

**Northwoods Land Trust**  
**Price County Private Shorelands Protection Project – LPT 465-14**  
**2013-2017**

**Final Narrative Report – Through December 2017**

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**Project Final Narrative Report:**

This final narrative report describes the progress from the initiation of the project through December 2017 on the Northwoods Land Trust Price County Private Shorelands Protection Project.

The goal of the project was to conduct an intensive, multi-year effort targeted to encourage Price County lake property owners with 500+ feet of natural shoreland frontage to protect their shorelines. The project sought to educate private lake property owners in Price County on voluntary conservation options available to permanently protect lake watersheds and water quality through preservation of their natural shorelands. Those options include Land Protection Agreement (Conservation Easement), Land Donation, Land Registry and Conservation Buyer programs.

Project objectives included the following:

- 1) To identify all lakefront property owners in Price County with approximately 500 feet or more of natural shoreland frontage. These landowners will include all property owners with frontage on DNR-identified “wild lakes”.
- 2) To prepare and distribute through direct mail an informational packet on voluntary conservation options private landowners in Price County can utilize to protect their private lake shoreland habitats.
- 3) To prepare a comprehensive conservation plan which establishes priorities for the Northwoods Land Trust to pursue in Price County. These priorities will focus on permanent shoreland protection and potential easement or fee simple property acquisition through the state Stewardship Fund, Lake Protection Grants or other programs.
- 4) To provide greater public awareness for voluntary conservation options through direct educational presentations, educational displays at events, and preparation and distribution of press releases and public service announcements to area media.
- 5) To conduct on-site follow-up contacts and provide technical assistance with interested landowners in Price County, and as a follow-up implementation project in Vilas, Oneida, Florence and Forest Counties, in order to implement any selected options. It is anticipated that a minimum of two conservation easements or land donations will result from these landowner contacts within the project timeline.

## **Progress on Project methods and activities:**

A summary of progress on each of the project methods and activities follows:

*1. Price County Shoreland Property Owner Identification - The project will utilize geographic information system (GIS) technology, tax roll data and other hard copy maps to identify and prepare mailing lists for all property owners with approximately 500 feet or greater of natural shoreland frontage on Price County lakes. These include all owners of private "Wild Lakes" identified by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Northern Initiative. The project will utilize NWLT's existing computer hardware and GIS software (ArcView) and will acquire where possible Price County Mapping Department digital mapping, orthophotos and property owner data to generate the property owner contacts. Where digital parcel and/or building links are not sufficient, the project will utilize existing tax roll data and other hard copy maps to develop the mailing lists. Maps of each town will be generated to illustrate the parcels with 500+ feet of existing natural shoreland frontage.*

GIS data and parcel map shape files were acquired through the cooperation of the Price County Land Information office. A special nonprofit price was approved by Price County for this project. GIS selection of lake parcels was completed in a process described in the "Price County ArcGIS 10 Lake Property Mapping Project" (document provided previously). A total of 672 privately-owned lake and flowage parcels were identified and mapped using the GIS system. Those parcels are owned by 383 different private landowners. A total of 24 GIS maps, including one countywide map, were created to illustrate the locations of the selected parcels in the 16 towns in Price County. Color copies of those maps were provided previously. Electronic file copies, including GIS data layers, are attached with this report. Countywide survey maps were also acquired from the Price County Surveyor. Site specific project maps were printed for each of the conservation easement donation projects. Eighteen lakes in Price County were identified as "wild lakes" by the DNR Wild Lakes Program. All parcels/owners on those lakes were identified in the parcel selection and mapping process.

*2. Price County Information Packet/Direct Mail Campaign - A packet of information on the voluntary conservation options will be assembled and distributed to provide the most up to date information possible on current tax implications and conservation options. A direct mail campaign will be conducted to provide the education packet on voluntary conservation options to all identified large (500+ frontage feet) lake shoreland property owners in Price County. Additional information packets will be distributed to interested landowners who contact NWLT based on subsequent media releases.*

The NWLT landowner conservation guide, a packet of information on voluntary conservation options and tax implications, was thoroughly reviewed and revised by the NWLT Education Committee. The packet was redesigned and upgraded to a full color publication. The conservation packet information was updated to reflect legislation approved by Congress in December of 2015 to make certain enhanced federal income tax benefits for conservation easement donations permanent. The publication was printed in April and May of 2016 (copy provided with previous report). After sorting for landowners contacted previously within the list of parcels and owners generated from the

GIS parcel maps and tax roll above, a direct mail campaign resulted in the mailing of 374 of the landowner guides in July of 2016. Landowner guides have also been distributed to interested lake property owners in the NWLT multi-county service territory based on inquiries received.

*3. Public Awareness Campaign - An educational public awareness campaign of press releases and public service announcements will be developed to include at least one press release/PSA every six months distributed to all media serving Price County. Powerpoint presentations will be conducted to explain the voluntary conservation program options offered to Price County lake property owners. In the 5-year strategic plan, NWLT plans to continue to prepare and distribute media releases in the region at least through the year 2018. A minimum of two educational presentations and/or displays at educational events for lake or other conservation organizations will be conducted each year of the project.*

Newspaper press releases were prepared and distributed for the Vilas County News Review Progress Issue, snowshoe hike at Dugan Squash Lake Nature Preserve, NWLT's public snowshoe trails, Deerskin River conservation easement donation, hike at Holmboe Conifer Forest, two-part series on the Northwoods Land Trust for the Lakeland Times/Northwoods River News, Marshall property donation, Price County Waterways Association presentation, Deerskin River paddle event, Lake Tides newsletter article, Marshall property dedication, and Gathering Waters newsletter article.

The Spring 2017 NWLT newsletter featured the donation of the Marshall Wildlife Conservation Area in Vilas County, the Heal Creek conservation easement in Oneida County, and the Geisness conservation easement donation on the Flambeau River flowage in Price County. The Fall-Winter 2017-18 NWLT newsletter featured the two conservation easements donated by the Letts family in Price County, which protected two-thirds of the shoreline of a "wild lake." Copies of the newsletters are attached.

Education events from prior years were reported previously. Education events featuring talks, PowerPoint presentations, table-top displays and/or field tours during 2017 included the following:

- Dugan Preserve Snowshoe Hike, January 2017
- Sustainability Fair, Newbold, April 2017
- Nicolet College Learning in Retirement, April 2017.
- Price County Waterways Association Annual Meeting, May 2017
- Lac du Flambeau Lakes Fest, June 2017
- High, Fishtrap & Rush Lakes Association, June 2017
- Forest Fest, Eagle River, August 2017
- Deerskin River Canoe Trip, August 2017
- Marshall Wildlife Conservation Area dedication, September 2017

*4. Price County Conservation Plan - A comprehensive conservation plan/needs assessment will be prepared which establishes priorities for the Northwoods Land Trust to pursue for permanent shoreland protection and potential easement or fee simple property acquisition in Price County. Such land or easement acquisitions could be*

*accomplished through utilization of the state Stewardship Fund, Lake Protection Grants or other programs. This plan will take into consideration current DNR Wild Lakes initiative, local town and countywide land use plan compatibility, the Price County Land & Water Resource Management Plan, the Headwaters Basin plan, and comprehensive lake management plans developed by local lake organizations in Price County.*

NWLT's Price County conservation plan was drafted by the NWLT Executive Director, reviewed by the Conservation Committee, and also reviewed and approved by the NWLT Board of Directors on March 24, 2017. A copy of NWLT's conservation plan is attached.

*5. Property Owner Contacts in Price County - Follow-up educational and technical assistance contacts for property owners in Price and other counties responding to the information packets will be conducted with on-site visits. Legal and technical assistance for conservation easement transactions, land donations, conservation buyer and land registry program applicants will be provided by NWLT board of directors or volunteers and/or by contracting for outside assistance. A minimum of two conservation easements or other land transactions are expected to be completed by the end of the project. Landowner educational and technical assistance in the target area will continue beyond the project date through at least 2018.*

Direct educational and technical assistance was provided for property owners in Price County, as well as additional contacts in the NWLT six-county service region. Extensive legal and technical assistance for conservation easement donations was provided by a contracted legal representative and by NWLT staff, board members and other volunteers.

A list of landowner contacts is prepared quarterly for the NWLT Conservation Committee and Board. A total of 29 new landowner contacts were made through mail, telephone or email in 2017 (see attached generalized list). Nineteen landowners (new and previous contacts) received direct technical assistance in 2017 regarding their voluntary conservation options through in-person meetings, telephone calls, and on-site visits to their properties. During the entire project, a total of 127 new landowner contacts were made. An average of 25 landowners were provided more extensive technical assistance during each of the four years of the project.

All of the conservation easement and land transaction documents received legal and technical reviews from the NWLT Conservation Committee and a third party attorney. Baseline documentation photos and maps, title reports, environmental hazard assessments, conservation values assessments and other technical information were prepared for all properties.

Twelve completed grants of conservation easements and one outright conservation land donation were received from the following landowners during this project period:

Butch & Mary Lobermeier, Jacob Lobermeier and David Lobermeier – about 250 acres of land including about 250 feet on Coolidge Lake, town of Fifield, Price County. Coolidge Lake is on the DNR “wild lakes” list.

Cindy Walters & Sue Kartman – This project is their second conservation easement granted to NWLT and includes a total of 178.5 acres of land on the Sailor Creek Flowage in the town of Fifield, Price County. Sailor Creek Flowage is approximately 215 acres in size with a maximum depth of 8 feet—the 20th largest of 389 lakes identified by WDNR in Price County. The water levels of the flowage are regulated by a dam owned and managed by Price County. The property includes roughly 9,600 feet of natural shoreline frontage on Sailor Creek Flowage (about 1.8 miles of frontage).

Butch & Mary Lobermeier – Also a second conservation easement, this project includes 46 acres with about 1,850 feet of natural shoreline on Coolidge Lake in the town of Fifield, Price County. This parcel was purchased by the Lobermeiers for conservation purposes and is adjacent to the 250-acre conservation easement granted by the family previously. The two conservation easements together complete the protection of all of the privately-owned shoreline on this small “wild lake.” The remaining shoreline on Coolidge Lake is part of the Price County Forest.

William Lynch & Barbara Manger – This 223-acre conservation easement property includes about 8,750 feet (1.66 miles) of frontage on the North Fork of the Flambeau River in the town of Lake, Price County. The river in this section is a flowage controlled by the Pixley dam upstream and the Crowley dam downstream. The river is accessible to the public and supports populations of muskellunge, northern pike, walleyed pike, smallmouth bass and panfish with significant recreation value for anglers. This segment of the North Fork of the Flambeau River is popular and has been noted as one of the best areas in Wisconsin for river fishing for muskies (*Wisconsin Sportsman* magazine, June 2014). Both the main river channel and its backwaters and shoreland-wetlands provide valuable habitat for fish and wildlife.

Craig Everts – This 153-acre conservation easement is a woodland and wetland parcel which provides “headwaters” watershed protection upstream of Rice Lake in the town of Nashville, Forest County. Small intermittent streams flow through the property generally in a southerly direction and are tributaries to Rice Lake. Rice Lake is a 208-acre publicly-accessible drainage lake and is part of the Upper Wolf River watershed.

Marena Kehl & Peter McKeever – Their 75-acre perpetual conservation easement protects about 1,200 feet of Deerskin River corridor (2,400 ft. frontage) in the town of Washington, Vilas County. The Deerskin River is an important tributary to the Eagle River Chain of Lakes. From its headwaters at the outlet dam on Long Lake, the Deerskin River runs mostly through Nicolet National Forest lands. Only about four miles of the river runs through privately-owned lands, including through the Kehl-McKeever property.

Alden Geisness – This project is immediately upstream and adjacent to the conservation easement granted to NWLT by William Lynch and Barbara Manger. This 52.82-acre conservation easement property includes about 2,130 feet (0.4 mile) of frontage on the North Fork of the Flambeau River in the town of Lake, Price County.

James & Erinn Letts – The Letts family granted two contiguous conservation easements encompassing about 84 and 42 acres respectively in the town of Flambeau, Price County. The two properties also include about 2,620 feet (0.5 mile) and 1,040 feet (0.2 mile) of frontage on Perch Lake. Perch Lake was identified by the WDNR Wild Lakes Program as one of the 18 “wild lakes” in Price County. The two conservation easements protect roughly two-thirds of the entire shoreline on this wild lake. The remaining shoreline is owned by one hunting lodge group.

Hodag Sports Club – This 127-acre conservation easement is a woodland and wetland parcel which provides “headwaters” watershed protection for Heal Creek just west of Rhinelander in the town of Crescent, Oneida County. Heal Creek is listed by the WDNR as a Class I trout stream. The project includes about 4,065 feet of frontage on the creek. The project is adjacent to City of Rhinelander property, the Northwood Golf Course, and nearly 500 acres of other private lands slated for protection. Together, these properties make up the Northwoods Nordic Ski Club's trail system as a silent sports park.

Ann (Munninghoff) and Scott Eshelman – About 210 acres of upland and wetland flowage property known as the Munninghoff Marsh was protected by the Eshelmans on Earth Day 2016 and witnessed by students from Rhinelander High School. Their perpetual conservation easement protects about 6,375 feet (1.2 miles) of Wisconsin River and creek frontage north of Rhinelander in the town of Newbold, Oneida County. Munninghoff Marsh was recognized by DNR Wildlife Biologist Ron Eckstein as follows: “By all standards this marsh is worth protecting. The wetland values are great; endangered resources are present; it is a large area; the emergent beds are uncommon in the region; and it is the best spot for people to canoe and observe wildlife in three counties. In addition, the wild rice beds rival the Kakagon Sloughs as the largest, most diverse beds in northern Wisconsin.”

James & Joy Perry – Their 99-acre conservation easement property includes about 625 feet of natural scenic frontage on the Potato River just upstream from the larger Potato River Falls in the town of Gurney, Iron County. The land is contiguous with Iron County Forest land and also includes scenic rapids and a smaller falls. The property also protects about 6,600 feet of frontage on Barr Creek, a Class I trout stream. Both landowners are trained as botanists and have compiled a list of over 100 plant species on the property.

Edward Marshall – In September of 2016, Ed donated outright to the Northwoods Land Trust a 96-acre property in the town of Lac du Flambeau in Vilas County. Now known as the Marshall Wildlife Conservation Area, this site includes about 1.3 miles (6,927 feet) of Koernet Creek/beaver pond shorelands and wetlands, wildlife habitat and productive woodlands. This property is now open to public non-motorized outdoor recreation use for hiking, wildlife observation, snowshoeing, ungroomed cross-country skiing, hunting, fishing and trapping. An old pier/wildlife observation deck currently on the property was removed and a new pier/viewing platform was constructed for public use in 2017. The observation deck overlooks the extensive beaver pond where nesting swans, woodducks and other waterfowl are commonly seen, as well as otters, beaver and many other species of wildlife.

Altogether, the **13 completed conservation projects** now permanently protect a total of **1,636 acres of land**. The projects include **15,360 feet of lake frontage (2.9 miles)** and an additional **37,872 feet (7.17 miles)** of frontage on rivers, streams and flowages.

Of the twelve conservation easement donations, nine of these conservation easement donations have been valued by independent appraisals. Three easements were donated but the owners elected not to claim the donation as a charitable contribution, so the value was estimated from assessed values only. The outright conservation land donation was also appraised for IRA charitable donation purposes.

The donation values of all of these 13 projects total **\$1,308,125**, a very significant leveraging of the DNR grant funds. Copies of maps and the recorded conservation easement documents and warranty deed for these projects were provided previously.

**Project products or deliverables:**

Copies of color maps of each of the towns in Price County were provided in hard copy and electronic format pdf files are submitted with this report. GIS project file/data layers are also provided. These maps illustrate the parcels/landowners identified with 500+ feet of existing natural shoreland frontage.

Sample copies of press releases and public service announcements have been provided with each progress report.

A copy of the Conservation Plan for Price County which serves as the Northwoods Land Trust's needs assessment for priority land protection is attached. The plan was approved by the NWLT Board of Directors.

A generalized listing of landowner follow-up contacts by program type has been provided with each progress report. However, due to the confidentiality of landowner interests, names, addresses or other identifiable information has not been included in the project reports.

Copies of recorded conservation easements and the deed from the land donation have been provided with each progress report.