

CADILLAC AREA LAND CONSERVANCY

Protecting land in Wexford, Missaukee, Osceola, and northern Lake and Mason Counties



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR VOLUNTEER MUCH?



SHARI SPOELMAN
CALC BOARD
CHAIRPERSON

In its nearly 30 years of existence, the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy has fulfilled its vision of protecting and preserving land for future generations. From its humble beginnings in 1995 when George Rock and Thomas Rensberry shared a vision of preserving their much-loved lands, CALC now boasts twenty-four conservation easements and four nature preserves for the public to enjoy.

None of this would be possible without dedicated volunteers who moved the organization forward through the years. These men and women gave not only their time, but also their talents and their money. Since its inception, more than 100 people have served on our Board and have dedicated thousands of hours to this organization.

Pausing now to reflect on our mission, vision, and values while engaged in a new strategic planning process, the impact of work by staff and volunteers is more important than ever. We are committed to carrying on the vital work of the conservancy. Our goal is to carry on the vision of the founders to continue to make our service area an attractive place that adds to our quality of life through the protection of significant pieces of land.

There are many people that have worked behind the scenes throughout our short history. If you are interested in getting involved, giving of your talents on our board of directors, with fund raising events, or to provide an educational program, please let us know. Our continued mission depends on our human resources.

MAKING AN IMPACT ON LAND PRESERVATION

By Chris Gentry, Executive Director

It has been a very busy year for the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy as we continue to pursue our mission of land preservation in our five-county region.

Earlier this year the board launched a strategic planning effort. Sarah Naperella, an organizational planning consultant who works with land trusts and has experience working for land trusts, was engaged to facilitate the process. From March through July, she helped the board gather input through personal interviews, focus group gatherings, and an online community survey. The CALC board of directors will be using collected data to develop an organizational strategic plan for the next few years. This plan is expected to be finalized by year end.

Land preservation this past year has included:

- One new 60-acre conservation easement added at the end of 2022.
- Four new easements, totaling 240 acres, under development so far in 2023.
- Five new serious discussions underway to begin work on new conservation easements.
- Developing a plan to receive a 100-acre parcel as a donation; expected to be completed in 2023.
- CALC's volunteer conservation easement monitors have performed required annual visits to each easement location to confirm the conservation values for each property are being protected.

Our Waldeck Island Preserve partnership with the DNR to restore the site's natural connection to Stone Ledge Lake got started this year. The removal of the earthen berm between the wetland and lake is set to begin in September. The berm will be replaced by a bridge that will maintain and improve access to the island. The bridge construction is planned in late fall of 2023 or as early in 2024 as weather will allow.

The work of the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy is perpetual. We could not do our preservation work, now and in the future, without the dedication and involvement of our volunteers, landowners, and donors. Saving special places in our own backyard takes all of us. Thank you to each and every one.



CHRIS GENTRY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FINANCIAL UPDATE

BALANCE SHEET	2ND Q 2023	2022
Current Assets	1,060,445	1,060,472
Fixed Assets	153,090	143,303
Endowment	334,751	382,450
Accrued Payroll	-2,360	-2,230
TOTAL ASSETS	1,545,926	1,583,925

Current Liabilities	682	3,456
Long Term & Endowment	1,562,050	1,580,540
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	1,562,732	1,583,996

CALC ANNUAL OPERATIONS

Donations	11,452	26,815
Endowment Proceeds	0	2,500
Grant Projects	-1,995	9,550
Investment Proceeds	554	46,709
TOTAL REVENUE	10,011	85,574

EXPENSES

Employment Costs	23,331	36,304
Professional Services	7,202	6,670
Insurance	1,282	1,729
General Expenses	8,922	18,673
TOTAL EXPENSES	38,737	63,376



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»» A BRIEF HISTORY OF CALC ««

- 1995** Cadillac residents George Rock and Thomas Rensberry sought a way to preserve their properties. They established the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy on Sept. 21, 1995.
- 2001** CALC establishes a Special Fund with the Cadillac Area Community Foundation with a generous gift from the Rock family to generate funds for easement procurements and maintenance. This fund continues to grow.
- 2002** Protecting bear habitat becomes a priority. CALC begins a lengthy process of developing a bear corridor by establishing easements on private property, partnering with public agencies to identify bear travel patterns, and placing signage on state highways.
- 2007** Waldeck Island becomes CALC's first preserve. This beautiful 11 acre sanctuary rests on the north side of Stone Ledge Lake, just south of Cadillac and was donated by George and Victoria Rock.
- 2014** Bud and Ann Oliver gave the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy a 15 acre parcel of land near Harrietta to use as a preserve for hiking and fishing. This preserve on the Slagle Creek gives access to the US Forest Service lands on its northern border.
- 2015** The Carl T Johnson Preserve is recorded, opening 39 acres of prime wildlife habitat. The property was bequeathed to the Rotary Club of Cadillac by Carl T. Johnson, local conservationist and steward of the land. The Rotary Club gave it to CALC in order to open to the public.
- 2016** The 22 acre Kohn Family Nature Preserve is added with 4,300 feet of the Manistee River shoreline. This natural area that abuts state land is habitat for waterfowl and game, a canoe resting place and a forested scenic backdrop for hikers on the North Country Scenic Trail.
- 2020** CALC hires its first paid staff. Norma Roelfsema as office manager and Chris Gentry as Executive Director.

CALC Chairpersons

1995-1998 Tom Rensberry
1999-2004 Richard Loughmiller
2005-2007 Dick Bensel
2008-2010 Ruthann French
2011-2018 Larry Copley
2019-2022 Steve Cunningham
2023- Shari Spoelman

2023 CALC Board Members

Chair: Shari Spoelman	John Leech
Vice Chair: Marco Menezes	Matt Long
Secretary: Sam Hogg	Vicki Long
Treasurer: Marty Williams	Dennis O'Hara
Susan Conradson	
Cyndy Foley	Executive Director
Dave Foley	Chris Gentry



Learn more at www.calc-landtrust.org

“KEEPING LAND IN ITS NATURAL STATE” WAS GOAL OF JUSTUS EASEMENT

By Dave Foley



In 1995 Floyd and Denise Justus bought a farm on Mackinaw Trail near Tustin that had been owned by the Larson family for 99 years. The house was declared a state historical site in June of 1997 by the Michigan Historical Commission. Denise noted that “We love this property and we wanted to keep it in its natural state. We first became aware of CALC when a neighbor, Anita Cornell gave us a CALC newsletter. It sounded like what we were looking for and we got in contact with George Rock.”



DENISE JUSTICE

Rock convinced Floyd and Denise of the value of having an easement on their property and Bob Hess prepared the baseline documentation for an easement for 67.5 acres on the Justus farm property in June of 2004. As Denise recalled, “ When we bought this property, a golf course was being developed.” Floyd and I thought, “If they can put in a golf course, What's next? It was important to us to protect what we had.”

About a dozen years ago Hess used his connection with the Fish and Wildlife Service to arrange and administer wildlife enhancement projects that would protect the wetland swales that tended to dry up in the summer. This was accomplished by creating a low head dam to reclaim what was once a wetland, restoring it as habitat for water fowl. Under Hess's direction, two agri-drains were created to raise and lower water level so birds and animals could count on a water source on the reflooded wetlands.

Wind energy was also intriguing to Floyd and Denise and their farm became one of the first to have a wind spire – a vertical spinning wind turbine. “The spire was initially successful but there actually was too much wind out there in the field and the constant breeze caused the spire to over-rotate and it burned itself out.” It was expensive to replace the spire so the Justus's turned to solar energy and brought in solar panels.

In the future more of their property will likely be protected as Denise has been working with CALC finishing up an easement which will include an additional 20 acres of the Justus farmland. In looking toward the future, Denise said, “A quote attributed to Andy Warhol probably best sums up what Floyd and I believed about land conservation: *'I think having land and not ruining it is the most beautiful art that anybody could ever want to own.'*”

Floyd, who passed in 2021, and Denise have been committed members of CALC with Denise serving as the organization's secretary for several years.



Justus Farm



*(Above) Justus Farm
fence line and pasture*



(Left) Justus Homestead

Photo credits by Chris Gentry

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS PROTECT BREHM PROPERTIES

By Dave Foley



VICTORIA BREHM



In 2004 the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy finalized a conservation easement on 100.76 acres of land owned by Victoria Brehm. The land, located on the Osceola-Wexford County line, has been in the Discher and Brehm families for over 150 years.

Originally from Verno, Hessen, the Johannes Discher family came to the United States in 1832, settling in the Black Swamp of Ohio. During the Civil War, three sons homesteaded in Osceola and Wexford Counties as the land became available. The Discher-Brehm farm, one of the earliest in Sherman Township, Osceola County, was settled by “Will” Discher, who married Elizabeth Rock in Ohio and brought his brother-in-law Fred Rock north with him as part of a chain migration. Will and Elizabeth were leaders among the Sherman Township homestead families because they were bi-lingual. Church services were held in their front parlor and Will became the first Sherman Township Supervisor. Another Rock sister, Caroline, married John Eggle and they joined the other families on a nearby farm.

Although Victoria grew up on the farm, for many years she was an English professor in the East. In addition to teaching, she is a writer who has published numerous books, notably *The Women's Great Lake Reader*, named one of 50 Essential Books for Michigan History by the Library of Michigan, and *Star Songs and Water Spirits: A Great Lakes Native Reader*, the first collection of Native literatures of the lakes region.

Victoria inherited the Discher farm from her father, Ernest Brehm, Will Discher's nephew. He had begun the process of restoring the buildings that Victoria has continued, working to preserve wood-frame buildings that were built by hand in the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s. When Victoria retired, she returned to the farm, telling me that “I lived in cities and college towns for decades, but I couldn't do it now. I had to get back to the farm where I grew up.” Most days she takes her dogs on long hikes. “It's never boring out here. There's so much to observe in nature. Really it's the land that matters. That's why I stay here.” In 2022, Victoria put a conservation easement on another 60 acres.



Wooded trail on Brehm property

Steve Cunningham, who is quite familiar with the property, pointed out the diversity of the Brehm property, noting that the land is a mix of highly productive farmland with crops of grass and alfalfa as well as a pine plantation, a tamarack bog, several ponds, and upland hardwoods. The land has been managed for open space and wildlife as well as farming. A dedicated gardener, Victoria cultivates some rare plants, including vintage geraniums, and she works to maintain an apple orchard with heritage trees like those planted when the farm was homesteaded.

With a goal of keeping these lands in their natural state, Victoria was intrigued when her cousin George Rock, told her about CALC. "It sounded like what I was looking for. I was afraid that after I passed, the property, which has a mile of road frontage, would be subdivided into small parcels." Now protected by easements, Victoria has stipulated that after she dies the property and buildings will be given to CALC.



(Left) Fall colors starting on Brehm Farm



(Right) Historic Brehm family barns



(Left) Brehm property rolling hills, pasture and woods.

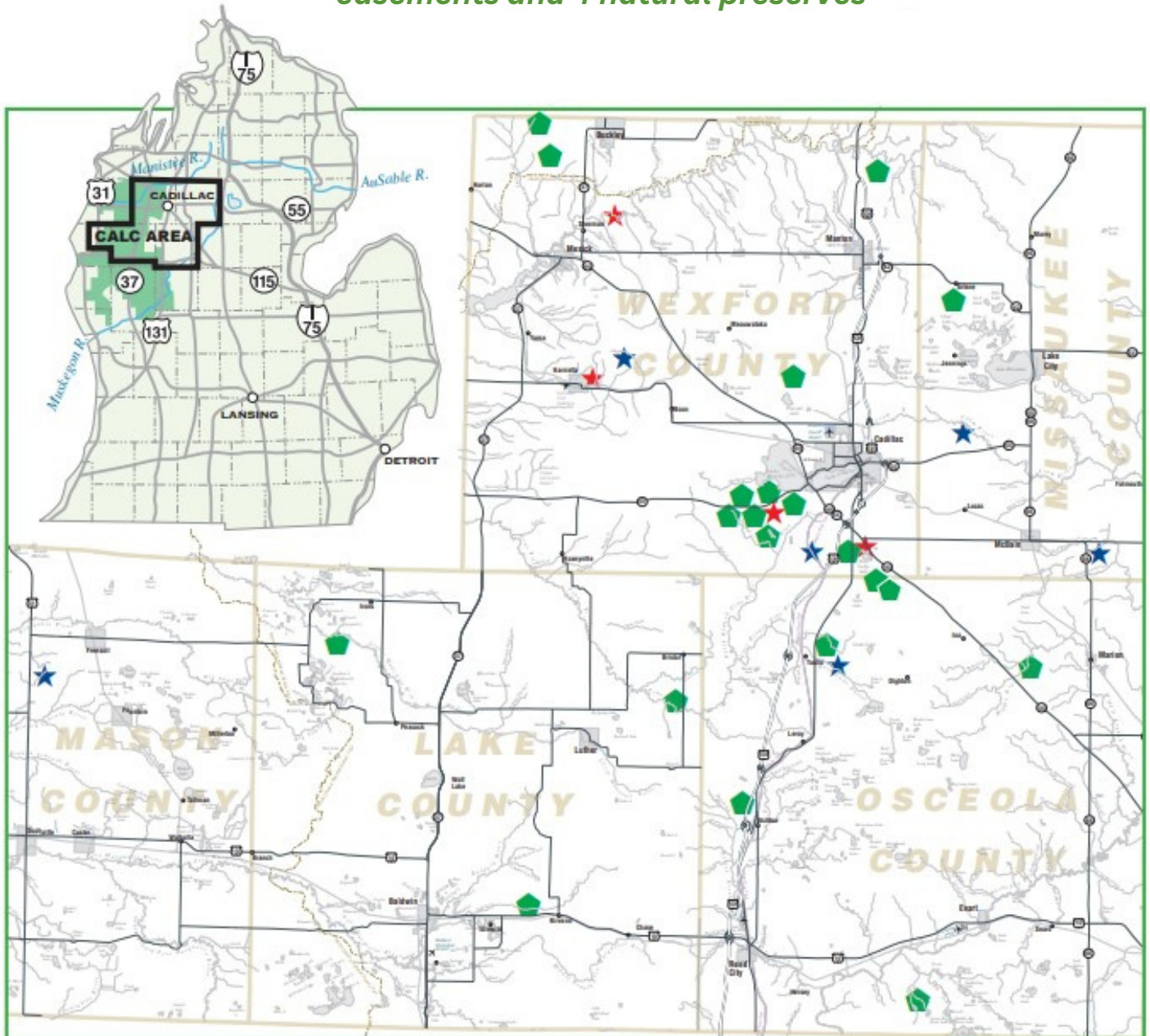
Photo credits by Chris Gentry



CADILLAC AREA
Land Conservancy

Protecting land in Missaukee, Osceola, Wexford
& northern Lake & Mason Counties

➤➤➤ *CALC is now protecting over 2,500 acres through 21 conservation easements and 4 natural preserves*



*Conservation
Easements*



*Nature
Preserves*



*Developing
Easements*

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*As of August 2023