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NEWS RELEASE

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Mississippi Valley Conservancy to Celebrate 10 Years of Conservation Success with Banquet and Silent Auction

- **Special guest speaker Kenny Salwey, a.k.a. “The Last River Rat”**
- **Artistically presented hors d’oeuvres made from local produce**
- **Wine tasting featuring 7 varieties from 3 area vineyards**
- **Silent auction with over 70 works of art, crafts and unique gifts**

Mississippi Valley Conservancy, a regional land trust based in La Crosse, will celebrate ten years of voluntary land conservation success at its 10th Annual Banquet on Thursday, November 8th, at the La Crosse Radisson Hotel Ballroom starting at 5:00 p.m.

Back in June 1995, a group of local people, concerned about the ecological and scenic features of the region being threatened by poorly planned development, gathered on the deck of David and Gretchen Skoloda’s house to brainstorm how to protect the best natural areas of the Coulee Region. State and national organizations had other priorities and refused to help.

“In 1997, it was clear that the State of Wisconsin would not do anything legislatively to conserve the beautiful bluffs of the Mississippi River,” said Gretchen Benjamin, one of MVC’s founders. “There had to be another solution

to the problem. Mississippi Valley Conservancy provided an avenue to conserve the bluffs by voluntary, private and non-threatening means. As of today, I would say we have succeeded wildly!”

"MVC has undergone a remarkable evolution," said Craig Thompson, another MVC founder. "Ten years ago it began with a small group of like-minded people meeting in the basement of the public library. Today, it is one of the most effective land trusts in the state, having protected thousands of acres ecologically significant sites in southwest Wisconsin. Clearly, these special places would not have been protected if not for MVC's efforts."

Tim Jacobson, MVC's Executive Director, said, "I started volunteering for MVC in the 90s, back when it was a small organization with no paid staff members. It's been heartwarming to see the organization spring to life and flourish like a pasqueflower emerging from a blufftop 'goat prairie' in April."

"As MVC enters its second decade, I'm thankful we have such a great base of people and businesses supporting our work," Jacobson added. "With such strong support, MVC can provide tools to enable local residents to leave lasting legacies for everyone to enjoy, like Grandad Bluff and Hixon Forest preserved for the public a century ago."

This year's banquet features special guest speaker Kenny Salwey, food and wine produced within our region and a silent auction with a wide and diverse offering of items donated by local supporters and businesses.

Kenny Salwey, known as “The Last River Rat”, is author of two books and stars in an Emmy-winning BBC documentary that aired in the United States on the Discovery Channel.

To complement Kenny’s reflections and Mississippi Valley Conservancy’s commitment to the importance of protecting our regional landscape, we will celebrate our local ecology with hors d’oeuvres prepared from organic and locally produced foods and host a wine tasting that features seven different wines from three area vineyards.

The silent auction will feature a wide range of original and reproduced works of art and handiwork from area artisans, gift baskets, and many more unique items for every taste and budget.

To sign up for this gala event, please call 608-784-3606 ext. 1 or e-mail mrich@mississippivalleyconservancy.org.

Founded in 1997, Mississippi Valley Conservancy is a regional land trust that has permanently protected more than 5,300 acres of scenic lands in southwestern Wisconsin by working with private landowners, businesses and local communities on voluntary conservation projects. Nationally there are over 1,700 land trusts which have collectively conserved more than 37 million acres.

For information on tax incentives, how you can permanently conserve your land, or to become a contributing member of Mississippi Valley Conservancy, please visit MississippiValleyConservancy.org; write to us at 201 Main Street, 10th Floor, La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601; or send e-mail to mrich@MississippiValleyConservancy.org.

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