

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONSERVATION LEADERS HONORED

MADISON, WIS. -- Land conservationists from across the state will gather in Madison later this month to honor some of those whose dedication to the preservation of Wisconsin's natural places has been especially outstanding in 2007.

Gathering Waters Conservancy's Annual Land Conservation Leadership awards recognize individuals and organizations whose achievements are making a notable impact on the future of Wisconsin's natural resources. "Everyone who plants a tree, volunteers at a nature preserve, or makes a donation is part of Wisconsin's conservation movement," said Mike Strigel, Executive Director of Gathering Waters Conservancy. "These awards are an opportunity to honor individuals whose exceptional work is supported and valued by many thousands of conservationists throughout the state."

The Winners

Land Trust of the Year

In just six short years, the **Northwoods Land Trust** has established an impressive track record of conservation in an area of Wisconsin where development pressure has never been higher. Executive Director Bryan Pierce and the Northwoods Land Trust's dedicated board of directors offer a wealth of innovative tools and information to northern Wisconsin landowners who are equally dedicated to preserving the natural character of Wisconsin's northern lakes and forests. Their efforts have resulted in an incredible collection of more than 2,000 acres preserved by a grand total of 23 conservation easements, including over eight miles of lake and river shoreline. "The Northwoods Land Trust is an outstanding small land trust using the full panoply of land conservation tools with great success," said Peter McKeever, attorney and NWLT member. "It is a model that inspires other land trusts to achieve excellence."

Policy Maker of the Year

As the state Secretary of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, **Rod Nilsestuen** has led the charge to preserve Wisconsin's working agricultural and forest lands. Rod convened the Working Lands Initiative Steering Committee, a diverse group of leaders with a shared interest in keeping Wisconsin's working lands in production. Out of these committee meetings came a proposal for a statewide Purchase of Development Rights grant program, which if instated would be an invaluable tool for communities, farmers, and land trusts in protecting farmland. "Rod has been a visionary leader of the Department of Agriculture and a champion of the idea that protecting Wisconsin's working lands is vital to the state's future," said Jim Welsh, Executive Director of the Natural Heritage Land Trust. "The land trust community of Wisconsin is behind him in taking action to protect Wisconsin's working lands."

Conservationist Lifetime Achievement Award

We will present our 2007 Conservationist Lifetime Achievement Award to **David Ladd**, for his dedication to environmental sustainability in business as well as decades of untiring land stewardship in his native Iowa County and across the state. As CEO of Walnut Hollow, Inc. David has instilled his business with an ethic of environmental stewardship, committing to no-waste “lean manufacturing” practices in woodcraft production. He has served on countless conservation boards, including a term on the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board and 20 years on the board of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. David has long been actively involved in local conservation projects in and around the Dodgeville area, and he and his family have planted hundreds of thousands of trees on family property. His combined work on all these fronts has left a lasting and visible impact on the Wisconsin landscape. “Mr. Ladd has permeated his community with a notable environmental ethic,” said Charlie Luthin, Executive Director of the Natural Resources Foundation. “His legacy will be long regarded and remembered.”

This year’s Land Conservation Leadership Awards Celebration will be held at the Monona Terrace on September 20 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. The celebration is open to the public by RSVP and \$25 donation, and will include a silent auction for the benefit of conservation efforts around the state. For more information about the event, please contact Gathering Waters Conservancy at (608) 251-9131 or by visiting www.gatheringwaters.org.

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Gathering Waters Conservancy was founded in 1994 with the goal of establishing a statewide network of local land trusts – citizen-run organizations, dedicated to protecting trails, parks, nature preserves, access to rivers and streams, working lands and wild places. To date, Wisconsin’s 55 land trusts have a combined membership of 45,000 individuals and families and have protected over 200,000 acres for the benefit of current and future generations.