We occasionally learn of funding available from organizations like Soil and Water Conservation Districts to be used on land management and restoration activities, and the Land Trust has also been working to secure its own funding for similar projects. We'd like to hear from landowners who are interested in restoration and habitat enhancement activities so that we can contact you if opportunities are available in your area.

Check it out! The Minnesota Woodland Owner Workshop has a virtual training upcoming titled "Growing Your Dream Forest". The training consists of 3 pre-recorded sessions and a live (online) Q&A session with presenters taking place on April 20, 6:30-7:30PM. Registration is required (\$10). For more information, contact Matt Russell, UMN Extension, russellm@umn.edu / (612) 434-3847.

Are you in need of new protected property signs? The Land Trust has durable, metal signs and boundary markers available for our landowners free of charge. Please contact the stewardship team or let your monitor know if you are interested.



DEFENDING THE PRAIRIE; HONORING FAMILY

Over the course of a single weekend one year, Becky and Graden West planted 5,000 trees at their property in Kandiyohi County.

"We were dreamers with a shovel," explains Becky, "and we were a lot younger then!"

But that explanation doesn't tell the whole story when it comes to the Wests' fierce commitment to restoring and preserving of their 30 acres of land between Spicer and New London. Not only have the Wests worked hard, planted trees, and devoted serious bucks toward the property's restoration, they donated a conservation easement to the Land Trust and, as explained later in this article, defended their conserved property and its precious memories.

As Becky recently told the District Court in her victim impact statement, "We hope someday this greenspace will make our grandchildren proud of us."

The Wests' story with their land began in 1980 when they purchased an old field of corn stubble and marsh along the banks of the Middle Fork of the Crow River. At the time, Graden was working at the New London federal fish hatchery. He was soon transferred to another post when the New London hatchery closed. For the next 8 years, the Wests returned to their riverside

property whenever they could to plant trees and nurture it back to health.

Graden taught his kids, the scouts, and 4-H'ers the finer points of archery, fishing, and fly-tying. Becky is a Master Gardener. Together, over the course of 40 years, they purchased additional land, planted thousands of trees, and restored the habitat. In 2011, they donated a conservation easement to the Minnesota Land Trust to protect the land forever.

When the Wests were preparing to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in 2011, they briefly considered taking a cruise. In the end, they decided to use the cruise money to hire a private company to restore the prairie at their protected property with the support of the Middle Fork Crow River Watershed. One of the Wests' grandchildren, Nate, took a special interest in the prairie and tirelessly worked with Becky to carefully spread seeds without dumping them and learning the Latin names for the prairie plants.

It takes many years of hard work and commitment to transform an old corn field back to native prairie. Some prairie forbs, including coreopsis, need years to sink deep tap roots to become established. By 2018, the coreopsis that had been planted in 2011 were finally blooming and the prairie was so well



Nate Shumaker planting flower seeds on the protected property in 2016.



Shumaker-West family at the polliNATE sign dedication in 2019.

"WE HOPE
SOMEDAY THIS
GREENSPACE
WILL MAKE OUR
GRANDCHILDREN
PROUD OF US."

—BECKY WEST

established that the Wests and their neighbors were enjoying glorious rounds of blooming prairie flowers. That year, however, was also marked with tragedy when Nate, then only 11, died from the injuries he sustained in a traffic accident.

In the spring of 2019, the Wests dedicated the restored prairie to Nate and erected a sign to honor Nate's love of nature, Monarch butterflies and other pollinators, and the prairie he helped nurture with his Grandma. The restored prairie is now known as the PolliNATE Memorial Prairie, but sometimes simply as Nate's Prairie.

Only two months after dedicating the prairie to Nate's memory, Becky and a friend spotted a woman out in Nate's Prairie who appeared to be picking flowers. Becky soon discovered that the woman was actually pulling blooming coreopsis from the ground, roots and all. By the time Becky had arrived on the scene, more than 20 plants had been yanked from the ground. Becky's friend snapped photographs while Becky talked to the stranger who was holding clumps of wilting bright yellow coreopsis, dropping clods of dirt, and offering no good explanation.

Becky soon started making calls, including to the Land Trust but also to the DNR and the Kandiyohi

County Sheriff's Department. Her calls were taken seriously. The DNR assigned a Conservation Officer to investigate. The County charged the woman with criminal damage to property.

The criminal matter was only recently concluded in 2021, nearly 2 years after dedicating the prairie to Nate. Becky admits that she was frustrated with the pace of the court process and the attitude of some regarding a seemingly trivial matter. The woman's defense attorney once called the destroyed flowers a bunch of "ditch weeds." Even so, the court ordered the trespasser to pay restitution to the Wests, placed her on probation, and ordered the woman to have no contact with the Wests.

With the court case behind her, Becky has invited her Master Gardener volunteers and friends to visit Nate's Prairie on April 25, the anniversary of Nate's death.

"I love watching the prairie bloom," says Becky. "Lance leaved coreopsis - which was the plant removed - blooms early; June into September, and monarda turns the expanse purple later June into July. Goldenrod is the fall star, but liatris also is calling then for attention. Grasses, which I never appreciated until I started watching the prairie, have their own many splendors."

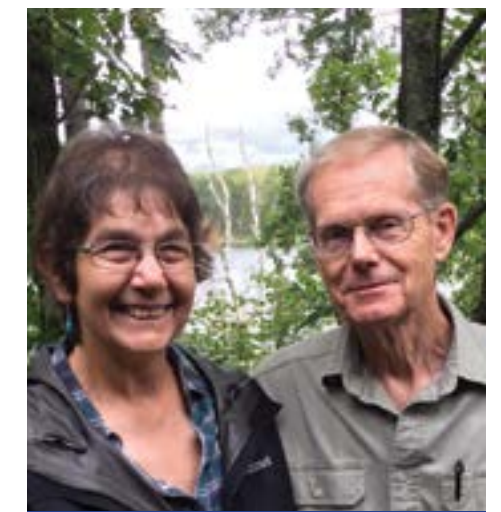
2020 Landowners of the Year: Florence and Carter Hedeem



Closed Bottle Gentian on Hedeem's property in Hubbard County.

At their protected property on Skunk Lake in Hubbard County, Florence and Carter Hedeem have put their land stewardship ethos into action, planting thousands of trees and engaging in sustainable forestry practices to promote diverse wildlife habitat. Their property was among the earliest easements to be held by the Land Trust when the Hedeems donated the conservation easement in 1998. Since then, they have also been active volunteers, helping create and maintain dozens of miles of the North Country Trail and monitoring conservation easements for the Land Trust.

It was our honor to present Florence and Carter with the Landowner of the Year award at our virtual Treasured Places event last fall. On behalf of everyone at the Land Trust, thank you to Carter and Florence and to all our landowners who have protected their land in perpetuity!



2020 Landowners of the Year Florence and Carter Hedeem at their property in Hubbard County.



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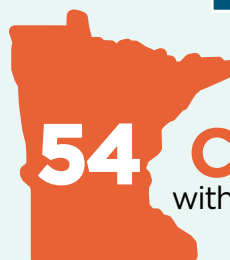
STEWARDSHIP & CONSERVATION BY THE NUMBERS



1,400+
Volunteer
hours in 2020

638

Sites Monitored
in 2020



54 COUNTIES

with a Conservation Easement

68,716

Total Acres
Protected

2,100,923 Total Feet of Shoreline Protected

90

**VOLUNTEER
MONITORS**

37% of Sites Monitored by Volunteers /
55% by Staff / **8%** by Contractors