

# **LANDSCAPES OF OPPORTUNITY: A REGIONAL CONSERVATION PLAN FOR WISCONSIN'S LAKE MICHIGAN BASIN**

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Caledonia Conservancy  
Door County Land Trust  
Glacial Lakes Conservancy (fka Sheboygan Area Land Conservancy)  
Kenosha/Racine Land Trust  
Milwaukee Area Land Conservancy  
Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust  
Ozaukee-Washington Land Trust  
The Nature Conservancy - Wisconsin



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## OVERVIEW

This regional conservation plan reflects the mission, vision and goals of the Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance (the Alliance). The Alliance is a collaboration of seven non-profit land trusts and The Nature Conservancy of Wisconsin focused on “building organizational capacity to accelerate the protection of significant land and water resources in the Lake Michigan basin.” Through funding support provided by the Cavaliere Foundation and the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, Gathering Waters Conservancy facilitates the Alliance’s work to “identify, protect, restore and manage lands that protect water quality, wildlife habitats and the scenic integrity of Wisconsin’s Lake Michigan Basin.” The *vision* of the Alliance is:

1. Increased federal funding available for conservation in the region;
2. Staffed land trusts operating from Marinette County to Washington Island to the Illinois border; and,
3. Effective land use plans adopted in each county within the region.

To fulfill this vision the Alliance established the following *goals*:

1. Focus conservation efforts on critical and/or protected land and water resources, building upon ongoing conservation efforts;
2. Coordinate resources among groups and identify and pursue a variety of funding opportunities;
3. Promote capacity building through communication and cooperation between LMSA partners and others;
4. Promote creative solutions for land and water protection; and,
5. Build local and regional public support for protection of critical natural resources.

The planning approach and the recommendations provided herein seek to address the goals, vision, mission and purpose of the Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance and the conservation needs within Wisconsin’s Lake Michigan basin. The goal of this plan is to provide a meaningful set of recommendations and conservation strategies leading to the protection of important aquatic and terrestrial habitats within Wisconsin’s Lake Michigan basin. The resource assessments and planning documents used for this plan provided the basis for the majority of conservation areas identified in this plan; however, expertise and knowledge provided from organization and agency staff were critical to guiding site identification and recommendations provided in this plan.

## INTRODUCTION

In January of 2003, the Alliance held a conservation planning meeting focused on Wisconsin’s Lake Michigan basin bringing together private conservation organizations and interests, the Oneida Tribe, and regional, state and federal agencies (See Table 1). The participants shared information about their current projects, planning priorities and protection strategies within the basin. The goal of the planning session was to integrate this information into a single representation of ongoing, planned and needed conservation activity in the basin.

The sites and recommendations presented in this document are based on the information provided at that meeting, as well as statewide and regional planning documents which establish conservation priorities and assess current conservation status. This combined data has been used to identify places on the landscape where land trusts and other conservation agencies and organizations can work together to best leverage their collective resources to protect important natural resources within Wisconsin's Lake Michigan basin.

### Planning Goals

The goal of this plan is to identify important natural resource areas within Wisconsin's Lake Michigan basin. These places are those which will protect the most important land and water habitats, and will provide the greatest opportunities for leveraging financial and institutional resources for protecting land and water habitats. This approach also encourages collaborative conservation among resource agencies and organizations working toward resource protection within the basin.

Additionally, projects were prioritized based on the impact that their conservation would have on conservation within the basin as a whole.

Finally, the Alliance partners were concerned with identifying projects which met their organizational mission and protection criteria, but which also will enhance the environment of the region as a whole, rather than a limited area within the region.

### Planning Approach

The premise of this planning approach is simple: conservation agencies and organizations commit their time, money and expertise to those areas where they have a vested interest. The plans and assessments used within this document (See Table 2) identify natural resource priorities important to multiple private and public conservation interests. Most of the plans and assessments used for *Landscapes of Opportunity* make use of Natural Heritage Inventory data and sound methodologies and scientific principles in identifying important natural resource areas. The strength of *Landscapes of Opportunity*, in part, relies upon the methodologies, principles and practices used in developing the plans and assessments.

This document also presumes that collaborative conservation will provide far

### **Table 1: Participants at the Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance Planning Meeting:**

#### 1. The *Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance*:

- Caledonia Conservancy
- Door County Land Trust
- Glacial Lakes Conservancy
- Kenosha Racine Land Trust
- Milwaukee Area Land Conservancy
- Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust
- Ozaukee Washington Land Trust
- The Nature Conservancy of Wisconsin

#### 2. *Gathering Waters Conservancy*

#### 3. *Support Partners*:

- US Fish and Wildlife Service,
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources,
- Wisconsin Coastal Management Program,
- Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Comm.,
- Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission,
- East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission,
- Eco-Services of the Oneida Nation,
- The Conservation Fund,
- Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers,
- Heartlake Conservation Associates, and
- University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee

greater opportunities for leveraging financial capital and institutional capacity than efforts undertaken by any one agency or organization working alone. Collaborative conservation will also make most efficient use of the staff, financial and technical resources of each partner.

In order to achieve this collaborative conservation, Gathering Waters Conservancy has been facilitating the following approach:

1. Priority conservation project area identification;
2. Subsequent site conservation planning at each project area;
3. Integration of this plan and subsequent site conservation plans into Smart Growth plans at the local and regional levels.

This planning approach is intended to initiate and facilitate ongoing dialog among conservation professionals, planning agencies, local units of government and landowners. By integrating the results of this plan – priority project identification - and subsequent site conservation planning efforts into local Smart Growth Plans, land trusts, resource protection agencies, landowners and local units of government have an opportunity to work collaboratively and in a non-confrontational manner to protect important natural resource areas that represent the priorities of a broad range of interests.

## METHODS, ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

**Table 2: Regional Conservation Plans and Assessments used in Landscapes of Opportunity**

1. A Data Compilation and Assessment of Coastal Wetlands of Wisconsin’s Great Lakes: Final Report (WDNR)
2. Wisconsin Land Legacy Report: An inventory of places critical in meeting Wisconsin’s future conservation and recreation needs: DRAFT (WDNR)
3. Great Lakes Ecoregional Plan (TNC)
4. A Regional Natural Areas and Critical Species Habitat Protection and Management Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin (SEWRPC)

Gathering Waters Conservancy staff, assisted by the planning partners listed in Table 1, identified several regional resource assessments and priority conservation project identifications completed by conservation agencies and organizations for the Lake Michigan basin. These reports ranged from assessments of a specific type of resource to broadly defining resource and recreational needs. Table 2 lists those reports selected for use in determining basin conservation priorities.

The criteria to determine which plans and/or assessments were selected are as follows:

1. Statewide or regional (three or more counties) in scale;
2. Have a clearly defined criteria and site selection process;
3. Focus specifically on natural resources consistent with the type of conservation work undertaken by land trusts of the Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance;
4. Published within the past 5 years.

A Geographic Information System (GIS) was used to overlay maps representing priority areas in the different plans and assessments from Table 2, and those priorities identified by agency and organization staff at the January planning meeting. Locations and, where available, geographic extent of each priority area were compiled into a single map to determine how they related to one another on the landscape. Priority conservation project areas were identified when three or more of these priority areas intersected on the landscape, or when there were other compelling reasons for including them in the list. Several of the participants at the January meeting identified priorities which, because the resource attributes of the site were different from those being assessed in a given report, were not included in the final plans and assessments. However, these places were recognized by the group as having significant regional conservation value.

This planning approach does not differentiate among conservation values represented at each area. For instance, the *Land Legacy DRAFT Report* includes recreational areas as priority areas within the plan. *Landscapes of Opportunity* only identifies those areas where planning and assessment priority areas intersect; it does not categorize or group according to natural areas, recreational areas or other resources. When site conservation planning takes place within the priority project areas, conservation values and goals will be refined for each site. It is also important to note that this planning approach does not identify threats to natural resource areas within the basin. Certain areas not identified in this plan but of regional ecological significance may demand immediate attention due to a threat, series of threats or unique opportunity. The priorities established in this plan should not preclude conservation work in other areas as appropriate.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the assessment contained few surprises. Most of the priority areas identified through the assessment process were known to the members of the Alliance and their agency partners. Of the 18 priority areas identified, seven had existing conservation efforts underway by one or more of the Alliance members. Table 3 and Map A identify these 18 priority conservation project areas within Wisconsin's Lake Michigan basin. The boundaries of each area are rough approximations of the conservation area on the landscape. In most cases the project areas identified do not reflect a direct overlapping of priority areas taken from the plans and assessments used for this plan. Rather, a more qualitative grouping or "clustering" of priority areas was used. Subsequent site conservation planning will delineate specific project boundaries that will identify critical core areas, buffers, corridors, etc., based on the resource goals, values and needs represented within the project area.

It is clear from the map representing the priority project areas that nearly all sites are located within Lake Michigan coastal regions. This is a result of the resource focus of the plans and assessments the Alliance partners selected to use in identification of regional priorities. However, it also reflects the fact that Wisconsin's coastal ecosystems are extremely threatened and therefore are priorities for conservation action.

**Table 3: Priority Conservation Project Areas in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan basin:**

1. Black Ash Swamp
2. Brussels Hill/Gardner Swamp/Kayes Creek
3. Chiwaukee Prairie/Kenosha Sand Dunes
4. Kohler-Andrae Area
5. Little Wolf River headwaters
6. Lower Green Bay
7. Milwaukee River mainstem
8. Northeast Coast Door Peninsula
9. Northern Kettle Moraine
10. Pensaukee River Wetland Complex
11. Peshtigo Harbor Marsh & Seagull Bar
12. Point Beach Area
13. Point Creek/Fischer Creek Area
14. Red Banks Glades
15. Root River Riverine Forest/associated Natural Areas
16. Shivering Sands Area
17. Upper Milwaukee River
18. Washington Island

The Alliance partners have selected specific sites within many of these priority areas for focused attention through site conservation planning. In many cases, these specific sites build on or overlap with existing conservation projects already undertaken by the organizations.

The site conservation planning process takes several steps:

- Selection of conservation targets
  - those natural elements found at the site for which the protection of the site is critical to their viability and maintenance
  - can include – species, natural communities, historic features, scenic viewsheds
- Identification of threats to those targets
  - activities, elements, inaction which degrades or destroys the targets
- Setting conservation goals for the targets
  - what is desired condition of the targets?
  - e.g. how big a population is needed, how many acres required
- Developing most appropriate conservation actions to mitigate threats and achieve conservation goals

This planning process is designed to be collaborative among those organizations and agencies working within the site, concerned with the resources found at the site, and/or potential funders of conservation activity at the site.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Site conservation planning at the local level will create a set of more meaningful, site-specific strategies for conservation of resources at each site. However, there are broader conceptual strategies which have applicability across multiple sites, and throughout the Lake Michigan basin. These strategies will be implemented by the Alliance partners, in coordination with other organizations and agencies, to complement and support the site-specific work they undertake.

Recommended strategies include:

1. The Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance should continue to meet as an Alliance and each land trust should continue working to build their respective capacity by teaching and learning from other land trusts in the Alliance.
2. Alliance partners will take the lead on developing site conservation plans for each of the priority project areas in their respective service areas.
3. Develop mechanisms to integrate this plan and the subsequent site conservation planning efforts into local Smart Growth Comprehensive Planning. This could be accomplished through involvement of local elected officials and plan commissions in site planning workshops. Implement coordinated education & outreach on recommended conservation actions, targeting local elected officials, plan commissions and planning consultants.
4. Develop outreach strategies for Alliance partner members and others about the ecological, recreational and economic value of conserving these sites, and build a constituency to advocate for their protection, and inclusion in Smart Growth plans.
5. Work with the Wisconsin Department of Resources' Bureau of Endangered Resources to designate appropriate priority areas as State Natural Areas or expand current SNA boundaries which overlap or fall within priority areas, thus providing eligibility for State Stewardship funds for property acquisition or easements at those sites.
6. Share this plan with potential funders as a means to direct private and public protection monies to each priority area. Programs such as the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office, and others could provide a great benefit in meeting the conservation needs in the respective areas.
7. Work closely with legislators, at both the state and federal level, to maintain support for programs vital to land protection in Wisconsin, and provide opportunities for accessing appropriations for projects within the priority project areas.
8. Distribute this plan to each of the planning organizations and agencies engaged in resource protection within the basin, through site conservation plans and comprehensive planning workshops.

9. Pursue opportunities for increased capacity building funds to the Alliance partners through joint grant proposals and foundation requests.
10. Build on current county-level work in the seven southeastern Wisconsin counties to develop coalitions of environmental, conservation and advocacy groups working on common critical conservation projects and issues. These coalitions can provide visibility, support and resources for accomplishing the conservation goals set out in site plans, as well as raise awareness of and funding for open space and natural area protection.
  - a. Work in partnership with the Milwaukee County Conservation Coalition on developing support for a bond referendum for open space protection.
  - b. Partner with the Land Conservation Partnership of Washington County to build support and secure funding for a county-wide PDR program.
11. Ensure that major federal environmental laws such as the Clean Water Act (CWA), the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the like, are protected and appropriately implemented.
12. Revise this assessment regularly, to incorporate new information about natural resources, conservation opportunities, significant threats and partnership opportunities.

#### Funding Opportunities for Implementation

Three general areas where opportunities for implementation seem to be strong are:

1. **Fox River Valley** and greater Green Bay watershed -- the Fox River Natural Resources Damage Assessment (NRDA) settlement provides funding for protection and restoration activities throughout the northern part of Wisconsin's Lake Michigan basin;
2. **Milwaukee Metropolitan region** -- the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District's Conservation Plan and GreenSeams program provide funding for protection and restoration activities within the watersheds of the Menomonee, Root, Oak Creek and Milwaukee rivers; and
3. **Door County** -- the county's conservation partners have secured funding from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant program for land acquisition.

Other potential funding sources for implementation of the strategies outlined above, as well as site-specific strategies developed for each priority area includes **The Conservation Fund's** low-interest revolving loan fund for conservation projects within the Great Lakes basin. The Environmental Protection Agency's **Great Lakes National Program Office** makes grants for projects which provide conservation benefit to the Great Lakes basin. The **Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat Network Fund** makes grants of \$500 - \$3500 for grassroots, citizen-led initiatives to protect and restore aquatic habitats within the basin. The **Wisconsin Coastal Management Program** makes grants to local non-profit conservation organizations for projects that enhance and restore coastal natural resources.

## CONCLUSION

This plan identifies significant natural areas within the Lake Michigan basin of Wisconsin which are a priority for conservation due to the resources they represent and the opportunity they provide for land trusts to achieve substantial, lasting conservation success. The Lake Michigan coastal region is under constant, increasing and severe development pressures. Those natural areas still extant in the region are of high priority for protection primarily because they represent the last remaining examples of these types of systems in the region and in the world. By highlighting these areas, bringing together multiple partners to work collaboratively for their protection, and developing site specific conservation strategies, it is hoped that these special places remain as habitat for plants and animals, continue to provide scenic and recreational opportunities for people within the region, and serve to improve the health and quality of regional water resources.

*Landscapes of Opportunity* is a guide to some of the most important conservation work to be done in the basin. It is not just a tool for the Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance and its partners, but for any agency or organization which is concerned with the conservation of land, water and habitat resources in their communities. This guide reflects the priorities of the people living within the basin, as reflected in the public planning documents used to develop this plan.

The next steps will be to develop site-specific conservation strategies for each of the 18 Priority Conservation Project Areas. These plans will guide the work of the Alliance, and the individual land trust members of the Alliance as they implement on the ground conservation action. In addition, these site plans will be a tool to use in securing funding for that conservation action; they will provide goals, measures of success and a strategic outline of actions that will be implemented.

## **LAKE MICHIGAN SHORELANDS ALLIANCE ALLIANCE AGREEMENT**

### ***ALLIANCE MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS***

Caledonia Conservancy (CC)  
 Door County Land Trust (DCLT)  
 Glacial Lakes Conservancy (GLC)  
 Kenosha/Racine Land Trust (KRLT)  
 Milwaukee Area Land Conservancy (MALC)  
 Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust (NEWLT)  
 Ozaukee Washington Land Trust (OWLT)  
 River Revitalization Foundation (RRF)  
 Wisconsin Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

BACKGROUND: Natural resources of Wisconsin’s Lake Michigan Basin face rapidly accelerating threats from inappropriate management. In most cases these threats directly or indirectly impact the water quality of Lake Michigan and its tributaries and threaten to erode the ecological and scenic integrity of lands within the basin. To effectively address these threats well-coordinated and collaborative conservation strategies are necessary.

PURPOSE: Collaborate to identify, protect, restore and manage lands that protect water quality, wildlife habitats and the scenic integrity of Wisconsin’s Lake Michigan Basin.

COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURE: The Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance is a loose consortium of private, not-for-profit conservation organizations, referred to herein as “*member organizations*,” working to protect the important natural resources of Wisconsin’s Lake Michigan Basin. The member organizations form the decision-making body of the Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance.

As deemed appropriate by the member organizations, ‘*support partners*,’ such as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, regional planning commissions, etc., may serve in an advisory capacity for the collaboration.

*Gathering Waters Conservancy* facilitates the growth and development of the LMSA and will assume the role of fiscal agent for the collaboration when capacity building funds are secured.

MISSION: The Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance is a collaboration of non-profit Wisconsin conservation organizations focused on building organizational capacity to accelerate the protection of significant land and water resources in the Lake Michigan basin.

### DRAFT VISION:

1. Increased federal funding to region for land and water conservation work.
2. Staffed land trusts operating from Marinette County and Washington/Rock Islands to the Illinois border.

3. Effective land use plans adopted in each county in the region which address natural resource conservation needs.

ALLIANCE GOALS:

1. Focus conservation efforts on critical and/or protected land and water resources, building on ongoing conservation efforts;
2. Coordinate resources among groups, and identify and pursue a variety of funding opportunities;
3. Promote capacity building through communication and cooperation between LMSA members and others;
4. Promote creative solutions for land and water protection; and,
5. Build local and regional public support for protection of critical natural resources.

MEMBER EXPECTATIONS:

In order to achieve these goals, each member organization is expected to:

1. Assign a contact person who will represent the organization, and provide all appropriate contact information;
2. Participate in at least 3 of the 4 annual meetings of the LMSA;
3. Adopt the Wisconsin Land Trust Statement of Principles;
4. Adhere to the Land Trust Alliance's Standards & Practices, in particular, adopting a Conflict of Interest policy for the organization;
5. Provide timely information and reports as requested by the LMSA and/or Gathering Waters Conservancy in order to meet grant proposal deadlines and grantor reporting requirements.

**LAKE MICHIGAN SHORELANDS ALLIANCE:**

Recognizing the importance of terrestrial and aquatic resources within the Lake Michigan Coastal Region, we the undersigned agree to participate in and support the Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance in an effort to maximize voluntary conservation efforts to preserve, protect, enhance and maintain the natural resources that underlie healthy, viable and livable communities.

## Priority Conservation Project Areas within Wisconsin's Lake Michigan Basin

Reports and Assessments in which site was identified as priority

	A	B	C	D	E	F	Total	H
Black Ash Swamp	X	X	X			A Guide to Significant Wildlife Habitat & Natural Areas of Door Co.	4	
Brussels Hill/Gardner Marsh/Kayes Creek	X					A Guide to Significant Wildlife Habitat & Natural Areas of Door Co.	2	
Chiwaukee Prairie/Kenosha Sand Dunes	X	X	X	X			4	✓
Kohler Andrae Area	X	X	X				3	✓
Little Wolf River headwaters	X		X				2	✓
Lower Green Bay	X	X			X		3	
Milwaukee River Mainstem	X		X	X	X		4	✓
Northeast Coast Door Peninsula Area	X	X	X				3	✓
Northern Kettle Moraine	X		X		X		3	
Pensaukee River Wetland Complex	X	X	X		X		4	
Peshtigo Harbor Marsh & Seagull Bar	X	X	X				3	
Point Beach Area	X	X	X				3	
Point Creek/Fischer Creek Area	X	X					2	✓
Red Banks Glades	X	X	X				3	✓
Root River Riverine Forest & associated Natural Areas	X	X		X		Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District's Conservation Plan	4	✓
Shivering Sands Area	X	X	X				3	✓
Upper Milwaukee River – Cedarburg Bog/Huiras Lake	X		X	X	X		4	✓
Washington Island Sites	X	X	X				3	✓

A: Wisconsin DNR *Draft* Land Legacy Report

B: Wisconsin DNR Coastal Wetlands Assessment

C: The Nature Conservancy's Great Lakes Ecoregional Plan

D: Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission's Natural Areas Plan -- only covers southern portion of the basin

E: Current Wisconsin DNR Priority and/or Planning Area

F: Other local natural resource assessments (listed)

**G: Total Number of Reports and Assessments** in which site was identified as priority

H: Overlap with current Land Trust project areas

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## CURRENT ALLIANCE PARTNER CONSERVATION PROJECTS

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### Brussels Hill/Gardner Swamp/Kayes Creek

The Brussels Hill area in southern Door County includes a diverse array of interconnected natural systems, including a wetland/creek system which empties into Green Bay, a large block of unbroken forest land and karst outcroppings associated with the Niagara Escarpment. In addition, it offers a variety of recreational opportunities, including biking, hiking and fishing.

The Wisconsin DNR has been managing Gardner Swamp as a Wildlife Habitat Area, and is also using Scattered Fish Habitat funds to acquire parcels within the Red River watershed. Door County Soil and Water Conservation Service is implementing a streambank easement program under the Red River Priority Watershed designation.

Successes in the Brussels Hill/Gardner Swamp/Keyes Creek complex include:

- ✓ *Conservation easement on 415 acres, including the headwaters of Kayes Creek.*

### Chiwaukee Prairie – The Nature Conservancy and WI-Department of Natural Resources

Chiwaukee Prairie is a joint protection and management project of The Nature Conservancy and WI-DNR. The project is situated on ridge and swale topography created when the level of glacial Lake Michigan was lowered in stages. It is one of the largest prairie complexes in the state and the most intact coastal wetland in southeastern Wisconsin. The prairie contains an exceptional diversity of plants and animals -- more than 400 species of vascular plants have been found here. The natural area features a mosaic of plant communities, ranging from southern sedge meadow, wet prairie, and wet-mesic prairie in the low areas, to dry-mesic prairie on the slightly elevated sandy ridges. Portions of the site are classified as calcareous fen, inhabited by calcium-loving plants. Oak opening dominated by bur and black oaks occupies higher, drier ground along the southern and western parts of the preserve. This variety of habitats allows several rare and geographically restricted plants, amphibians, reptiles, birds, invertebrates, and mammals to thrive here. Twenty-six rare plant species, 10 of which are listed as endangered or threatened grow in the prairie. Grassland birds make extensive use of the area.

Successes at Chiwaukee Prairie include:

- ✓ *Acquisition of over 400 acres, held by TNC, WI-DNR and UW-Parkside.*
- ✓ *Establishment of trail system throughout preserve.*
- ✓ *Annual prairie management through prescribed burns, seeding, monitoring.*

### Little Wolf River Headwaters - Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust

The Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust has a community-based conservation project in the Little Wolf Headwaters to restore and protect the natural heritage of western Waupaca and eastern Portage Counties. The project area is defined by the watersheds of the Upper Little Wolf and South Branch of the Little

Wolf Rivers within Waupaca and Portage Counties. The region provides vital source-waters for greater Northeast Wisconsin, supplying clean water to the Fox and Wolf River systems and Lake Michigan.

The Upper Little Wolf Watershed is dominated by some of the largest tracts of private forest and wildland in Central Wisconsin, used both for commercial timber harvest and outdoor recreation, intermixed with fallow and occasionally active agricultural lands. The South Branch Watershed contains a greater mix of hobby and working farms, fallow fields, woodlands, and glacial lakes.

Successes within the Little Wolf Headwaters Project Area include:

- ✓ *Acquisition of 39-acre Reeve Reserve on the Little Wolf River.*
- ✓ *Acquisition of 220-acre Skunk and Foster Lake Natural Area*
- ✓ *Acquisition of 60-acre conservation easement on Vesey Lake*

The main goals of the Little Wolf River Headwaters Project are:

- \*Conserve, protect and restore natural features vital to the physical, psychological and economic well-being of Headwaters communities
- \*Engage a Little Wolf Headwaters Community Conservation Partnership of land trust volunteers, staff and conservation partners in conservation and restoration efforts

### **Point & Fischer Creeks – Glacial Lakes Conservancy (fka Sheboygan Area Land Conservancy)**

Sheboygan Area Land Conservancy was a lead partner in a multi-year project to protect property on Lake Michigan at the outlet of Point Creek. The 39 acre property was acquired by Manitowoc County for \$1.9 million, using funds from federal and state grant programs, matched by \$250,000 in donations collected by the Conservancy. The property is being jointly managed by the University of Wisconsin's Sheboygan, Green Bay and Manitowoc campuses.

### **Red Banks Glades – Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust and WI-Department of Natural Resources**

Red Banks contains an unusual array of natural communities, including Wisconsin's best example of an alvar community. The site is located on top of and at the edge of the Niagara Escarpment, and is characterized by areas of exposed bedrock and very thin soils. A unique white cedar woodland occurs on Gilson Creek within the site, on relict beach ridges. The dwarf lake iris, a federally listed species, is found in this woodland area. Along the edge of the Escarpment are found very rare land snails associated with spring seepages, cliffs and fissures. This area also finds some of the oldest red and white cedars known in Wisconsin. The Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust has been making contacts with landowners in the Gilson Creek corridor for the past year.

Successes at Red Banks Glades include:

- ✓ *Designation as a State Natural Area, with 102 acres protected by the WI-DNR.*
- ✓ *Collaborative Site Conservation Plan* drafted with partners including the WI-DNR, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, UW-Extension, Brown County Planning, Brown County Land Conservation and The Nature Conservancy.

## Upper Milwaukee River area – Ozaukee-Washington Land Trust

The Ozaukee Washington Land Trust is active at several sites within the Upper Milwaukee River area, including, *Huiras Lake* and *Cedar Sauk Woodlands*. The Milwaukee River has a fair number of riffles, boulders and deep holes, and for most of its length, supports a fairly diverse warmwater fishery. The stretch of river from West Bend to its mouth hosts excellent smallmouth bass populations. There are also seasonal runs of salmon and steelhead from Lake Michigan upstream as far as Grafton. Three of the fish species found in the river are rare or endangered. In the Milwaukee River corridor, OWLT has:

- ✓ *Accepted a donation of 15.5 acres* of hardwoods along the Milwaukee River in the Town of Grafton.

Huiras Lake is a 26-acre seepage lake with an undeveloped shoreline contained within a larger wooded matrix. Plant communities at the site include dry-mesic forest, mixed conifer and hardwood swamp, and a relict kettle bog. The undeveloped nature of the site and its location within a rapidly urbanizing area make this site highly valuable waterfowl and wildlife habitat.

Successes at Huiras Lake include:

- ✓ *Protection of a 103-acre tract* adjacent to the Huiras Lake, including the majority of the lake's northern shoreline as well as 80 acres of hardwood and conifer swamp. Wetland and forest restoration is an important component of the preservation effort at this site.
- ✓ *Provided financial assistance* for the purchase of 70+ acres of wetlands and agricultural land located to the north of the above mentioned tract.

The Land Trust also works at the Cedar Sauk Woodlands, a series of large forest tracts extending north from Cedarburg Bog State Natural Area. The forest is a mix of lowland hardwoods and conifers, although small glacial ridges in the wetland support upland forest communities. Several kettle lakes, largely undeveloped, dot the area, providing prime habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife. The Woodlands support a number of uncommon plant communities and species.

Successes at Cedar Sauk Woodlands include:

- ✓ *Conservation easement on 35 acres* of upland and lowland hardwoods and conifers, located adjacent to the State protected Cedarburg Bog.
- ✓ *Conservation easement on 110 acres* of wetlands, hardwood and conifer swamp, and agricultural land.

## Washington Island - Door County Land Trust

The Door County Land Trust works to protect various types of landscapes on Washington Island, often in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Washington Island Family Forests.

Successes on Washington Island include:

- ✓ *Protection of the 160 acre Richter Community Forest*, a resource where local schools and community come together to learn and study forest ecology and enjoy the recreational amenities offered at the Preserve.
- ✓ *60 acres of conservation easements*, protecting hardwood forests, wetlands and scenic views.
- ✓ *Maintenance of a scenic overlook on Washington Harbor*, through a land donation.