

Nature News

Newsletter of the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy



Spring 2026

Chicago Couple Preserves Land in Wexford's Antioch Township



Looking N.E. over Block property interior

CALC is pleased to partner with landowners Dick and Betsy Block to protect nearly 60 acres through a new conservation easement. Much of the land is natural, forested acreage containing diverse species of wildlife. There is wetland and about 500 feet of lakefront. Taken together, protecting this land protects valuable wildlife habitat, water quality for the local Cole Creek and Soper Creek watersheds (part of the greater Manistee River watershed) as well as providing natural and scenic value.

Speaking of why they choose a conservation easement the Blocks said:

"Years ago, looking to escape the hustle and bustle of Chicago, we were lucky enough to find a beautiful tract of old forest and wetland in Antioch Township. It became our favorite place in the world, and we recently began to think about how to make sure that it remained protected as a home for the many plants and animals that live there and for future generations of people to enjoy as we have. A conservation easement is making that possible. We are very grateful to the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy for partnering with us to preserve this parcel of land, and especially to the staff for patiently walking us through the easement process."



Dick and Betsy Block

We feel very fortunate to help them maintain their peaceful respite for now and for the generations to come.

Waldeck Island is an Island Again!



Water flowing to Stone Ledge

This winter's snow melt and the spring's ample rainfall has filled the wetland northeast of Stone Ledge Lake at CALC's Waldeck Island preserve. Water is now flowing from the wetland (sometimes called Swede Lake) to Stone Ledge Lake raising the lake's level by re-establishing a connection between the two bodies. This is good news for the fish and other aquatic species in the area.

In 2024 CALC received a DNR Fisheries Habitat Program grant that allowed us to partner with the DNR and donors to remove a failing berm between the "mainland" and the island. The berm was originally put there to allow access to the island. This structure had severed the wetland from the lake eliminating an important spawning area for some fish species in Stone Ledge Lake. The berm was removed and replaced with a bridge to maintain island access. This provided a way for fish and other critters to access both water bodies thereby improving their habitat and increasing their populations.



Water flowing under bridge

Unfortunately, the first couple of years after the berm was removed proved to be quite dry and no water flow connection occurred. This has changed dramatically this spring. Hopefully some type of water flow can be maintained in the months ahead. This project has been a wonderful partnership between CALC, DNR, and donors that illustrates the positive outcomes that happen when working together.

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



LEARN & RESTORE: A Clam River Streambank Workshop



**Saturday
July 25th**

Morning: 9 am - 11:30 am
Educational Session

Afternoon: Noon - 3pm
Hands-On Restoration
Working Session

Choose to attend
just the morning
or the afternoon
session - or stay
for both!

Bring a sack
lunch to enjoy at
the beautiful
pavilion.

**Cadillac
Pathways**
3736 S Seely Road
Cadillac, MI 49601

- Learn to heal Clam River banks through hands-on restoration
- Master techniques to protect your piece of the watershed
- Hands-on practice with expert professionals in the field
- Connect with neighbors caring for our river

A Clam River Partnership Event

No Cost to Attend



MISSAUKEE
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT



MUSKEGON RIVER
WATERSHED
ASSEMBLY



CADILLAC AREA
LAND CONSERVANCY



To register
scan here or
call 231-839-7193

www.missaukee-d.org

Funding for this project provided by: Fremont Area Community Foundation

CLAM RIVER RESTORATION WORK DAYS

A Clam River Partnership Project



Volunteers Needed!

Tues., May 19th - Noon to 4pm

Tues., May 26th - 1pm-4pm

Fri., May 29th - 10am-2pm

***Training will be provided.**

**Get your boots on the
ground and help us
restore areas along the
Clam River- we'll tackle
degraded riverbank
areas together.**

Scan below to sign up to
volunteer!



This project is funded by a grant from the
Ice Mountain Environmental Stewardship
Fund of Fremont Area Community
Foundation.

A Tribute to Bob Hess

By Steve Cunningham



The Cadillac Area Land Conservancy joins family, friends and the wider community in honoring the life and legacy of Bob Hess who passed away on March 27, 2026 at the age of 82. Bob was a man whose life was rooted in devotion—to his family, his friends and to the natural places he cherished. Bob was a board member and long-time volunteer for CALC and his presence was more than support; it was an embodiment of the values we strive to uphold. Due to his formal education, his many years of working with the Michigan DNR and his personal passion, Bob was an incredible naturalist. Walking through the woods with Bob was akin to a walk with Aldo Leopold, he knew every plant and animal and how they all live in delicate balance.

Once when visiting his land near Luther I spotted many elevated platforms which at first appeared to be for deer hunting, except for their locations seemed odd to me. As an expert wildlife biologist I thought he would have placed them differently, however much to my embarrassment I learned that they were not for hunting but rather to observe birds, of course, I should have known. Although a hunter, Bob was an avid birder as well as a lover of natural prairies and their many plant and insect communities.

You knew you were seeing something special when you witnessed Bob climb a chair or table and mimic a rooster prairie chicken in full strut. Once in the company of close friends I saw him ascend a picnic table thumbs under his armpits, elbows flapping, neck and head bobbing, all while explaining the beauty and elegance of the prairie chicken dance. Bob was a sight to behold.

As a professional Bob accomplished much. During his 30+ years working for the DNR as a highly respected wildlife biologist, he headed up the Non-Game Wildlife Species program and was personally responsible for helping to reestablish populations of Trumpeter Swans and the Peregrine Falcon here in Michigan.

At CALC, we recognize that conservation is built not only through protected acres and preserved habitats, but also through people like Bob—individuals whose lives reflect a deep understanding of the importance of land, water, and wildlife.

For those of us who care deeply about preserving the land, Bob's life stands as an example of quiet, lifelong stewardship. He understood that the beauty of our region is not simply something to enjoy, but something to protect and pass forward. As we remember Bob, we also celebrate the values he embodied; stewardship, dedication, and a lasting love for the natural spaces that make our community home.



YMCA Native Species and Education Garden Kicks Off!



Successful tree planting day...

Re-Leaf, a non-profit tree organization, partnered with CALC, MSU Extension, the Cadillac Y, CISMA, the ISD, Baker College and Wexford Conservation District to plant 20 trees at the YMCA on May 8 with the assistance of 30 volunteers!

This tree planting is the first step in creating a native plant and educational garden space in the location of the former YMCA community garden. The vision is that this garden will be a place to show the value of native wildflowers, shrubs and fruits. There will be an area also



to show how the indigenous people of Northern Michigan gardened. In the future it is the hope that this new garden area will be a place where the partner can do education, provide a place for the 4H groups to plant, and a place for education for the YMCA youth programs and a great place for volunteer gardeners and master gardeners to use their green thumbs. A huge thanks to all the people that came out to volunteer on the tree planting and kick off day for this garden project.



Photo of Phase 1 of the YMCA Native plant garden completed. Stay tuned for future phases and volunteer opportunities to be part of this exciting community project.

Earth Day 2026



Setting up for Cadillac Earth Day celebration. Thank you to all those who stopped by to say hi.



The CALC Earth Day booth on April 19 had many visitors—including Curtis the tortoise.

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

At a recent statewide meeting of land trust directors, we were reminded that these days land conservation and preservation does not get accomplished without collaboration and partnership. This is so true. Land trusts across the country are engaged in collaborative projects that are preserving valuable and important open space, engaging diverse populations in the outdoors, and educating the public about the positive effects of taking care of the land and maintaining open space.

That's certainly been the case for us at the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy. Partnership has always been part of how we work. We have teamed up with private landowners to protect special woods and farmland, kept our preserves open for folks to enjoy, and helped support land acquisition adding to accessible public lands in Wexford and Missaukee counties. None of that happens without trust and cooperation.

This year, that spirit of working together is showing up in some especially meaningful ways.

One is the **Native Species Demonstration and Education Garden** at the Cadillac Area YMCA. CALC convened a whole group of partners to the table, including the Central Michigan Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area, Michigan State University Extension, Wexford Conservation District, Baker College, Wexford-Missaukee Career Technical Center, the Cadillac Area YMCA, and ReLeaf Michigan. Work began on May 8, and over time it will grow into a resource where people and organizations can see how native plants support and strengthen the environment around us.

We're also proud to be part of the **Clam River Partnership**, working alongside the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly and the Missaukee Conservation District. Together, we're focused on caring for the Clam River through hands-on demonstrations, community education, and practical resources for the people who live along it.

And of course, none of this would go far without the people who stand behind it. Our donors and volunteers are partners in every sense of the word. Their time, their support, and their belief in this work are what make it possible to keep moving forward.

Introducing Our New Board Member!

Randy Hill

I was born and raised in Calais, Maine and lived in St. Petersburg, Florida and Traverse City before settling in Cadillac in 2008.



I am currently the Campus Director for Baker College. Prior to Baker College, I held roles as the Education Coordinator for the Inland Seas Education Association in Sutton Bay and the Education Director for the Dahlem Conservancy in Jackson, Michigan.

I have a Bachelor's degree in Natural Resources and Master of Arts in Teaching from the University of Maine, Master of Science in Marine Science from the University of South Florida, and a Doctorate in Education from Liberty University.

I have been married to my wife, Heather, for 25 years and we have three children: Connor (18), Avery (16), and Jackson (14).

I am interested in joining the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy Board of Directors because I value protecting the natural beauty, outdoor spaces, and environmental resources that make our region such a special place to live and work. I would welcome the opportunity to contribute my leadership experience, community connections, and passion for Northern Michigan to help advance the Conservancy's mission for future generations.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Chris Gentry

OPERATIONS MANAGER
Sue Conradson

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

2026 Save the Dates

July 17-18 - Art Fair in the Cadillac City Park. CALC will be there—Come support us!

August 29 - Ripple Festival in Lake City

October 19—Annual Meeting at the Carl T. Johnson Hunting & Fishing Museum