

Northwoods Land Trust
Forest & Oneida County Private Shorelands Protection Project
2007-2010

FINAL REPORT

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Project Final Report:

This report describes the final results of the Northwoods Land Trust's Forest County & Oneida County Private Shorelands Protection Project, including progress from the previous project report submitted in November 2009. Although originally scheduled to end in December 2009, NWLT requested an extension until December 2010 to complete the grant project, as a number of additional lake protection projects were in progress. Those completed projects resulted in significant additional leveraging of the DNR grant funds.

The goal of the project was to conduct an intensive, multi-year effort targeted to encourage Forest County lake property owners with 500+ feet of natural shoreland frontage to protect their shorelines. The project was designed to educate private lake property owners in both Forest County and Oneida 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 Forest 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 Forest 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 Forest 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 with interested landowners in Forest County and Oneida County in order to implement any selected options. It was anticipated that a minimum of two conservation easements or land donations would result from these landowner contacts within the project timeline.

Results on Project methods and activities:

A summary of the results for each of the project methods and activities follows:

1. Forest 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 Forest 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 Forest 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 mapping were acquired through the cooperation of the Forest County Emergency Management/Mapping Department. After parcel layer installation, NWLT's GIS system was linked with Forest County tax roll data. With this system, as well as Forest County's web-based parcel and tax information, all parcels with approximately 500 feet or more of natural shoreline were selected and highlighted on town GIS maps. Where questions existed on whether or not the 500-foot minimum threshold existed, digital aerial photos were used to confirm the existence and location of structures. Maps of each town were generated to illustrate the selected larger lakefront parcels. Hard copies of those maps were provided previously, and digital copies are on the attached CD.

The linked parcel/tax roll database was then exported for the selected parcels to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Duplicate names and addresses were then removed to generate a single list of property owners of the larger lakefront parcels. This spreadsheet was then used to create mail-merged letters for the direct mail campaign. A total of 502 parcels were identified with approximately 500 feet or more of natural lake shoreline frontage. After screening for duplicate ownership, and eliminating landowners previously contacted by NWLT, a list of 226 lake property owners was generated for the mailing.

2. Forest 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 Forest 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 assembled and mailed directly to each of the 226 identified lake property owners who own at least 500 feet or more of natural lake shoreline in Forest County. The landowner Excel spreadsheet was used to mail merge both introductory letters and also mailing labels. The introductory letters highlighted current enhanced federal income tax benefits for donations of conservation easements. The landowner guides were mailed in June of 2009. Additional landowner guides were distributed to lake property owners in Forest and Oneida Counties, as well as other nearby areas, based on inquiries received due to newspaper, magazine and other publicity.

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 Forest and Oneida Counties. Powerpoint presentations will be conducted to explain the voluntary conservation program options offered to Forest and Oneida 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 2010. 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.

Publicity from 2008 and 2009 related to the project was forwarded in previous progress reports. Additional publicity in 2010 included being interviewed on WXPB-public radio in March, June and August, and preparation and distribution of newspaper /web media/local shopper press releases including the following: conservation milestones of 5,000 acres of conserved land, NWLT annual meeting, dedication of the Dugan Squash Lake Nature Preserve, Wiesner family Bearskin Lake conservation easement, Preserving Family land seminar, St. Germain bike ride and conservation field tour, and a land conservation options presentation at the Boulder Junction library.

Four NWLT newsletters were prepared and distributed annually highlighting a variety of conservation projects. These newsletters are now mailed to over 1300 interested landowners in the multi-county region. Copies of the 2010 newsletters are attached. PDF files of all of the newsletter issues are also made available through the NWLT website at www.northwoodslandtrust.org.

Education events were conducted throughout the project including talks, PowerPoint presentations, table-top displays and/or field tours. These education events included the following:

2008

- Zoning & Land Use Leadership Program, Treehaven, Feb. 22
- Wisconsin Assoc. of Land Conservation Employees Conference, Minocqua, Feb. 28
- Wild Lakes Partnership program, Spooner, April 9
- Earth Day program with Northwoods Community School, Rhinelander, April 23

- North Lakeland Discovery Center, Manitowish Waters, June 4
- Wisconsin Land Trust Staff Retreat, La Crosse, June 6
- Lac du Flambeau Lakes Fest, June 14
- Pine Island Lake Property Owners Association, July 13
- Trees For Tomorrow Teacher Forestry Program, July 30
- Working Lands Initiative listening session for DATCP Secretary Nilsestuen, August 13
- NWLT Wisconsin River paddle & preserve trip, August 30
- Wisconsin Lake Leaders program, Kemp Field Station, Sept. 10
- Partners in Forestry Field Day, Sept. 13
- Tree Farm Demo Day, Sept. 27
- NWLT gathering for Oneida County landowners, Madison, Nov. 13

2009

- Wisconsin Land Trust Board & Staff Retreat and the Land Trust Alliance Midwest Land Conservation Conference, Madison, March 12-14
- Presentation to John C. Bock Foundation Board of Trustees, Madison, April 9
- Earth Day program with Nicolet College, Rhinelander, April 23
- Oneida County Lakes & Rivers Association Annual Meeting, Rhinelander, June 13
- Lac du Flambeau Lakes Fest, June 13
- NWLT Annual Meeting & Holmboe Conifer Forest field tour, Rhinelander, July 17
- NWLT Wisconsin River paddle & preserve trip, Rhinelander, July 18
- Partners in Forestry Estate Planning Workshop for landowners, Eagle River, August 1
- Minocqua Rotary Club, August 19
- Working Lands Initiative field tour for DATCP Deputy Secretary Randy Romanski, Eagle River, August 20
- Tree Farm Demo Day, September 19, Crandon
- Easy Eagles retirees club, Eagle River, November 10
- NWLT gathering for landowners, Mequon, November 12

2010

- Wisconsin Land Trust Board & Staff Retreat, Wausau, April 8-10
- Dedication of the Dugan Squash Lake Preserve, June 11
- Oneida County Lakes & Rivers Association/WAL workshop, June 19
- Lac du Flambeau Lakes Fest, June 26
- Rhinelander Noon Rotary, July 26
- Old Schoolhouse Saving the Family Cabin/Preserving Family Land, August 5
- "Tour de Conservation" Bike Trip, August 7
- NWLT Fall Banquet—Rhinelander, September 18
- Boulder Junction Library presentation, September 23
- Nicolet College Sustainable Living Fair presentation, September 25.
- Minocqua Winter Park Day, September 26.
- Volunteer recognition evening, October 8
- Rhinelander Kiwanis, November 10

4. Forest 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 Forest 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 Forest County Land & Water Resource Management Plan, the Headwaters Basin plan, and comprehensive lake management plans developed by local lake organizations in Forest County.

The Northwoods Land Trust Forest County Conservation Plan 2009 was drafted by the Project Coordinator. The NWLT Conservation Committee reviewed the draft, made revisions, and forwarded the draft plan to the full Board of Directors for approval. The plan establishes priority conservation targets including “wild lakes”, large remaining undeveloped shorelines on otherwise developed lakes, old growth forest stands, priority river and stream segments identified by the Northern Rivers Initiative, and large blocks of unfragmented forest lands. The plan in part utilized the conservation planning process developed by The Nature Conservancy, including a series of MS-Excel spreadsheets to assessment conservation target viability, summarize active threats, summarize conservation strategies, and consider project resource requirements. The Plan also included an overview of Forest County resources, a discussion of each of the conservation targets, a narrative summary of the conservation strategies and a table of five-year goals and strategies. Maps were also included of “wild lakes,” outstanding resource water lakes and rivers, priority northern river and stream segments, and occurrences of aquatic and terrestrial endangered and threatened species in the Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory. The Forest County Conservation Plan was adopted by the full NWLT Board of Directors at their March 27, 2009 meeting. A copy of the plan was provided previously.

5. Property Owner Contacts in Forest and Oneida Counties - Follow-up educational and technical assistance contacts for property owners in Forest and Oneida 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 2010.

Direct educational and technical assistance was provided for property owners in both Oneida and Forest Counties, as well as additional contacts in the NWLT six-county service region. Extensive legal and technical assistance for conservation easement donations, an outright conservation land donation and land registry program applicants was provided by a contracted legal representative, NWLT staff, board and other volunteers.

A list of landowner contacts is prepared quarterly for the NWLT Conservation Committee and Board. In 2010, 76 new landowner contacts were made through mail, telephone or email (see attached confidential lists). A total of 37 landowners received

direct technical assistance regarding their voluntary conservation options through in-person meetings and on-site visits to their properties.

Altogether, a total of 217 new landowner contacts were made during the project, while 114 landowners received direct technical assistance as they considered their conservation options.

Four more conservation easement drafts were prepared in 2010 for prospective landowners to conserve their properties. All of these documents have received legal and technical reviews from the NWLT Conservation Committee and legal advisors. Baseline documentation photos and maps, title reports, environmental hazard assessments, conservation values assessments and other technical information were prepared for all of these properties.

In response to the landowner mailings, one Forest County property owner and three Oneida County landowners signed up for the NWLT Conservation Area Registry Program – a voluntary, non-binding technical assistance program. In Forest County, Steven Anneken and his wife, Dalia Gvildys, own about 65 acres including an entire small lake in Forest County.

In Oneida County, Jean and Jerry Crawford own about 46 acres and 1100 feet of frontage on Big Fork Lake, Howard Dunham owns 80 acres and 700 feet of frontage on Eagle Lake, and Jean Jakusz owns 43 acres and 145 feet of frontage on Maple Lake plus an additional 190 feet on a small, unnamed bog lake. Registry Program conservation plans and maps were prepared for each of the four properties following site visits and meetings with the landowners. Copies of the Anneken and Jakusz Registry plans are attached.

Also in response to the landowner mailings, one Forest County lake property owner and one from Oneida County signed up for the NWLT Conservation Buyer/Seller Program. This program seeks to link interested landowners with valuable properties that should be conserved, with prospective buyers who might be interested in purchasing those properties to assist with conservation. The listed Conservation Buyer/Seller properties were highlighted in two issues of the NWLT newsletter to interest any prospective conservation buyers.

A total of **eight** completed grants of perpetual conservation easements were received from landowners during this project. **One outright conservation land donation** was also received. Two more conservation easement projects have been drafted, but not yet completed. The conservation easement grants included the following:

1. Roger Degrís – 20 acres on a peninsula with 3,822 feet (0.72 mile) of shoreline frontage on Squash Lake, town of Crescent, Oneida County.
2. Carl Anderson (Estate) – 21.9 acres of land on a peninsula with 2,620 feet (0.5 mile) of frontage and all or part of two small islands on the Rhinelander Flowage (Wisconsin River), town of Pine Lake, Oneida County.

3. Linda Pierson Family – 59 acres with over 1,124 feet (0.21 mile) of frontage on Long Lake, town of Crescent, Oneida County.
4. Richard & Helen Thomas (Trust) – 3.5 acres of entirely undeveloped land on a peninsula with 675 feet of shoreline frontage on Crawling Stone Lake, town of Lac du Flambeau, Vilas County.
5. Richard Bostwick & Barbara Arms – 215 acres with an estimated 4,868 feet (0.92 mile) of frontage on Sack Lake, and another 3,876 feet (0.73 mile) surrounding Twin Lakes (east and west), town of Knight, Iron County.
6. Jeffrey & Sara Wiesner – 37.8 acres with 1,036.7 feet of frontage on Bearskin Lake, town of Hazelhurst, Oneida County.
7. Gene & Phyllis Likens – 11 acres with 600 feet of frontage on Found Lake and another 380 feet on an un-named bog lake, town of St. Germain, Vilas County.
8. Highlands Limited Partnership of Wisconsin – 813 acres of land with about 4,600 feet of frontage on Douglas Lake (a DNR-listed “wild lake”) and 31,000 feet on Fredrich’s Flowages, in the towns of Newbold and Pine Lake, Oneida County.

The outright conservation land donation featured 5.62 acres of land with a total of 4,088.21 feet (0.77 mile) of surveyed frontage on Squash Lake in the town of Woodboro, Oneida County. The property was donated by Pat and Sue Dugan and the area has been dedicated as the Dugan Squash Lake Nature Preserve.

Altogether, this Lake Protection Grant project was successful in providing permanent protection to a total of **1,186.82 acres** of lake shorelands, including a total of about **58,416 feet (11.06 miles) of lake frontage**.

The total appraised donation value for all eight conservation easements plus the conservation land donated through the project is **\$4,828,900**. Copies of maps and conservation easement documents for the three newest conservation easements and the conservation land donation are attached.

Note that this objective has far exceeded grant expectations. However, projects currently in progress include two additional prospective conservation easement donations. One of these projects is located in Oneida County and would permanently protect a Conservation Area Registry Program property, while the other would be NWLT’s first perpetual conservation easement granted in Forest County. Both projects have had conservation easements and the full baseline documentation drafted. Both are expected to be completed by the end of 2010 or into 2011.