



Our mission: To preserve open space resources in McHenry County by working with private land-owners, communities and developers.

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Goodbye, Pingree

by Nancy Gonsiorek, Nunda Township Resident

Environmental advocates around the country are mourning Pingree Prairie. Dry hill prairies are a rare ecosystem, a product of the glaciers that covered this area over ten thousand years ago. Less than 20 acres of high quality dry hill prairie remain in Illinois, and Pingree was a part of that—make that 15 acres, and dwindling.

We cannot begin to understand how the loss of this plant and animal community will affect us, but it will. All life on Earth is interconnected. Some

Unfortunately, Pingree suffered the ultimate devastation. Deeply frustrated by the cat and mouse games between city, state and the developer interested in purchasing the land, the owner had his land herbicided. Now there is virtually nothing left to save.

I hope we learn from this experience. It wasn't environmental advocates halting production. Nobody threw themselves in front of a bulldozer or chained themselves to a tree. This was about money. Growth and development always have money to dazzle us with gifts while a big price tag hangs on clean air, clean water and open space. Of course, growth also has its price, we just don't see it until our schools are overcrowded, water is rationed and the developer has left town.

We have to let our leaders know what we want. We have to remind them everyday and twice on election day. To quote Chief Seattle, "Only when the last tree is cut...the last river polluted...will they realize that you cannot eat money."



Volunteers discuss plans to begin plant rescue and seed collection.

will shrug their shoulders when protection of one endangered species, such as the red-veined leafhopper is mentioned. But this isn't about one tiny bug—it is about an entire endangered ecosystem, of which that bug is a member and therefore an indicator.

Advocates tried their best, lobbying state and local officials to preserve this little piece of our natural heritage. When it became apparent that development was inevitable, advocates worked with the developer, preparing for intensive seed collection and plant rescues.



Now—there is virtually nothing left to save.

“ In the end, we will conserve only what we love.....

We will love only what we understand.....

We will understand only what we are taught.”

Lao-Tsu
Chinese philosopher



Message from the Executive Director



The vast majority of land in McHenry County is in private ownership, and it always will be. This means that the future landscape in the county will be determined by the decisions that private landowners make about their property – as it should be.

The mission of The Land Conservancy of McHenry County (“TLC” for short), is to protect open space, natural and agricultural resources by working with private landowners, communities, and developers.

While the mission is simple, the work is complex.

TLC is a resource to help landowners preserve land, to help communities integrate green space into their infrastructure, and to help developers incorporate natural resources and conservation practices into new developments.

Thus, the projects we are engaged in are diverse, ranging from a 2 acre conservation easement on private land, to a 70 acre agricultural conservation easement, to nearly 200 acres of green space within a proposed subdivision. This diversity of conservation projects is driven by the rapidly changing landscape around us, and our attempts to fulfill our mission as effectively and strategically as possible given the resources available to us.



NEW FEATURE

As part of TLC’s commitment to preserving farmland in McHenry County, we are starting a regular feature that includes listings of “direct to the public” farms in the county. Frankly, when we started looking into the diversity of local farming operations, we were amazed. This is a vital part of the landscape, character, and quality of our community.

Please patronize local producers – you can purchase locally grown items from apples to beef and just about everything in between!



Another locally grown product is trees! You can come celebrate trees at the **Fall Tree Festival** on October 1st, and also attend the Tree & Shrub Auction starting at 11:00 am that day. This will be a great opportunity for you to purchase high quality native trees and shrubs, and to support local conservation work by groups like TLC.

I hope to see you at the **Fall Tree Festival** near Harvard on October 1st and at the **York Easement Member Event** on October 2nd!

*We have much to celebrate—
— TOGETHER.*

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We are proud to be a
sponsor member of



Welcome Cheryl!



We are delighted to welcome Cheryl Perrone to The Land Conservancy of McHenry County. Cheryl has been here since June, when we contracted with

Working World for temporary administrative help.

In short order, Cheryl organized the office, updated several publications, and took over doing design for the newsletter. Cheryl is now a TLC employee, working about 20 hours a week in our Crystal Lake office.

Cheryl has a strong administrative and communications background, and is currently working on a graphic design degree at Elgin Community College. From 2001-2003, she served as Village Clerk in Lake in the Hills. Village Trustee Paula Yensen speaks highly of Cheryl's professionalism and her hard work while Clerk.



You can contact her at:

cperrone@conservemc.org

Land Heritage Registry Accepts Portnoy Land

Marsha Portnoy lives on a 9-acre parcel of land just west of Woodstock on Kishwaukee Valley Road with her husband, Sherwin, and three dogs. The property lies within what biologists have identified as a unique natural area referred to as West Woodstock Prairie.

Marsha is working to restore her land to its natural condition by removing invasive species and adding native ones. She is restoring an old pasture to a meadow of wildflowers and grasses, and a woodland filled with beautiful old oaks.

TLC accepted Ms. Portnoy's land into the Land Heritage Registry on July 8, in recognition of her dedication to natural land and open space preservation.

Through its Land Heritage Registry program, TLC recognizes private landowners throughout the county who are good stewards of the land. If you know anyone who would qualify, let us know.

Areas of open space which contribute significantly to the community, including agricultural lands, wetlands, woodlands and backyard prairie restorations all qualify for the Land Heritage Registry.



*Marsha Portnoy
& Linda Balek*



Please join us at an exclusive Members Event to honor our founders,

Bill Howenstine and Ed Collins, among others

to be held on

Sunday, October 2nd

at the

York Arboretum

Tours and refreshments will be provided

Details will be mailed to our members.

Swainson's Hawks Teach Chicks the Ropes

2005 August

"We have been observing a pair of Swainson's Hawks since they arrived in mid-April, and often walk through the field towards the nest tree. Over the last few weeks, each time we get close to the nest, an adult appears overhead and begins to scream at us. We leave immediately, so as not to upset him too much. If the



hawk is screaming at us and telling us to get away, it **must have chicks!**"

"Last Sunday, we again walked towards the nest tree through the waist-high rows of soybeans. There was no sign of the hawks anywhere, then suddenly we flushed two birds—an adult Swainson's with a juvenile—a beautiful youngster mottled in color with very prominent markings. We watched this young Swainson's as it flew up and



A beautiful pair of Swainson's Hawks have been spotted nesting in McHenry County.

landed on the topmost branch of a tall dead tree and sat. He sat for quite some time and looked around, stretched his wings, preened and waited for his parents to return with food. Suddenly another juvenile appeared in the air taking short flights!"

"This is very good news, as it means that this pair is 100% successful for two years running. I expect they will be around for another month or so while the parents teach the chicks the ropes."

*All the best,
Anita & Robert Morgan*

F A C T S

Swainson's Hawks live in plains, open forests, foothills, brush lands, and near rivers or streams. They **MUST** have trees for nesting. Their preferred habitat is being converted to urban areas.

The hawks prey on small mammals such as ground squirrels and gophers, birds and large insects such as grasshoppers and crickets.

Paired birds occupy the same nest site for successive years.

The hawks produce only one brood per year, laying 2 to 4 eggs. The female provides security while the male does most of the hunting.

Pesticide use in Argentina resulted in the death of some 6,000 hawks in 1995/96. There are fewer than 20 Swainson's Hawks in Illinois. The McHenry County nest has produced a total of four new birds in the last two years.

Some Thoughts on Urban Wetlands.....

Why does TLC bother to work with developers to take easements on wetlands in subdivisions?

Land development has changed stormwater patterns from diffuse overland flows to concentrated flows with increased runoff rates. The need to restore and follow historic stormwater patterns exists through the integration of natural ecosystems into our urban and rural landscapes.

Ecological solutions to stormwater management are now beginning to prove less expensive, easier to maintain, more beneficial to wildlife and more attractive than conventional stormwater management solutions.

These urban wetlands are certainly contributing to

the health of watersheds by at least helping maintain some groundwater recharge rather than all of the water being funneled off and away through a big pipe pouring out into a creek.

As a developer confessed to me recently, he has no idea how to even start to restore a wetland on his property. He doesn't know who to call, and he would be at a loss to evaluate the quality of the restoration work done.

TLC is here to help facilitate a decent restoration of these reed canary grass marshes so that future residents will get to experience the beauty of a diverse wetland community.

Director's Challenge 2005

The Board and Staff of TLC extend a challenge to our membership and other caring supporters to match **OUR** pledged giving for the year. The funds we raise are essential to the work we need to accomplish. It is because of our strong member support that we have been able to secure support from private foundations the last three years.

This is a critical time for our organization—

We need to keep our momentum going so we can complete projects like:

- Our first agricultural preservation easement on 70 acres of prime McHenry County farmland.
- Five easements totaling 50 acres at one of the most vulnerable natural areas in the northwest part of the county.
- Protection of a 15 acre addition to the Waichunas Wetland Conservation Area near Island Lake.

The challenge this year is to raise \$10,000 in member support by the end of the year. The following contributions will count towards meeting the challenge:

- Membership Renewals
- Gifts in addition to membership
 - New Memberships, and
 - Donations of Wish List items



Thank You
for your past and continued
support of TLC.
Together we will preserve
a legacy of land
in McHenry County!

Please contact us with
any questions,
concerns or ideas!



TLC
P.O. Box 352
Woodstock, IL 60098

815.455.4618

www.conservemc.org

Our Annual Meeting
will be held on
February 5, 2006.

SAVE THIS DATE!

We are proud to be a
member of



CHICAGO
WILDERNESS

Army Corps Donates Funding

The Land Conservancy is receiving some funding from the Army Corps of Engineers that we will use to help cover landowner costs related to easement donations at natural areas identified in either the state or county natural area inventory. We are calling this an “Easement Incentive” payment. We cannot pay a landowner’s costs directly, but we can pay the landowner some amount for the easement. The program will work as follows:

- A landowner expresses an interest in donating a conservation easement on some portion of their property.
- TLC staff determines if the property is included in either the state or county natural areas inventory.
- TLC staff and attorneys work with the landowner to draft a conservation easement. The dollar amount that TLC will pay the landowner will be determined at this time. This information will be included in the

easement document, and the payment will be made at the time the easement is signed by both parties.

- TLC staff works with the landowner to develop a management plan and baseline documentation for the easement property. TLC may hire a botanist to conduct a baseline plant survey of the property if it seems helpful.
- Once both parties are satisfied with the easement and supporting documents, they both sign the easement, and the document is recorded. TLC will make the incentive payment at that time.
- TLC will then deposit some funds into our endowment account to ensure that we are able to provide long-term monitoring of the easement property.

Give us a call if you are interested in learning more about the program, or if you think your property might qualify to participate.

Wish List

Field Equipment:

- Drip Torch
- Small Trailer
- Small Farm Tractor with Attachments
- Rotary Brush Cutter

Office Supplies:

- Stapler
- Spiral Notebooks
- Computer Mouse
- Paper—8½x14
- Envelope Labels

If you can help us with any of the above items, please contact Lisa at 815.455.4618

Thank you!

Our Volunteers are Awesome!

Thank you Phil and Lou Emmons for your generous donation of a brush mower! It made our job of clearing a walking path at the York Arboretum much easier. Volunteers are helping ready the site for its dedication on October 2nd.



Steve Wenzel, Chair of the Stewardship Committee, uses the DR brush mower to clear a path.

Volunteer workdays are on the 2nd Saturday of every month, with additional workdays held throughout the year. Workdays take place at different sites each month. If you'd like to receive email notices of upcoming workdays, let us know at info@conservemc.org.

If you have a few hours on a weekday, we can use your help collecting seeds in September and October.

Give us a call at 815-455-4618.

Thank You Very Much.....

- ☞ **Betsey Bobrinsky** for the wonderful bookshelf!
- ☞ **Marlene Frisbie** for the FAX machine!
- ☞ **George & Becky Luehring** for donating the book, "Plants of the Chicago Region."

UPCOMING VOLUNTEER WORKDAYS:

Sat. September 10th 9am-noon
Crowley Sedge Meadow
Approx. 1/4 mile off Route 173 on Crowley Road, 3.5 miles east of Harvard
 Seed Collection and Burn Prep

Sat. October 8th 9am-noon
Prairie Ridge
Northeast corner of Route 14 and Dean St., Woodstock
 Seed Collection, Invasive Removal

Sat. November 12th 9am-noon
Powers Creek Conservation Area
On Mason Hill Road, between Cherry Valley and Crystal Lake Roads, Bull Valley
 Prescribed Burn (weather permitting)

The Land Conservancy Refer a Friend.....

Your Name _____ Daytime Phone _____

May we use your name: Yes I prefer to remain anonymous, thanks.

The following individuals/businesses deserve to know more about The Land Conservancy's programs, services and opportunities for involvement. Please add them to your mailing list:

Name _____ Daytime Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Name _____ Daytime Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Return to: The Land Conservancy • PO Box 352 • Woodstock, IL 60098

"Seekers and praisers of beauty..... we find as much cause for rejoicing as for sorrow as we walk the line between what remains of the wilderness and our rabidly consumptive civilization. "



THE
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CONSERVANCY
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Mark Your Calendar!

Saturday, October 1st

Fall Tree Festival
McHenry County

Nursery

8501 White Oaks Rd.

Off Route 173, West of Harvard

Activities start at 11:00 a.m.

Native Tree & Shrub Auction begins at Noon

Some You Win, Some You Lose

Remembering Pingree Prairie

The conservation community gave it a good shot, but Pingree Prairie has been lost. The owner herbicided the site, and virtually everything was killed. Nancy Gonsiorek, the volunteer who was so close to working out a deal to protect the property back in early 2004, wrote the “obituary” included on page one. In these situations, some people will look to lay blame—“We lost it because this person did such and such!” or “It would have been saved if only this other person had done what we wanted him to!” But all we can do is move forward and learn from the experience so that we avoid tragedies like this in the future.

What are some of the lessons learned?

Know When to Walk Away

At some point we just have to accept that certain properties cannot be saved—either there isn’t the money or the political will to protect them. At that point, gather whatever genetic material we can from the site and pass it along to other sites where it can survive. Then move on to the next project.

Act Early Pingree Prairie had been identified as an important natural area some years ago, but it was only recently that a concerted effort began to try and save it. By

that time, the natural area had been so carved up that just the core portion of it remained on one parcel in an industrial park adjacent to a new train station. We know where most of the high quality natural areas are in the county. We need to redouble our efforts to reach out and work with those landowners—to find the time and resources to protect the areas that matter.

Work Together It seems simple, but conservationists are stronger when we work together on projects like this than if any of us try to strike out on our own. We need to combine our talents and energies to find solutions that will help preserve these precious areas.