

Nature News

Newsletter of the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy



Winter 2026

Forest and Water Fund: Helping Landowners Protect Forests and Water While Getting Paid



We recently were made aware of this brand new program that private landowners should know about! Private forest landowners in Michigan now have a new opportunity to improve the health of their woods and protect local water resources through the Forest and Water Fund. This program offers direct cash reimbursement — up to \$25,000 per project — to support conservation practices that strengthen forests, enhance wildlife habitat, and promote long-term resilience.

Eligible landowners can receive **80% to 100% reimbursement** for approved practices, depending on the project. Examples of funded practices include establishing **High Carbon Reserves** to protect mature trees and habitat, using **prescribed fire** to restore natural ecosystems, **ecological tree planting** with native and climate-smart species, and **resilience and forest health treatments** that thin and cultivate diverse, healthy forests.

Any private Michigan landowner with fewer than 2,500 acres may apply. The program places a strong emphasis on reaching underserved landowners, including new landowners (owning land less than 10 years), veterans and active-duty military members, Native American and Tribal groups, and landowners in limited-resource or high-poverty areas.

The Forest and Water Fund is supported by **\$6.4 million in total funding over four years**, with at least **\$2.6 million dedicated specifically to underserved landowners**. The program is offered by the **Michigan Forest Association**, in partnership with the **Michigan Association of Conservation Districts** and the **Michigan Department of Natural Resources**.

Landowners interested in learning more or determining eligibility are encouraged to contact **Program Manager Vic Lane** at vic.lane@michiganforests.org



New Nature Guides for the Carl T. Johnson Preserve

We are pleased and honored to announce the creation of two nature guides for the Carl T. Johnson Preserve. “Common Plants of the Carl T. Johnson Preserve” includes watercolor paintings and plant characteristics to easily identify over 75 species. “Wildflowers of the Johnson Preserve” is a quick identification reference tool, grouping wildflowers by color. As you hike the preserve take a moment to notice the amazing variety of wildflowers, grasses, ferns, shrubs and trees. Check out these beautiful guides at:

calc-landtrust.org/nature-guides-for-the-carl-t-johnson-preserve

Julie Raabe Gentry created the nature guides for a stewardship project to complete the Nature Journaling Educator certification through the Wild Wonder Foundation. She is an avid Watercolor and Nature Journalist whose passion is spreading the awe and joy of nature through watercolor. Julie has enjoyed walking the trails at Johnson Preserve for many years and has recorded the flora in her journals. Thank you Julie! Special thanks to Victoria Brehm and other CALC members who helped to edit this project.

❖ Protecting Land in Wexford, Missaukee, Osceola and northern Lake and Mason Counties ❖



What's going on at our local conservation districts

Missaukee County Conservation District

Missaukee CD had 80-acres donated to them by Joyce Jamieson in 2021 and are in the process of creating a draft master plan for the Jamieson Nature Education Center. The nature center will have accessible trails, a multi-generational playscape, wildlife viewing areas, native gardens and other outdoor education spaces. The property is located south of Falmouth Road, off M66 near McBain.



The Missaukee CD has also many workshops scheduled for 2026 including:

- Sprout about It - Microgreen workshop - Feb 25th
- The Giant Pumpkin Workshop - April 8
- Wild for Wildlife - May 6
- Bring Nature Home - Native Landscaping - May 27
- Native Freshwater Mussel Discovery - July 18
- From Forest to Future Part 2 - March 28
- Soil Health Workshop - March 25
- Autumn Oliver Removal Workshop - Aug 10

Registration is on-line and there is a nominal cost for some of the workshops. <https://missaukee.cd.org/home>

Wexford County Conservation District

The Wexford County Conservation District is offering their "Winter Workshop Series", including:

- Fruit Trees and Pruning, February 25
- Basic Beekeeping, March 4
- Chickens 101, March 8
- Healing Herbs and Make-Take Tinctures, March 25
- Mushroom Logs Make and Take, April 1
- Pollinator Habitats, April 15
- Healing Herbs and Make-Take Salves, May 6

All workshops begin at 6:30 p.m. at the Wexford Conservation District, 7192 East 34 Road, Cadillac. Contact the District at 231-775-7681, Ext 3 or 231-667-4481 for more information and to register.

Osceola-Lake Conservation District

They are hosting a fruit tree grafting workshop on April 2. Cost is \$25. Call 231-465-8012 to register.

Robyn Buckley Meets the Challenge

By Dave Foley, first published in the Cadillac News



This past year to celebrate our 30th anniversary, we sponsored a "30 Miles for 30 years" challenge to encourage people to walk and record miles they covered on local trails. Although not a difficult task for those with reasonable fitness, it provided a major undertaking for Robyn Buckley who suffered a stroke in 2011 that crippled his right leg and right arm. In the years before this stroke, he led a vigorous life. "I used to cut 20 cords of wood each winter" he told me. "And when I wasn't cutting wood, I hunted" His garage wall is lined with racks from the largest deer he harvested, including a 15-point buck. As he showed me photos of him slalom skiing on the lake, I realized how devastating it was for him to suddenly be denied the ability to do these activities. Fred Sprague noticed this as well. The two are friends and met up for hikes and walks around Cadillac. As a member of CALC, when Fred heard about the challenge he felt it was something Robyn could do. In the first walks we tried to get in at least a mile and a quarter each time we went out. We'd hike the Carl T. Johnson Nature Preserve, the Johnson Heritage Trail, and the Oliver Family Nature preserve near Harrietta. And the White Pine Trail to do their walks. By mid-May Robyn had logged about 13 miles and it seemed like they would complete 30 miles before the 4th of July. Then on May 22, Robyn suffered a fracture in his back and was forced to stop walking until September. After Labor Day, the walking resumed with a series of hikes on the White Pine Trail. The final mile was logged on Oct 27th on the White Pine Trail. As they returned to the parking lot, CALC's director Chris Gentry was there to present Robyn with a certificate acknowledging his completion of the challenge and a patch. For Fred and Robyn, finishing the challenge doesn't mean the walking is over.

Remembering Ann Oliver



The world sparkles less with the passing of Ann Petrie Oliver in November of 2025. Throughout her life, Ann was a woman with a tenacious drive, kind heart, mischievous twinkle in her eye, and a genuine smile. While Ann had many passions, the strongest was for her family. Ann and her husband Bud generously donated land to create the Oliver Nature Preserve in Harrietta. She loved the outdoors and the beauty of Slagle Creek which runs through the preserve. CALC is so glad that she was able to visit the preserve last summer and see the location of the future overlook platform to be built by the creek. Given Ann's zest for life, the best way to honor her is to dive head first into everything you do; share your stories, get outdoors, embrace friends & family, and appreciate the world.



Thank you to everyone who donated so generously in 2025. Our donors are...

Guardian \$1000+

Lewis and Mary Bender
Todd Carlson
Pete and Heidi Eliot
Richard Hansen
Sam Hogg and Lauren Rule
Matt and Vicki Long
Kathy McCurdy
Melissa Rakestraw *
Cynthia Sorensen and Henry Reuter
Fred and Sharon Sprague**
Kerry Sprigg
Karen Waterman *
Matthew Waterman *
Mark Wyckoff

Steward \$500-999

Thomas Bookholtz*
Cheryl Brooks
Paul and Nancy Brown
Consumers Energy
Steve and Ria Cunningham
Dennis O'Hara
Sandy Oliver *
Lesley Pattison
Jim and Shirley Petersen
Gary Pomeroy
John and Nancy Silander
Tom Rensberry

Protector \$250-499

Dick and Maria Bensel
Larry and Margo Copley
Charles and Leta Mae Corwin
Frederick and Sue Eyer
Dave and Cyndy Foley
Chris Harris
Ann Kahner**
David and JoAnne Lawless
Phil and Janet Potvin
Mark McCartney
Andrew Smith

Conservator \$100-249

Allen and Elizabeth Altafater
Anonymous
Bruce Baker
Tom and Karen Basch

Lawrence and Nancy Beckwith
Rod and Mary Bellows
John and Lois Bishop
Carolyn and Richard Block
Mary Bugela
Sue and Scott Conradson
Bob and Patti Dunning
Cheryl Rock and Jeffrey Dysart
Chris and Julie Gentry
Fred and Sue Goetz
Doug and Amy Gullekson**
Richard Harvey and Marcia Calkin
David and Joy Hogg
Martha Irvine
Denise Justus
Kathleen Kelso
Mike and Kathryn Leuder**
Richard and Donna Maatman
Barb Miller
Pat Pavaglio
David and Joyce Petrakovitz
Mike and Leslie Pratt
Patricia Richardson and Deborah Winn
Jenny and Tim Reaume
Norma and Steve Roelfsema
Gordon and Patricia Roush
John Smith
Shari Spoelman and Gary VanHouten
Dorothy Stenman**
Jerry and Marlene Stilson
Linda and Arthur Squires
Pete and Mary Swearingen
Ed and Julie VanAlst
Glenn and Berniece Verbrugge
Alison and John Walters
Craig Weidner
West Michigan Credit Union

Supporter \$50-99

Jerry and Linda Adams
Alan and Pamela Anderson
Tom and Debra Bihlmeyer
Beverly Brighton
Richard Deuell
Bob and Elizabeth Garner
John and Kimbra Klarquist
James and Sarah Lawless
Patricia McRoberts
Joyce Mongar
Doug Nelson
Steve Spencer
Dave and Muriel Zandstra

In Memory of Tom & Marguerite Harris
Chris Harris

In Memory of Bev Strom
Ann Kahner

In Memory of Dennis VanAlst
Dorothy Stenman

In Memory of Doug Miller
Barb Miller

*In Memory of Gerald & Olive Rose and
Wexford Fox Ranch*
Richard Deuell

In Memory of Fred and Pat Lawless
David and JoAnne Lawless

In Memory of Doris Falk
Linda and Arthur Squires

In Memory of Robert Dunning
Bob and Patti Dunning

In Memory of Bill Irvine
Martha Irvine

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

To help support CALC's mission you can
donate online at www.calc-landtrust.org
or mail to
124 1/2 N. Mitchell St., Ste. 115
Cadillac, MI 49601

(231) 775-3631
calc@calc-landtrust.org

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

* Donation for improvements to the Oliver
Preserve in Ann Oliver's honor

** 2025 donation to Cadillac Area
Community Foundation endowment fund

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Mission Statement

To protect natural, scenic, and farm lands for current and future generations, and foster an appreciation for the environment in Missaukee, Osceola, Wexford, and northern Lake and Mason counties.



Director's Corner

Chris Gentry, Executive Director

As I looked through CALC's 2025 donor listing for this issue, I felt a deep sense of gratitude. Each name represents someone who believes in protecting the special places we all care about. Your generosity truly makes our land preservation work possible—thank you!

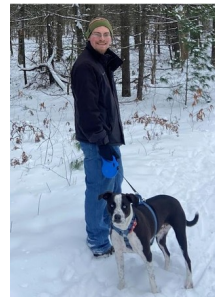
Because of our Board's careful financial stewardship, 100% of these contributions have been able to go directly toward conserving land and caring for the natural areas entrusted to us. That's something we can all be proud of.

As we head into 2026, I'm feeling optimistic and energized about what's ahead. I'm especially excited about:

- Continuing conversations with several landowners from 2025, with hopes of completing four or five new conservation easements (fingers crossed!).
- Connecting with some additional new landowners who have reached out to explore conserving their property through easements or land donations.
- Growing collaborations, including:
 - Riverbank restoration demonstration projects along the Clam River with the Muskegon River Association, Missaukee County Conservation District, and partners.
 - A native plant demonstration garden in cooperation with MSU Extension, NCCISMA, YMCA, and others.
- Working alongside our dedicated board members and volunteers to complete annual easement monitoring, offer programs, and create volunteer opportunities that invite more people into our work.
- Continuing to expand opportunities for the community to enjoy nature and the outdoors at CALC nature preserves.

Thank you for being part of this important work in 2025. I'm grateful for your continued partnership and look forward to all we can accomplish together in 2026.

Introducing Our New Board Members!



I'm CALC's newest board member Bob Weir. I originally come from northeast Ohio but have been making my way up through Michigan since I started college at Michigan State University in 2010. I've now been in the Cadillac area for a little over 8 years and am excited to be more involved with CALC. Hunting, fishing, birding, and hiking are among my hobbies though it's hard to choose a favorite as just about anything that gives me a chance to be outdoors is enjoyed. You might have already met me on one of the local paths with my dog Oscar; his blue eyes make him pretty memorable. Be on the lookout for CALC events. I hope to see some more folks outdoors.

Dana Castle works in the Habitat Management Unit in Fisheries Division of DNR. In her current role, she is responsible for administering the Natural Rivers Program on the Pere Marquette and the Pine Rivers, working on FERC hydropower projects, and working on long term strategies for DNR-managed dams. Dana previously having served a role as a technician studying spawning reefs in Lake Michigan out of Charlevoix, and also held roles at Little River Band of Ottawa Indians and USGS. She has a degree in Fisheries and Wildlife from MSU and a Master's in Biology from CMU. Even though she's from Grand Rapids, her parents bought a cabin in Baldwin on a small lake when she was just a year old, and since she has dreaded heading south on US 131. She enjoys being in an area heavy with public land where she can partake in all the outdoor activities. Her favorite hobby is fishing for steelhead in some of our amazing rivers in this area.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Shari Spoelman, Chair
Sam Hogg, Vice-chair
John Leech, Secretary
Dennis O'Hara, Treasurer
Dana Castle
Cyndy Foley
Dave Foley
Mark Lagerwey
John Leech
Matt Long
Vicki Long

Bob Weir
Marty Williams

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chris Gentry

OPERATIONS MANAGER

Sue Conradson

Contact us at:

www.calc-landtrust.org
 231) 775-3631
calc@calc-landtrust.org

2026 Save the Dates

Sunday, April 19- Earth Day Celebration in Cadillac Commons
Saturday, May 16, 9am- Birding and Botanical Walk at Marco's property
July 17-18 - Art Fair in the Cadillac City Park. CALC will be there—Come support us!
August 29 - Ripple Festival in Lake City
More Events & Information to Come