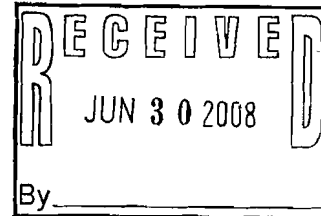


**Standing Cedars Community Land Conservancy
PO Box 249
Osceola, WI 54020-0249**

June 26, 2008

Jane C. Malischke, Environmental Grants Specialist
Wisconsin DNR
810 West Maple Street
Spooner, WI 54801-1255



Re: Project Number RP-117-06

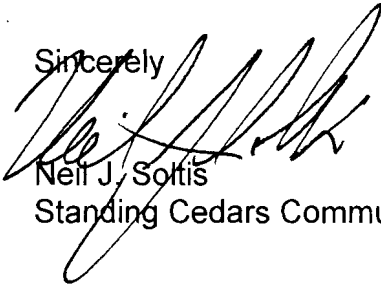
Dear Ms. Malischke:

Enclosed is the final report to close out the referenced Bluffs Greenway Protection and Education grant. I have also included some of the materials generated in the process. After reviewing this information, let me know if you need additional documentation. We have not received a copy of the canceled check #1458 and can provide that after receipt of our June bank statement. Otherwise, please confirm the unutilized funds to be returned to DNR.

One key element of the grant that was not performed was the GIS mapping. The consultant that we engaged to perform this work in 2006 has not delivered the information by the due date and, since the grant is expiring, has now offered to perform the work at no cost to Standing Cedars. We will provide you with copies of the digital files generated by the process as though it had been completed as a part of the grant.

The most exciting part of the grant, which required a change in contractors, was the educational effort with the Osceola Schools that provided all 6th grade students an outdoor education experience at Standing Cedars. The response has been very positive and the School is seeking to use the curriculum for the 6th grade next year. Based on what was developed we will also offer the curriculum to other school districts and organizations.

Sincerely



Neil J. Soltis

Standing Cedars Community Land Conservancy

Standing Cedars Community Land Conservancy

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN US!

Field Day July 31

Standing Cedars Community Land Conservancy, with the support of the Wisconsin DNR, has preserved over 1500 acres of ecological resources along the bluffs of the St. Croix River. SCCLC is working to preserve the natural features, including plant and animal life, and to restore the communities that once existed. This area is open to the public for low impact outdoor pursuits such as birding, plant identification, photography and hiking- Motorized vehicles, bicycles and horses are not allowed. Inquire about hunting opportunities!

On July 31, 2005 SCCLC is sponsoring a series of interpretive walks to familiarize the community and all interested parties with this valuable resource.

INTERPRETIVE WALKS: *These walks will provide you with a look at some of the rare and valuable resources, active land management, and management challenges present- be sure to bring your cameras as many wildflowers will be in bloom!*

Buffalo Skull: **8:00 am, 1:00 pm.** *Easy-*We will tour a degraded oak savanna with adjacent remnant prairie that is being actively managed with mowing, tree cutting, and prescribed fire. This site contains some federally listed endangered plant species!

Directions: *From Osceola airport, drive South 1.5 miles to 55th Avenue, Turn right onto 55th and drive 2.25 miles West (road is gravel only the last ½ mile). Parking area located on your right.*

Englewood: **RIVER WALK: 10:00 am, 2:00 pm.** *Moderate/steep terrain-*On this tour we will descend roughly 400 feet in elevation down to the banks of the St. Croix river. During our descent we will see several ecosystems: Prairie pothole grasslands, dry mesic forest, oak savanna, riverine forest, and "goat" prairie. Good footwear recommended!

CABIN WALK: 8:00 am, 2:00 pm. *Easy/lengthy-* This will be a more lengthy tour that covers a greater portion of the property. We will see prairie restoration/grasslands, oak woodlands, and mesic forests. Gently rolling terrain with deep river valleys provide for incredible views around every bend in the trail.

PHOTO WALK: 10:00 am. *Easy-* We will share nature photography techniques while touring areas that are sure to provide many subjects within prairies, woodlands and wetlands.

Directions: *From Osceola airport, drive South 4 miles to East Farmington and turn right onto 30th Avenue and continue West for 1.75 miles to 280th Street, turn left onto 280th street and go South ¾ mile- Englewood will be on your right.*

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURAL FARMS: The St. Croix River corridor is home to four community supported agricultural farms. These working farms are preserving the land for future generations through sustainable agricultural practices while providing high quality organic produce to their members. Standing Cedars has assisted two of the farms in land protection efforts. The farms will be open to interested visitors. Follow the signs on 280th St. for locations.

For more information call: 715-294-3551

Working on the Land

Led by Troy Meacham, the management of Standing Cedars is moving steadily toward the goals of protecting critical habitats and restoring the land that has been altered by fragmentation, invasive species, and lack of fire to a more natural state. In 2005 and 2006, funds from the Wisconsin DNR Pheasant Stamp Program, the US Fish and Wildlife Services' Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, and the Natural Resources Conservation Services Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program were used to remove wooded fence lines that dissected the grassland areas at Englewood. Funds from the Wisconsin DNR Turkey Stamp Program and USF&W's Partner's Program were used to clear the understory trees and shrubs and begin the process of restoring the savanna areas at Buffalo Skull.

A solid core of community volunteers aided in these efforts. Through agreements with local farmers, we are preparing fields, which are dominated by nonnative species, for prairie/grassland restoration. The cycle to begin the restoration of the native prairie is a four-year process. At Englewood, 35 acres have been planted with more than 60 species of local ecotype seeds, with another 50 acres scheduled for conversion to prairie by 2009. The seeds will come primarily from the high-quality remnants and restored prairie areas that are managed by Standing Cedars. The seeds are both harvested and planted by volunteers.

Fire is a critical component of native plant community restoration. In 2006, the Wisconsin DNR, with assistance from the Osceola Fire Department and volunteers, burned 40 acres of prairie and oak savanna at Buffalo Skull. Clearing the understory during the previous winter allowed for the first good burn of the savanna restoration area. These efforts help to simulate the natural cycle of fire and provide the proper conditions for native seed stock, lying dormant in the earth, to reestablish itself. On the same day as the Buffalo Skull burn, a crew from the US Fish & Wildlife



burned 90 acres of grassland and restored prairie at Englewood in an effort to reinvigorate the prairie and reduce invasive tree populations.

Community volunteers are a core element of the restoration efforts at Standing Cedars. Volunteers have made significant contributions to our restoration work including seed collection, seed planting, exotic species removal, tree cutting, and monetary support. As efforts to restore the health of the land continue, there will be an increased demand for community volunteers and resources to maintain the effort.



If you are interested in volunteer opportunities, please contact Troy Meacham, Land Manager, at (715) 265-4887 or stmeacham@baldwin-telecom.net or Barb Griffith, Management Committee Chair, at (715) 755-4624.



A Community Heals the Land

This is a headline that we are not likely to see in our lifetimes. Perhaps looking back 100+ years from now, someone could make that statement. For now, we can only work to begin the process of restoring the plant and animal communities which took thousands of years to create. Standing Cedars manages more than 1,500 acres along the bluffs of the St. Croix River. Within those acres are significant remnants of the communities that existed before the land was altered by farming and logging. Active management is occurring on only 400 of the acres. What about the rest? The good news is that the remainder is protected from future development. When will the land be restored? The short answer is never. We can only start the process of healing the land and trust that, with our continued stewardship, the land will heal itself. A community of volunteers who value its place in the community, whether for birding, hiking, hunting, or nature study, continue the stewardship effort. I hope that individuals who walk on the land a century from now will see the animal and plant communities that were typical of 200 years in our past. I encourage you to visit the lands and to watch the ecological value of our resource grow. Thanks for your continued support.

Neil Soltis, President

**Join us for Field Day
Sunday, September 24**

**See reverse for events,
times, and locations.**

Field Day Events – September 24, 2006

Buffalo Skull – 10:00 am

Easy. Tour an oak savanna restoration with adjacent remnant prairie that is being actively managed with mowing, tree cutting, and prescribed burning. This site contains some federally listed endangered plant species!

Englewood – 1:00 pm

Moderate/steep terrain. On this tour, we will descend about 400 feet in elevation to the banks of the St. Croix River. You will see several ecosystems – prairie pothole grasslands, dry mesic forest, oak savanna, riverine forest, and “goat” prairie.

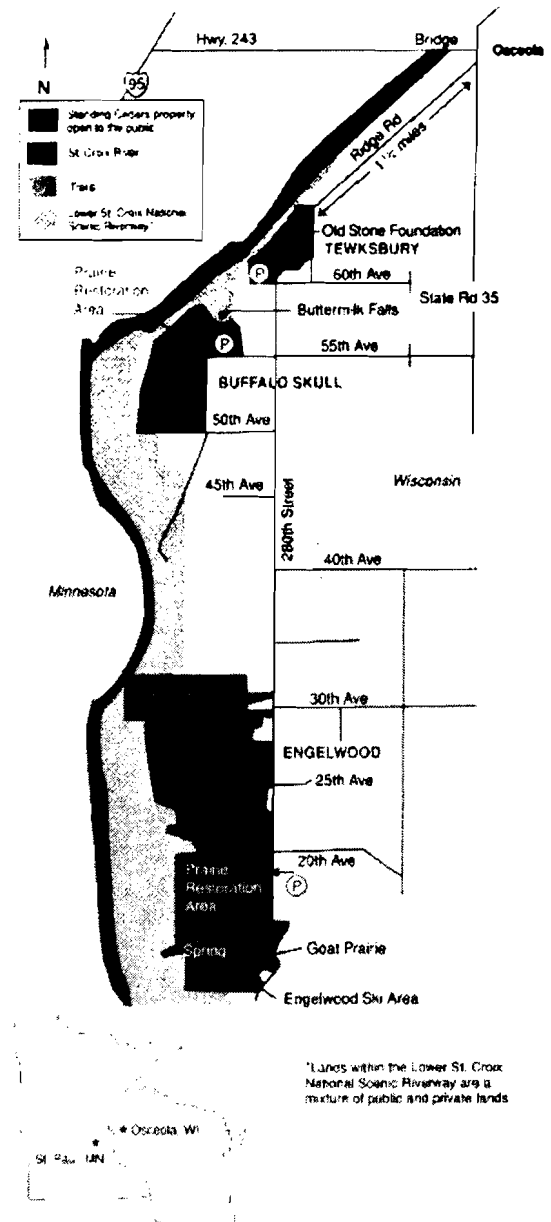
Englewood – 1:00 pm

Easy/lengthy. This will be a more lengthy tour that covers the northern portion of the property. Take a 3+ mile walk over gently rolling terrain and through prairie restoration, grasslands, oak woodlands, and mesic forests.

Join us for Field Day – Sunday, September 24

Standing Cedars Community Land Conservancy will hold a series of interpretive walks to familiarize the community and all interested parties with this valuable resource. These walks will provide an opportunity to learn more about the valuable resources we protect and our land-management activities.

Just show up...or for more information,
call (715) 294-3551.



Standing Cedars protects and restores field, forest, and natural habitat along the Lower St. Croix River.

Standing Cedars
Community Land Conservancy
P.O. Box 249
Osceola, WI 54020



1000
1100
Celebration
Dedication

Standing Cedars



Admission

2000

SAC Bank





The St. Croix River and adjacent habitats contain an exceptionally diverse assemblage of birds. The area serves as a natural north-south migratory corridor and remains largely intact compared to many environments.

Today we dedicate this Important Bird Area—from Stillwater to St. Croix Falls. The area provides critical habitat for a number of high conservation priority species, particularly those associated with floodplain forests. Join us today and come back again throughout the year to enjoy, among others, the following birds known to visit this site:

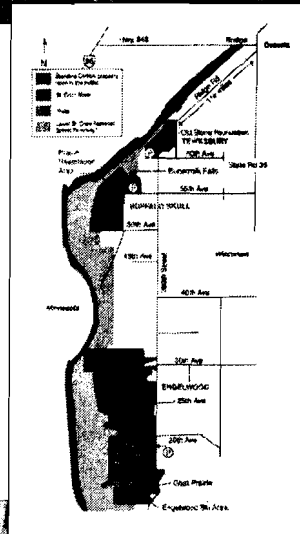
- Red-Shouldered Hawks
- Eastern Wood-Pewees
- Yellow-Throated Vireos
- Cerulean Warblers
- Prothonotary Warblers
- Louisiana Waterthrushes
- Bank, Cliff, and Northern Rough-Winged Swallows
- Bald Eagles
- Hooded Mergansers
- Belted Kingfishers

Event Schedule

- 8:00 a.m. Guided Bird Hike**
Travel through prairie and forest lands, guided by Audubon staff and volunteers.
- 10:00 a.m. Important Bird Area Dedication**
Speakers include:
Neil Soltis
President, Standing Cedars Community Land Conservancy
Dan McGuinness
Director of Conservation Policy, Audubon
Robin Maercklein
Biologist, St. Croix National Scenic Riverway
Yoyi Steele
Wisconsin Important Bird Area Coordinator, Wisconsin DNR
Dan Schuller
Northern Region Land Leader, Wisconsin DNR
- 11:00 a.m. Guided Walks**
Enjoy interpreted walks through the habitats of the Engelwood, Buffalo Skull, and Tewksbury properties.
- 12:30 p.m. Picnic Lunch**
Beverages provided by Standing Cedars.



Standing Cedars
 Community Land Conservancy was founded in 1994 to protect land along the Lower St. Croix River. To date, the organization has protected more than 1,500 acres in Wisconsin's Farmington Township, south of Osceola. Open grasslands, prairie potholes, upland forests, bluffs, and backwaters are among the diverse habitats in the area. The land is accessible to the public for enjoyment of nature and for hunting. For information or to volunteer, call (715) 294-4690 or visit www.standingcedars.org.



The 1,100-acre Engelwood property contains deep wooded ravines, rare native prairies, floodplain forests, and wetlands. It was the largest undeveloped parcel of land along the Lower St. Croix River when it was purchased by Standing Cedars in 1995.

NEW CURRICULUM aims to restore focus on nature

By Kyle Weaver
Editor

How often, indeed, do the children see the forest through the trees?

If the sixth-grade teachers at Osceola Middle School and organizers from Standing Cedars Land Conservancy have accomplished their goals, the answer to that question should be: frequently.

Recently, the teachers took their sixth-grade students out to the land conservancy, in the Town of Farmington, and participated in a field day curriculum designed specifically for the students.

Throughout the day, the students were allowed individual and group time to explore the forest, prairie and wetland landscapes, observing nature on micro and macro levels.

"It was very, very exciting, and hopefully it will be successful," said Dennis Weibel, a consultant hired by the conservancy board to help develop the curriculum.

The field day curriculum was an educational component of a larger grant the conservancy received recently.

Weibel, a retired elementary school teacher from Menomonie, holds a master's degree in environmental education and worked with the teachers to meld the project into the sixth-grade curriculum, which already includes reading "A Sand County Almanac" by famed outdoor writer Aldo Leopold.

"We tried to write it so it was (the school's)," Weibel said, noting that as a consultant he would eventually leave the project behind.

In addition to Leopold's

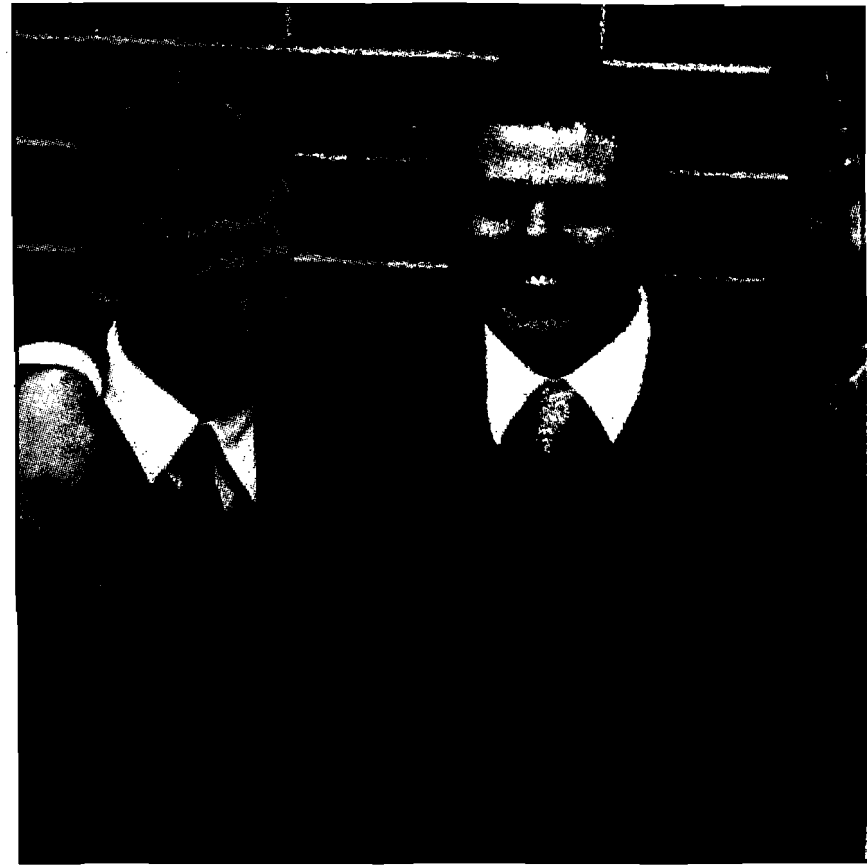
work, Weibel took ideas from "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder," a book by Richard Louv. The book decries the immersion of technology in society and argues that encouraging children to be outside and teaching them to enjoy nature can be a holistic cure for problems such as attention-deficit disorder.

Weibel said the group intentionally included lots of free time in the day's curriculum for the students to observe, reflect and journal.

"We thought they would get better experiences if each student experienced in [his or her] own way," Weibel said.

Weibel was nervous at first about how the curriculum would play out, but was re-

Cedars/See page 10A



Graduation

Travis Pomeroy, Gregory Kadrmas and Steve Tucker celebrated the graduation at St. Croix Falls High School on May 30. Photo by Carter Johnson



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Cedars from page 1A

ally excited by the end of the day and was pleased with the reactions of the sixth-grade students and teachers alike.

"Everybody was incredibly enthused," Weibel said. "The kids were excellent."

Awareness

For both Standing Cedars and the Osceola School District, the field day met certain goals.

Osceola High School math teacher Chris Willett helped make connections between the board and the school district.

Willett, who is a Standing Cedars board member, said the conservancy is continu-

ally trying to raise awareness of its lands, which are owned by a private, non-profit corporation but are open to the public for certain uses.

"As a long-term goal, we really want the public on the property," Willett said.

Hopefully, he said, many of the students—and the teachers, for that matter—now realize what is out there and will take advantage of what the property offers.

Willett believes that awareness of the outdoors is one of the school district's goals and that the curriculum was in tune with that goal.

"This is a philosophy that the district is really leaning

toward," Willett said.

Osceola School Board president Timm Johnson agreed.

"It's really the school's responsibility to expose children to a lot of different learning possibilities," Johnson said. "In society we're facing some real issues, some ecological issues."

With students inclined to pursue team sports and indoor recreation such as video games now more than ever, Johnson said, it is all the more important to encourage children to connect those global issues with things that they see locally.

Environmental education is a great way to do it, he said.

"There are a lot of opportunities to tie in education with the environment," Johnson said, noting the proximity of both the Wisconsin and Minnesota Interstate Parks and the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. "I think we've got so many opportunities everywhere, north and south."

Weibel noted the energy that both groups brought to developing the curriculum.

"For me to see and hear all these things," Weibel said, "there must be a good nucleus of people that have an environmental awareness."



Sixth-graders Matt Salami, Tyler Vazquez hike along a trail on the Conservancy property on May 21.

Relationship from page 2A

lives in Minnesota and is a member of the working group.

The working group recommends that the Festival Theatre organization provide annual program and audited financial reports to the City, pays its pro-rata share of energy costs, maintain its interior space "in a safe and orderly fashion," and report specific building maintenance issues to the City in writing.

On the other side of the relationship, "It is strongly recommended. . . that the

tival's future programming plans could support a level of lease payment that would offset the cost of the building stabilization work recommended.

Sutton said it was not his charge.

"I was commissioned to come in and look at everything that had been done [including previous analyses] and make some specific recommendations about what can happen now," he said.

Sutton said the Festival Theatre organization recog-

able enough to warrant that support?"

To city administrator Ed Emerson, the main issue is how the City and Festival Theatre can "get into a professional relationship here, which we've not had to date."

Councilman Arnie Carlson, a working group member, said the current lease arrangement is not viable and has not worked out well.

Valuable entity

"You have something in

while. He seems to favor simply giving the building to the Festival Theatre organization and letting the group sink or swim on its own.

"It's one of those things where you have to say, 'how much do we put at it?' and where do we finally draw the line and say, 'we just can't keep throwing taxpayers' dollars at this'? When I've run for any of the offices, it was always: What's in the best interest for the majority of the people of St. Croix Falls?"

happen," Sutton said. "How it happens is up for you to ascertain. And it is your responsibility to look to the best interests of the citizens of this community....This is the kind of thing that cities invest in for the benefit of their downtown, to bring activity to benefit the community, to give some educational benefits to the kids in their community...."

Sutton said the Festival Theatre board of directors includes members with the

Theatre that has

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