

Nature News



Quarterly Newsletter of the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy

Spring 2014



In Memoriam George Lee Rock 1925-2014

We mourn the passing of CALC's Director Emeritus, George Rock, as we celebrate his life—the life of a visionary. It was George's vision of using a non-profit organization to preserve land that led to the formation of the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy. He educated us by bending our ears every chance he got! He was a relentless believer in the cause and wasn't afraid to tell the world about it on a one-to-one personal basis. George acted on his convictions, serving on the board until he was term limited out.

Margo Copley knew George as "Lee" (at church he went by his middle name) and her daughters referred to Vicky and Lee as their "Church Grandparents" since the Copley family had no grandparents living locally. The Rocks always made a point of making the girls feel special.

George introduced the idea of a conservancy to Margo over coffee after church and his enthusiasm was contagious. Margo says, "There has never been a better ambassador for the conservancy than George. He was the workhorse who made it tick and we owe it all to him. We all hope we make him proud as he looks over us from above. We'll miss you, George."

George's Conservancy Highlights:

- 1995 - George co-founded The Cadillac Area Land Conservancy with Tom Rensberry
- 1996 - George put an easement on Waldeck Island.
- 1998 - George put an easement on a lot on Friedrich Strasse Drive adjoining Waldeck Island
- 2001 - George established the CALC endowment fund in the Cadillac Area Community Foundation with a generous donation
- 2003 - George put an easement on a lot in Evergreen Platt with a view of Stone Ledge Lake
- 2006 - George put an easement on his 80 acre farm
- 2007 - George donated Waldeck Island to CALC turning it into a preserve open to the public



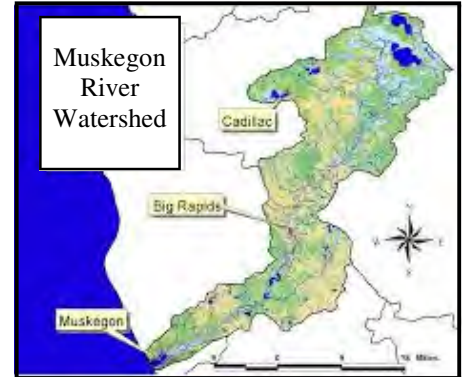


Mapping Our Future

by Larry Copley

The Cadillac Area Land Conservancy is working with several partners on a *Critical Lands Mapping Project* that will help us focus our efforts to improve and protect the water quality of the Muskegon River Watershed.

CALC, Grand Valley State University's Annis Water Resources Institute (GVSU-AWRI) and the Conservation Districts of Wexford, Missaukee and Osceola Counties have identified the upper-central portions of the Muskegon River Watershed as an area of priority for implementing watershed management practices. This portion of the watershed drains 1,020 square miles of land and is expected to undergo dramatic changes with projected urban growth and climate change.



A recent eight year investigation conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Purdue University, Grand Valley State University and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources resulted in some important findings and led to the development, calibration, and testing of a multi-model risk assessment tool called the Muskegon River Ecological Modeling System (MREMS). This research concluded that the best way to mitigate the impact of urban growth and climate change is to invest in reforestation and vegetative management practices along riparian corridors and to **permanently protect existing vegetation within riparian lands.** (This is where CALC comes in.)

In 2013, a partnership between GVSU-AWRI, CALC and the Conservation Districts of Wexford, Missaukee and Osceola Counties was formed. GVSU-AWRI secured a grant through the Fremont Area Community Foundation which was funded by Ice Mountain, a subsidiary of Nestle Water North America. The *Critical Lands Mapping Project* will empower all of us to implement the MREMS recommendations.



The project will produce a detailed map of Wexford, Missaukee and Osceola counties that lie within the Upper-Central Muskegon River Watershed. This will be used to determine and document where high priority natural and agricultural lands are located, where it's best to develop water quality projects and where we can implement conservation easements that will protect critical green infrastructure in the future. The protection of high priority natural lands and the proper management of existing agricultural areas are considered essential to the sustainability of the river.

We are excited about our role in this important project and look forward to acting on its results.

*Thousands have lived without love,
not one without water.*

~ W.H. Auden

*A river is more than an amenity,
It is a treasure.*

~ Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes



Our Best Idea

by Steve Cunningham

I have been fortunate to have traveled to some amazing places. Traveling and seeing nature's wonders has been a great passion of mine. In my early years I traveled to Florida to see grandparents, camped all over Michigan and spent countless days on Lake Michigan beaches. In my late teens, I started backpacking into wilderness areas and climbing peaks in the Rockies and in Switzerland. Later in life I traveled extensively in the United States, Canada and Europe and made a few trips to eastern Africa. During most of these travels, I carried a local bird book and paid close attention to local flora and fauna. The thrill of the natural landscape has driven me to go and see more of what makes this planet Earth so rich.

However, I have a strange and sad observation—in most places in the world today, what is left of the natural beauty is a remnant of what once was and is only there today because of intentional efforts to save and preserve what was once plentiful.



I can remember the first time I flew to Kenya. The hours in the plane were spent reliving those boy-hood dreams of jungles, wild animals and what a country famous for big game hunting might be

like. Ah, remember the story of *The Ghost and the Darkness* or Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa*? I found all of that, but all of that was confined to national parks. The average Kenya landscape is void of most large mammals and certainly the natural predator/prey relationships are all but gone outside of the large parks.

My wife and I visited the island of Malta last spring—a fascinating place. It is rich in history from Biblical and Roman times through the period of the crusades all the way to important events during World War II. However, there is almost nothing left of the natural landscape. It is even void of songbirds and the famous Maltese Falcons are nowhere to be found.



My daughter has been living on Vancouver Island, a wild and beautiful place. There's a grove of nearly 800 year-old Western Cedar and Douglas Fir there that are so tall, beautiful and church-like that it's named Cathedral Grove. But it is a small remnant of what once was, and it only still stands because it was protected, like our Hartwick Pines, by one individual who recognized what a treasure it was. Most of the island, which is the size of Michigan's UP, is under active logging and looks nothing like Cathedral grove.



Needless to say, much of the world is becoming limited in its natural bounty. What has been saved, what has been protected is amazing and has come about through a mix of both public and private efforts. Ken Burns states in his documentary on the national parks that they are "America's best idea." If you have seen this documentary you realize how many of the parks are the result of individual efforts to save something viewed as a great treasure. No one can visit Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon or even Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore and not be awe-struck. The same is true in Kenya where national parks have preserved the best of the best in their natural environment.

What would America be like without state and national parks and forests? Ask yourself what you love about the natural environment in your own community. Has it changed in your lifetime? What will be left of what you love for your children or for your children's children?

We currently have a bounty of mostly intact natural areas in the four counties served by the CALC. However, each year we lose critical components of our rich environment to land conversions that leave little of their natural character. Development is going to take place but in that process, let us make strong efforts to preserve the best of the best of our natural landscape. Please join with CALC in our efforts to preserve our local natural treasures. Let us hope that future generations will look at our efforts and say it was our best idea.



It's Spring!



We know Spring is here when Mark Johnson takes his Natural Resources Class from the Career Technical Center to Waldeck Island to clean and check the status of wood duck nest boxes. Mark and his students installed four new boxes, replacing three and adding one new location. Cleaning out the boxes is a dirty job, but gives students a hands-on, real life activity that natural resource managers might actually do. The students enjoy getting outdoors and we certainly appreciate their work. Stop by Stone Ledge Lake this summer—hopefully you'll see some young wood ducks swimming around.

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Peter and Heidi Eliot for their generous donation made online at the Cadillac Area Community Foundation's web site. You can make a donation to CALC on our web site as well—www.calc-landtrust.org and click the "Just Give" icon.



Mission Statement

The Cadillac Area Land Conservancy protects ecologically significant, scenic, and farm lands for current and future generations and fosters an appreciation of the natural environment in Missaukee, Osceola, Wexford and northern Lake and Mason Counties.



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