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## **Conservation Award Winners Exemplify Partnerships**

Gathering Waters Conservancy, a statewide non-profit conservation organization, is hosting its 4<sup>th</sup> annual *Land Conservation Leadership Awards Celebration* on Thursday, September 28<sup>th</sup> at the Monona Terrace in Madison.

In today's world of tight budgets and competing priorities, public-private partnerships are more important than ever in conserving our natural resources. This year's four award winners have successfully forged partnerships between private citizens, businesses, organizations, and local and state governments to protect spectacular natural areas.

"Our award winners have proven themselves as masters of collaboration," said Althea Dotzour, interim executive director of Gathering Waters Conservancy. "By leveraging the strengths and resources of their partners, they have been able to accomplish more land and water conservation than any of them could have done alone."

Dotzour credits the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund, Wisconsin's premier land protection program, for making each of the award winners' accomplishments possible. To date, the Stewardship Fund has been used to permanently protect 450,000 acres statewide. In addition to funding state land purchases, Stewardship has provided \$50 million in grants to land trusts who have matched the state's investment dollar-for-dollar.

"This event is an opportunity to recognize and thank the people who strive for excellence in land conservation," says Dotzour. "Our award winners have created new models to demonstrate how people can work together to protect the places that make Wisconsin a great place to live."

The event will be co-hosted by John Torinus, CEO of Serigraph Inc. (a recent Green Tier inductee), and Art Harrington, president of Gathering Waters Conservancy.

For more information about the event or this year's award winners, visit [www.gatheringwaters.org/awards](http://www.gatheringwaters.org/awards) or call (608) 251-9131.

Gathering Waters Conservancy's mission is to help the people and communities of Wisconsin protect their land and water by strengthening the state's land trust movement.

## **Gathering Waters Conservancy's 2006 Land Conservation Leadership Award Winners**

*Conservationist of the Year* – **Kristen Wilhelm** is a founding member of the Milwaukee Area Land Conservancy, Vice-Chair of the City of Franklin Environmental Commission, and staff member with the River Revitalization Foundation. Through Kristen's vision, tenacity and passion for land protection, Milwaukee County citizens are guaranteed access to pristine natural areas in the heart of expanding urban development. Most recently, Kristen worked tirelessly over the course of several years to protect the Fitzsimmons Woods area in the City of Franklin. Franklin Woods is made up of more than 20 acres of high quality maple-beech forest, containing woodlands, wetlands, and rare flora and fauna, and was purchased with the help of Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Funds by the Milwaukee Area Land Conservancy in February 2006. [more »](#)

*Land Trust of the Year* – **The Nature Conservancy – Wisconsin Chapter** has set an outstanding example of conservation innovation and leadership. In 2006, The Conservancy played an instrumental role in the protection of the Wild Rivers Legacy Forest project, the largest land conservation transaction in state history. By partnering with the State of Wisconsin, Conservation Forestry LLC and Forest Investment Associates, TNC helped protect over 64,000 acres of hardwood forest in northeastern Wisconsin. The Wild Rivers project, through conservation easements and public ownership, preserves public recreational access to wild rivers, lakes and forest, while ensuring sustainably managed working forests. This historic conservation success would not have been possible without the hard work of the staff and board of The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin. [more »](#)

*Policy Maker of the Year* – **The City of La Crosse** has made tremendous contributions to the preservation of over 700 acres of blufflands along the Mississippi River. Since 2001, the City has partnered with the Mississippi Valley Conservancy to implement the La Crosse Bluffland Protection Program. This collaborative conservation initiative works to protect the region's signature landscape feature – an eight-mile stretch of the Mississippi River Blufflands bordering the city. Through this partnership, over \$1 million dollars have been raised for land acquisition, protecting almost half of their 3,000 acre goal. Neighboring towns are watching La Crosse closely, and it appears that this collaboration will become a model for other upper Midwest communities. [more »](#)

*Harold "Bud" Jordahl Stewardship Award* – **Geoffrey Maclay** is a founder and president of the Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation, and founding member of Gathering Waters Conservancy. He has long been recognized as "one of the fathers of Wisconsin's land trust movement," and has been a lifelong advocate for private land conservation. For more than thirty years, Geoff has led efforts to protect over 2,000 areas of natural areas, wetland, woodland and other valued land resources within the Cedar Lakes Watershed. Recently, Geoff has worked closely with the DNR, the National Park Service and the Ice Age Park & Trail Foundation to protect some of the last remaining Kettle Moraine topography in Washington County. [more »](#)

### **Award winner contact info:**

Kristen Wilhelm (414) 277-7927

The Nature Conservancy

Mary Jean Huston, *State Director* (608) 251-8140

The City of La Crosse

Lawrence J. Kirch, *Director of Planning - City of La Crosse* (608) 789-7512

John Medinger, *Former Mayor of La Crosse* (608) 788-4594

Mark Johnsrud, *Mayor of La Crosse* (608) 789-7500

Mississippi Valley Conservancy – Tim Jacobson, *Executive Director* 608-784-3606

Geoffrey Maclay (414) 962-3670

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