

# Nature News

Newsletter of the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy



Spring 2023

## A History of the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy

By Dave Foley, *CALC Board Member*

George Rock grew up south of Cadillac on a 111 acre farm that included the west shore and an island on Stone Ledge Lake. Tom Rensberry had 360 acres of fields and woodlands in Cherry Grove Township. Both men and their families shared a vision of putting conservation easements on these properties, preserving their land for future generations to enjoy.

Initially they approached the Grand Traverse Land Conservancy. Although supportive, the GTLC was reluctant to expand their holdings as far south as Wexford County. In 1995, Rock and Rensberry decided to establish, with the help of John Rohe of the GTLC, what would become the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy. Among the first lands to receive conservation easements were Rock's and Rensberry's properties.

Among those who were leaders of CALC during its first years were John Grix who served as treasurer, Bob Eggle who worked with agricultural concerns, Fred Sprague who did monitoring of properties with easements, Bill Irwin who worked to secure easements on lands that provided grouse habitat and Mart Williams, who was the habitat expert.

Rock and Rensberry served as CALC's first presidents. Fred Sprague remembers George Rock as constantly promoting the Conservancy. "George would literally show up at people's homes to talk with them about why they needed to protect their properties. He really spread the word on the conservancy."

In the early years of CALC when it was operating on very little capital and had no insurance, Tom Rensberry, donated his time helping CALC navigate the legal challenges that come from establishing a conservancy.

In 2001 George established the CALC endowment fund in the Cadillac Area Community Foundation with a generous donation. George's original endowment has grown to over \$100,000. This along with additional donations and CACF investments have grown an

*You are invited to join us for our*

### **PRESERVE WORK BEE & SUMMER PICNIC!**

**Saturday, June 3, 2023**

Please join fellow CALC donors, volunteers and easement partners at noon for celebration and appreciation of our area conservation and preservation efforts. See what's up with CALC and enjoy each other's company with a pleasant afternoon at Johnson preserve. Prior to the picnic join us at Oliver, Waldeck or Johnson preserve for a work bee starting at 9:00 a.m. If you would like to volunteer, please let us know!

**Lunch will take place at the  
Carl T. Johnson Preserve @ Noon**  
(Located on 33rd Road south of M-55)

*For us to reserve your lunch please email  
[calc@calc-landtrust.org](mailto:calc@calc-landtrust.org) or call (213) 775-3631 and  
leave your name and how many will be attending.*

endowment principle of \$380,000. Earnings on the endowment include legal defense, land acquisition, easement development and monitoring, property maintenance, CALC operations, surveys, signage, etc. These funds along with annual donations from CALC members and friends support the work of land preservation and conservation throughout CALC's five county region.

After Rensberry and Rock stepped away from the leadership, the next years saw Dick Benzel, Ruthann French, and Dick Loughmiller serve as presidents. Fred Sprague recalls Loughmiller making a significant gift to

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the Conservancy. "Dick's financial contribution gave CALC the funds to advertise and set up investments. It gave us some financial stability."

In the early 2000s Larry and Margo Copley became members of the Conservancy and a few years later Larry took over as CALC president and Margo became office manager. According to Fred Sprague "The Copley's helped make CALC become an effective land conservancy. They computerized CALC's files, created a comprehensive balance sheet for financial records and developed policy statements."

"Working with the national Land Trust Alliance was an important action taken on by CALC" said Ruthann French who served as CALC's president between 2006 and 2009. "CALC is a member of the LTA and, in working towards accreditation, follows applicable standards." added French. CALC has also received a number of grants from LTA over the years that have helped in diverse areas of planning, land management, and organizational development.

Funding was always a concern. When CALC qualified for an Ace Grant through the LTA, that and generous donation from Dick Loughmiller, CALC gained some financial security. These funds enabled CALC to pay for training for board members and create brochures.

French, who worked with the DNR as a wildlife specialist, realized the importance of establishing wildlife corridors. The Mitchell Swamp, west of Lake Mitchell, is considered to be the best breeding area for bear in all of Michigan. With mothers often having triplets, the swamp lacks the proper habitat for a burgeoning population of black bears. To allow the population to spread out, CALC has worked to secure easements to create bear corridors so animals can expand their range. French helped coordinate this project. Working with Larry Visser, a DNR wildlife researcher, and Chris Schumaker from the Forest Service who monitored the bears, Ruthann harnessed CALC's resources. From maps of the area French, Steve Cunningham and Tom Harris determined where easements were needed and then worked to secure them.

The Cadillac Land Conservancy is a member of the Heart of the Lakes Consortium of Land Conservancies in Michigan. This organization makes sure that there is a group available to preserve land and place easements on



It was a beautiful day for our volunteers to get deep in the woods at our preserves and clean up trails and then celebrate with a picnic lunch in June of 2022. Volunteers are always needed and appreciated.

property anywhere in the state. CALC is designated as the Heart of the Lakes representative for Wexford, Missaukee, and Osceola counties as well as the north section of Lake and Mason Counties excluding the Lake Michigan shoreline.

In 2013 Steve Cunningham succeeded Copley as president, serving 9 years until 2022. With the beginning of 2023, Shari Spoelman became the chair of the CALC board of directors.

During its first years, the CALC office was in George Rock's home. The office later moved to the basement of the Network Reporting building where it stayed several years until that area flooded. "We lost lots of our paperwork and photos when the basement flooded," recalled Sprague. An upstairs office in the Masonic Building in downtown Cadillac now serves as CALC's office.

Since 1995 when George Rock and Tom Rensberry founded CALC, more than 100 have served on its Board and have dedicated 1000s of hours to this organization. For almost 20 years Pat Paveglio acted as editor of the newsletter and provided much of the copy until 2020 when Norma Roelfsema took this over. Richard Harvey heads the monitoring program and has streamlined and improved the process. According to Fred Sprague, past board member Tom Anderson was "hands on" and dedicated himself to the CALC's Preserves, cutting brush, marking trails, and clearing pathways.





Through brochures, its newsletter, and annual meetings open to the public CALC has sought to engage and educate the community about its mission. For many years annual meetings were scheduled at the site of CALC's easements and preserves. In recent years the meeting has been held at the Carl T. Johnson Outdoor Center featuring speakers like Heather Shumaker, author of *Saving Arcadia* and Jim DuFresne writer of guidebooks to Michigan trails. CALC also puts on a spring work bee and picnic at one of its preserves to give the public a chance to get acquainted with one of CALC's four preserves.

While easements are generally put on private property, CALC owns four preserves that are open to the public. Waldeck Island is 11-acres located on Stone Ledge Lake donated by George Rock. In 2014 Bud and Ann Oliver donated 15 acres just east of Harrietta which includes a section of Slagle Creek and borders 78 acres of Huron Manistee Forest land. The Carl T. Johnson Preserve was donated by the Cadillac Rotary Club and includes 39 acres of prime wildlife habitat near the corner of Benson and 33 Roads. The Kohn Family Preserve, a generous gift to CALC, is a 22 acre parcel

## Many thanks to our CALC 2023 Monitoring Team!

A shout out to the volunteers who have given of their time to ensure that the conservation values protected through CALC easements are being maintained.

Monitoring chair: Richard Harvey

Monitoring co-chair: Steve Cunningham

Pam Anderson

Ezra Bunce

Keenan Cooper

Cyndy Foley

Chris Gentry

Jan Guest

Laura Jacobson-Pentces

Matthew Long

Marco Menezes

Shari Spoelman

Marty Williams

Dave Bunce

Sue Conradson

Steve Cunningham

Dave Foley

Dave Guest

Sam Hogg

Lucas Johnson

Vicki Long

Dennis O'Hara

Fred Sprague

Thank You!

upstream of M37 that includes 4300 feet of Manistee River frontage.

In 2020 CALC hired Chris Gentry as Executive Director and Norma Roelfsema as our office manager.

In it's nearly 30 years CALC has grown, and now has two dozen properties protected with easements in addition to its overseeing of four preserves. Over 2500 acres are preserved to-date with 500 new acres under discussion for preservation so far this year. Its original intent of protecting land so that future generations could enjoy it in its natural state has not changed as the Cadillac Land Conservancy continues to seek more opportunities to pursue its mission.

Tom Anderson, Dave Foley, Richard Harvey, Steve Cunningham and Dan Valley install a pole for a bat house at the Oliver Preserve.



## SAVE THE DATE!

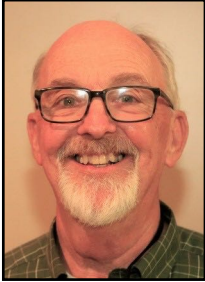
Sunday, October 8, 2023

**CALC Annual Meeting and Guest Speaker**

*More Information to Follow!*

### *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.*



## Director's Corner

*Chris Gentry, Executive Director*

The CALC board is currently engaged in a year-long strategic planning initiative to create an organizational vision for the years ahead. As we look ahead it is important to realize what has preceded; Dave's article summarizing CALC's history provides a quick look back.

Thanks, Dave for your efforts in putting this together!

Consultant Sarah Naperala has been engaged by the board to facilitate our planning. So far she has conducted individual interviews with each board member and a number of key volunteers.

Four community focus groups, two virtual and two in person, will take place in early June. Invitations for these sessions were sent out on May 1. If you'd like to take part in one of these community discussions please give us a call.

Input, ideas, and thoughts about CALC will then be widely solicited through an online community survey. Watch for the survey opportunity during July!

After all this community input the board will roll up their sleeves and get to work this fall to consider, discuss, analyze, prioritize, and process it all to create a strategic plan for the coming years.

Considering the future is an exciting and challenging process. I look forward to hearing from you about the future of CALC in the months ahead!

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Shari Spoelman**, *Chair*  
**Marco Menezes**, *Vice-chair*  
**Sam Hogg**, *Secretary*  
**Marty Williams**, *Treasurer*  
**Sue Conradson**  
**Cyndy Foley**  
**Dave Foley**  
**Vicki Long**  
**Dennis O'Hara**

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **Chris Gentry**

### OFFICE MANAGER **Norma Roelfsema**

Contact us at:  
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231) 775-3631  
[calc@calc-landtrust.org](mailto:calc@calc-landtrust.org)

## IN MEMORIAM

Throughout the year we experience happiness and sorrow. During these times memorial donations are made to CALC. Pat and Leo Paveglio made a donation in memory of a special friend, Tom Anderson, this past year which was omitted from our list of 2023 donors. Thank you for your kind donation.



## Earth Day 2023 is in the Books!

It was a cold and windy day along the banks of Lake Cadillac on April 23rd for Earth Day but Steve Cunningham came to spread the word about land preservation. Norma Roelfsema, Dave and Cyndy Foley also help to spread the word. The event took place at The Market at the Cadillac Commons. Over 30 other vendors were present.

We'd like to extend our thanks to the Cadillac Earth Day Committee for planning the local celebration!

*"If we don't have a consciousness about what's happening in our environment, that could make it hard for us to live on this planet. We have to have a plan to make sure that our water is healthy, our soil is healthy because we depend on all these things to live."*

Joyce Petrakovitz  
Assistant Coordinator