

Blossoming young prairie
crabapple (*Malus ioensis*)

Landowner News

SPRING 2023



SUE STEINWALL

2023 Monitoring Season Update

As this reaches your hands, our volunteer monitor training courses are in full swing, and you can expect to be contacted by a staff or volunteer monitor in the coming months regarding your annual visit. For all in-person monitoring visits, landowners are encouraged to join the monitor. This is a great time for landowners to ask questions or let the Land Trust know if any changes to the property are planned. Our staff and volunteer monitors always enjoy visiting with you and walking the land together!

In addition, 2023 will be our fourth year using remote monitoring for a portion of our conservation easements. We will rely on inspecting satellite or aerial imagery in lieu of or in addition to an in-person visit. Last year, we monitored 17% of our

protected properties remotely and we anticipate a similar proportion of remote visits this year. As a reminder, here are a couple of 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.

We recently updated our monitoring factsheet to include information about remote monitoring and we encourage landowners to view that on our website at mnland.org/conservation-easement-monitoring/ or contact stewardship staff.

Wary sheep on a MLT protected
property in Pope County.



ANDREW MOE

Drone Monitoring

What's that about a Drone? Coming summer 2023, we are launching drone monitoring! Drones are unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) that can be remotely piloted by one of our Remote Pilot Certified Federal Aviation Administration Licensed staff. Drone technologies can enhance the monitoring process as they provide high-resolution imagery and an opportunity for efficient monitoring. Talk to one of our Stewardship staff to see if your property is a good fit for drone monitoring!



Image taken from drone.



A verdant scene at a protected property in Isanti County.

Scam Alert – Vacant Land

“I saw the Land Trust sign and thought I’d give you a call. What can you tell me about the conservation easement?”

Minnesota Land Trust’s stewardship team frequently gets calls like these and we are happy to answer the questions of real estate agents and buyers. We want future owners of conserved land to know about the Conservation Easement’s terms before the property sells.

When Stewardship Director Sue Steinwall received such a call from a listing agent last summer, she was surprised since she had been in regular contact with the landowner and he had never mentioned any plans to sell the property. The property is vacant land in a rural area of Minnesota. In speaking with the landowner later that day, he confirmed that the property was not for sale and there were no plans to sell. The landowner added that he’d received a similar call from another real estate agent the week before. The whole thing was a scam. The landowner reported the scam to the sheriff and the FBI.

While there seems to be no limit to the ingenuity of scammers these days, there are a few things both the Land Trust and our landowners can do. If you own vacant land, have someone check on it from time to time. We have the same recommendation for those of you who use your properties only for part of the year. Scammers have been known to rent out cabins they don’t own. Be particularly vigilant if you believe you have been the victim of identity theft.

If you are planning to sell your property, let the Land Trust know and give us the name of your listing agent. If you’d like more Land Trust signs to post on your protected property, let us know. We provide signs free of charge. If we detect suspicious activity at your property – whether through our annual monitoring or through the calls we receive -- we’ll let you know.



Minnesota Land Trust staff practicing a scenario to keep an individual warm.

Wilderness First Aid

Field Safety has long been a priority for the Land Trust. Staff and volunteers participated in a 16-hour Wilderness First Aid Course this January and learned how to provide effective first aid treatment for common illnesses and injuries that might happen outdoors.



Jodi and Mike Guckenberg join his parents Dave and June Guckenberg.

2022 LANDOWNERS OF THE YEAR

June and Dave Guckenberg

It was our honor to recognize June and Dave Guckenberg as MLT's Landowner of the Year award at our Treasured Places event in Duluth last fall. After placing a conservation easement on their land in Montana, June and Dave donated two conservation easements to MLT protecting more than 275 acres of important habitat at King Lake in Saint Louis County. On behalf of everyone at the Land Trust, thank you June and Dave and to all our landowners who have protected their land in perpetuity!

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Northridge Estates Association: Michael Slag and Kris Liljeblad

Northridge Estates in Duluth is a 110-acre property that we've been protecting since the early 2000's. The property is mainly composed of forest and wetland habitat with trails running throughout.

For the past several years, Northridge Estates member at large Michael Slag and former Northridge Estates President Kris Liljeblad have worked to steward the forests and trails on the property by organizing a Land Trust approved woodland stewardship plan for the property, leading buckthorn removal efforts, organizing community tree planting days, participating in a deer browse citizen science project, and serving as the main point of contact between the Land Trust and the Association.

Michael, Kris, and the Northridge Community have planted more than 450 trees on the protected property in 2019 and 2021 with the main goals of

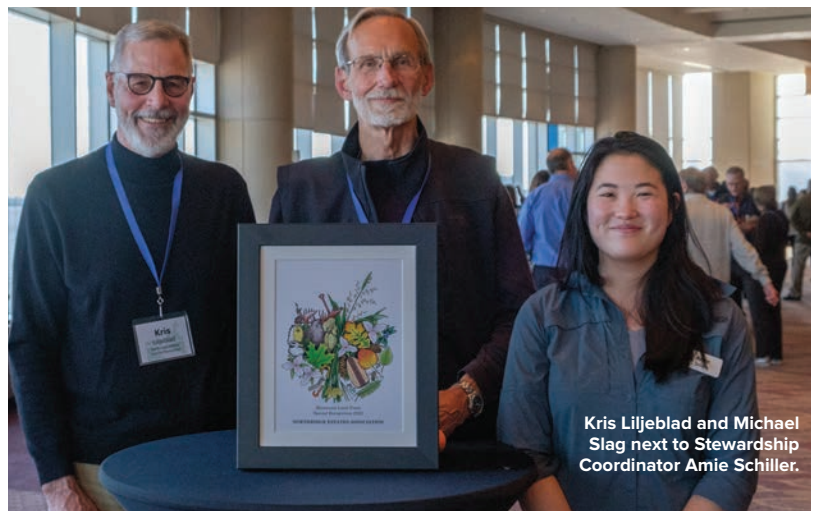
IRS Update: Safe Harbor Provisions for Conservation Easements

If you donated the value of all or part of a conservation easement to the Minnesota Land Trust and if you took a federal income tax deduction for that gift, read on.

Congress passed the Charitable Conservation Easement Program Integrity Act as part of the year-end "omnibus" spending bill. The Act was signed into law on December 29, 2022. The legislation effectively shuts down a tax avoidance scheme that took advantage of the federal conservation easement tax incentive.

The Act also provides taxpayers the opportunity to correct certain "defects" (in the eyes of the IRS) in a conservation easement within 90 days after the publication by the IRS of certain "safe harbor" provisions. On April 10, 2023, the IRS notified the public that it will publish safe harbor language effective as of April 24, 2023. That effective date results in a **July 24, 2023, deadline** to record an amendment to the conservation easement adding language that the IRS prefers. There's additional information on our website: see: mnland.org/irs/.

For more information or to request an amendment to your conservation easement, please contact Aaron White at 651-917-6287 or via email, amendments@mnland.org.



Kris Liljeblad and Michael Slag next to Stewardship Coordinator Amie Schiller.

improving plant diversity and improving wildlife habitat. Thanks for your commitment to stewardship, and for your hard work!

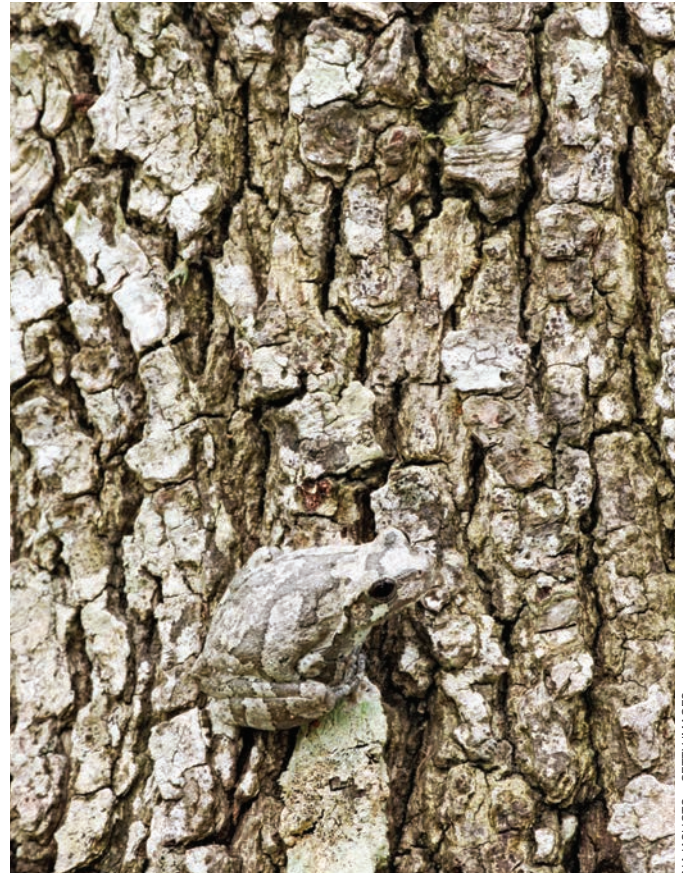


SUE STEINWALL



AMIE SCHILLER

Gray tree frog (*Hyla versicolor*) sitting along a wetland edge on protected property in Washington County.



NAJASHOTS - GETTY IMAGES

Backyard Symphonies



FUN FACT

The gray tree frog's scientific name, *Hyla versicolor*, comes from the Latin for "variable color." It is named for its ability to alter its skin color based on the time of day and surrounding temperature. The skin becomes much lighter at night and darker during the day.

All winter, they are snuggled safely amongst the mud, rocks, logs, and leaves, but come early spring, a symphony of frogs and toads call out as they emerge from the mud. During the winter, some animals migrate to warmer climates while others, like amphibians, burrow deep underground to hibernate until spring. Wood Frogs are an exception and seek cover near the surface where they freeze and thaw with their surroundings, including during Minnesota's disheartening cycles of false springs followed by more snow. In preparing for winter, the Wood Frog's liver makes large amounts of glucose—a type of sugar—which acts as an anti-freeze. The concentrated sugar solution helps prevent additional water from being pulled out of the frog's cells, during the freeze cycle. (Humans lack the proteins to make the extra glucose. So, when our skin freezes, we get frostbite.) When temperatures

warm and the ice melts, the wood frog thaws and water slowly flows back into their cells, blood starts flowing again, and the creature revives once again for a long summer.

Amphibians with their permeable skin are indicators of environmental health, and the ability to survive in both water and on land makes them highly vulnerable to pollution. Take it as a good sign when you can hear the backyard symphonies of Minnesota's nighttime croakers.

Citations:

Roach, J. (2021, May 3). *Antifreeze-like blood lets frogs freeze and thaw with Winter's whims*. Animals. Retrieved February 21, 2023, from nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/frog-antifreeze-blood-winter-adaptation
Saving frogs and toads. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. (2022, May 10). Retrieved February 21, 2023, from dnr.state.mn.us/reptiles_amphibians/frogs_toads/saving.html

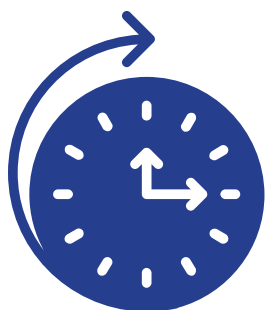


SUE STEINWALL retires as our Stewardship Director on May 31, 2023. Sue served on the Land Trust's Board of Directors, including a stint as the Board Chair from 2016-2017. She serves on the national TerraFirma Risk Retention Group's Claims Committee, which provides insurance coverage to land trusts across the country. Sue joined the Land Trust staff in 2019 to head the stewardship department. During her time with the Land Trust, Sue has helped strategically expand the mission and grow the organization to better meet Minnesota's conservation challenges. As one of the senior leaders on staff, she has provided critical mentoring and helped revolutionize the stewardship program. Following retirement, Sue is going to devote more time to her photography, but you might see her back in the field as a volunteer monitor someday.



ANDREW MOË takes the reins as Stewardship Director upon Sue's retirement. Andrew has been with the Land Trust since 2017, working on the stewardship team for the entirety of his tenure. He's completed several hundred monitoring visits himself so he will be a familiar face to many of you. Before coming to the Land Trust, Andrew worked in stewardship at the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire. He grew up in Rochester and has a B.A. from St. Olaf College and a M.S. from the University of New Hampshire. Andrew currently resides in Minneapolis with his wife, 4-year-old daughter and two dogs.

• STEWARDSHIP AND CONSERVATION BY THE NUMBERS •



1,100+
VOLUNTEER
HOURS IN 2022

86

VOLUNTEER MONITORS



2,501,101 TOTAL FEET
OF SHORELINE PROTECTED

77,092

TOTAL ACRES
PROTECTED

33% BY VOLUNTEERS

59% BY STAFF

8% BY CONTRACTORS



695

SITES MONITORED
IN 2022



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MNLAND.ORG

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Treasured Places

Save the date for our annual celebration of Minnesota's places and faces of conservation. This year, we'll gather October 7, 2023, at the Sherburne History Center in Becker, MN, adjacent to Oak Savanna Park, one of the Land Trust's protected properties. For more information as the date approaches, visit mnland.org/treasured-places.

Sharing Our Values

The Minnesota Land Trust is committed to becoming a more diverse, inclusive, equitable and just organization and embodying the values of DEIJ in all its work. To learn more about our values and vision, visit mnland.org/about/deij

Let's Connect

Get email updates from the Minnesota Land Trust and follow us on social media to learn about our protection, restoration, and nature engagement projects, events, and other outdoor and conservation news from around the state. Go to mnland.org/enews to sign up or scan the QR code with your smart phone.



QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

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