



## THE VIEW FROM ABOVE *By Chris Bunch, Executive Director*

The fluid and long-term nature of our work means we often see big swings in the metrics of our work on an annual basis. These metrics cannot be taken at face value, since in many cases they are the culmination of, or the beginning of, projects that span multiple years. Every year it falls on me to report, coherently, what we have done in the preceding year. It is a herculean task, given the volume of work we are doing and the pace at which we do it. Days and months run together, and often projects are inter-related, making it harder to determine where one ends and another starts. If nothing else, this is a valuable undertaking just to gain perspective from a higher altitude.

2022 saw the continuation of some projects, completion of others, the start of new ones, and some major advances in ones that have been ongoing for literally decades.

On the land protection front, in addition to closing out assist projects like the Marine City Marina and taking on the Highland Township, Monarch Meadows (Chesterfield Township/Selfridge Air National Guard Base) and the Beverly Hills/Rouge River projects, the big news is Turtle Woods. This is a 70-acre parcel on Square Lake Rd. with fabulous and unique natural assets and major community benefit that will become a nature preserve for Oakland County Parks. It has large mature forested wetlands, a remnant of lake plain prairie and abundant wildlife including the turtles it is named after. Owned by Troy School District since the 1960's and enjoyed by Troy residents for decades, Six Rivers now has a purchase agreement on the property. We are working directly with Oakland County Parks, which is applying for a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and will eventually buy the property to become a new natural area park. Six Rivers has been involved with Troy School District trying to get this property preserved for literally decades - we have newsletter articles from 1999 detailing hikes out there. Working with two major local units of government plus the DNR through the MNRTF, this is a sophisticated undertaking with lots of moving parts. We expect to be actively involved for at least another 12-18 months until the project is finally completed and we can rest assured it is protected.

A project reported on in last year's annual report (for 2021), grew into something in 2022 that is really taking off in 2023. In last year's report I noted we had revised our strategic plan and are looking to make a meaningful impact on the disparity of 8 million acres of public land in Michigan, with only 200,000 acres of that down here, where the majority of the population lives and works. As a result of that goal, in 2022 we hosted a series of focus groups with business, conservation and public leaders to explore the question of doubling the amount of conservation and recreation land in this region - from 200,000 to 400,000 acres. Everyone that participated agreed it was an important goal and required attention and engagement, and the result was the formation of the GREEN Initiative - Growing our Resilience, Equity and Economy with Nature - which is being facilitated by Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. SEMCOG is the convener and keeper of records, but the implementation lies with the partners, which are made up of local government, non-profit and business partners from throughout the region. A formal task force was formed in 2022, has been meeting to develop targets and metrics, and final recommendations and actions will be unveiled in April of this year. A goal of this magnitude could never be accomplished by a single entity or in a single year. But just like the Turtle Woods project, over time, it can evolve into something transformational.

Our stewardship work continued and increased, including adding more contract work which is causing us to look at expanding that programming for 2023 and beyond. Over the course of 2022 we worked on transitioning the role of lead agency and fiduciary for the Oakland County Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) from Six Rivers to Oakland County Parks. We stepped in to support and lead the program back in 2018, along with taking on the same role for the Lake St. Clair CISMA. With a renewed and updated millage in place, Oakland County Parks sought to step into the role to increase their ability to work with their local government partners and with private landowners. This allows us to take advantage of their depth and shift additional attention to the Lake St. Clair CISMA to expand impact there, knowing the Oakland program is in good hands.

*Continued on page 12*



# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

## THE VIEW FROM ABOVE

*Continued from page 11*

On the community engagement front we hosted numerous booths at events throughout the region, had guided hikes, led stewardship field days and hosted another sold out Conservation Leadership Luncheon at the Detroit Athletic Club. The number of requests for our presence and participation at events over 2022 is leading us to create a volunteer corps in 2023 that will allow us to respond positively to more of these requests. Planning is already underway for the 2023 Conservation Leadership Luncheon as well as for our annual Conservation Celebration.

On the fundraising and financial front, we had mixed outcomes. We were disappointed to not be awarded a couple of major program grants we applied for, but were truly gratified by the continued support of our donors and sponsors. As we continue to increase the pace of our work in the face of increasing demands on our landscape, we are looking to develop a larger base of supporters who share in our commitment to protecting the land, water, habitat and character that sustains the prosperity of our communities.

The most important thing to report is that all of us at Six Rivers are extraordinarily grateful for our supporters, volunteers, and partners. It is an extraordinary privilege to do this work and to work with and for others who share our sense of commitment to preserving the landscape that sustains us. All of us have the opportunity to experience the gratitude that arises from this work regularly - occasionally in a big way with a major success, but most often in the small ways that arise on a daily basis from being surrounded by people who care about and act on values we share.

## ASSETS

	2022	2021
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$44,471	\$72,677
Grants and Contributions		
Receivable	\$154,847	\$159,375
Other Current Assets	\$16,523	\$6,853
Land Preserves	\$1,790,749	\$5,884,162
Conservation Easements	26	26
Property and Equipment - Net	\$11,646	11,646
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$2,018,262</b>	<b>\$6,134,739</b>

## LIABILITIES

	2022	2021
Accounts Payable and		
Accrued Expenses	\$28,886	\$14,868
Payroll Liabilities Payable	—	—
Loans Payable	\$191,922	\$4,233,771
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$220,808</b>	<b>\$4,248,639</b>

## NET ASSETS

Unrestricted	\$1,797,454	\$1,886,100
Temporarily Restricted	—	—
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$1,797,454</b>	<b>\$1,886,100</b>

## TOTAL LIABILITIES AND

<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$2,018,262</b>	<b>\$6,134,739</b>
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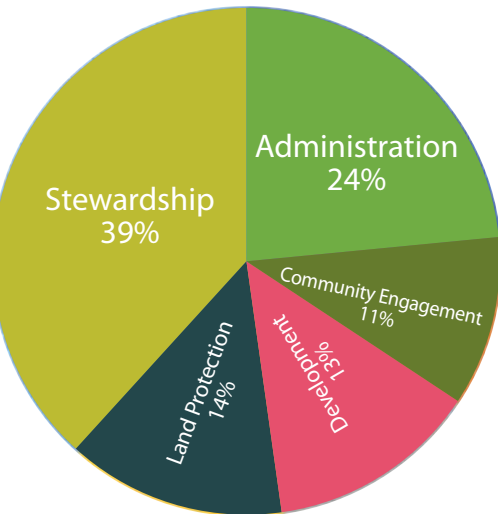


Photo by Lauren Hiltz

## 2022 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS



Photo by Rhonda Berger



## 2022 EXPENSES BY CLASS

- Stewardship . . . . . 39%
- Land Protection . . . . 14%
- Development . . . . . 13%
- Administration . . . . 24%
- Community Engagement . . . 11%

## LAKE ST. CLAIR CISMA 2022 IN REVIEW



Over 449 acres  
of invasive species  
treated



Hosted  
10 events

Over  
275K  
people  
reached.



2,094 acres  
surveyed





# 2022 STEWARDSHIP REPORT

Taking care of the *Nature Near You* requires healthy amounts of both patience and persistence. Thankfully, our stewardship department has plenty of both! We have been hard at work using a variety of tools to steward our protected lands.

Fire is a surprisingly effective natural resource management tool for some ecosystems in Southeast Michigan. This year we received funding from the Oakland County Parks Millage to conduct a prescribed burn at the Golden Preserve for Biological Diversity in Springfield Township. Golden Preserve consists of a mosaic of prairies and oak-dominated woodlands, both of which are adapted to the presence of fire. In prairies, the fire helps keep woody shrubs from dominating the sunny, open fields that prairie grasses and wildflowers love. In oak forests, fire will open up the forest floor for sedges, ferns, and wildflowers, as well as preventing less fire-friendly tree species from taking over the forest. The burn was conducted by an experienced work crew from Plantwise, LLC, an environmental contractor in Ann Arbor. We were especially thrilled to see the rebounding wildflowers in the larger prairie, including lots of butterflyweed, a fantastic flower for many of our native pollinators!

The Oakland County Parks millage also funded two larger invasive species management projects – phragmites management at Voorheis Lake Wetland Preserve in Orion Township and woody invasive species management at Cedar Lake Preserve in Oxford Township. While both of these preserves are difficult to access (Voorheis is almost entirely marsh, while Cedar Lake consists of two islands in the middle of a lake), they are both nonetheless important parts of their respective local ecosystems.

As always, volunteer workdays are a huge component of invasive species management in the *Nature Near You*—we couldn't do what we do without your help! We conducted a total of nine public invasive species workdays in Six Rivers preserves, public parks, and private conservation easements in Oakland, Macomb, and Lapeer counties. In the spring we removed invasive garlic mustard and dame's rocket by hand, while in the fall we used hand tools to cut down invasive shrubs, dabbing the stumps with herbicide to ensure that the invasive species will not regrow. During one of our garlic mustard workdays, our volunteers discovered several clusters of insects on garlic mustard plants that were later identified by Stewardship Manager Ian Ableson as garlic mustard aphids (*Lipaphis allariae*), the first confirmed sighting in Michigan! These small insects are natural predators of invasive garlic mustard.

## *Our Work Is Ongoing!*

SEE PAGE 7 OF THIS NEWSLETTER OR OUR WEBSITE CALENDAR FOR 2023 STEWDAY OPPORTUNITIES!



*Prescribed burn at the Golden Preserve*



*Wild Lupine at Golden Preserve in Springfield Township*

## CLOSED/PROTECTED PROPERTIES

Marine City assist - marina ..... 2 acres  
 Battaglia - conservation easement ..... 23 acres  
 in Oakland Township  
 TOTAL PROTECTED..... 25 ACRES

## IN-PROCESS PROPERTIES

- Highland Township assist ..... 58 acres
- Village of Beverly Hills assist - park ..... 8 acres
- Oakland County assist ..... 70 acres  
 (County park in Troy/Turtle Woods)
- Chesterfield Township - easement. .... 64 acres  
 (Monarch Meadows township park  
 w/Selfridge ANG/AF)
- Dryden Township- private easement  
 donation ..... 20 acres

TOTAL ACQUISITIONS IN PROCESS .. 220 ACRES

## HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2021/22, Six Rivers wrote and advocated for a \$272,000 grant that was secured for a Marine City public marina
- In 2022/23, Six Rivers wrote and advocated for a \$1,000,000 grant that was secured for a park in Beverly Hills
- Six Rivers earned \$77,000 in revenue from fees charged for assists and grant-writing services

## ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Anchor Bay Woods Preserve - Staff continues efforts to secure more land to expand our existing preserve in New Baltimore. Negotiations are in process for a parcel near the Police Station off of M-29 utilizing previously received NAWCA grant funds to help fund the acquisition.
- Six Rivers' Staff attended and participated in multiple local government public meetings related to the assist projects (Village of Beverly Hills, Chesterfield Township) as well as multiple meetings with government staff and officials involved in each project.
- Six Rivers' staff researched all of the communities in our five-county service area that have land acquisition listed in their 5-Year Master Plans and reached out to each of them with information on our Land Acquisition Assist Program. Potential exists for work with: Genesee County, Huron-Clinton Metro Parks and the City of Sterling Heights.



Site of Marine City Marina



Oakland Township - 23 acres



Highland Township 58 acre park site



20 acre private donation in Dryden



Village of Beverly Hills park



Chesterfield Township 64 acre Monarch meadows site



Turtle Woods in Troy





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Contact Kristen Myers,  
Deputy Director  
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# THANKS TO OUR DONORS!

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# 2022 VOLUNTEERS



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and Garden Association  
- Rochester  
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Our thanks go out to all of the volunteers who attended our stewardship workday schedule in 2022. Thank you for all that you do!

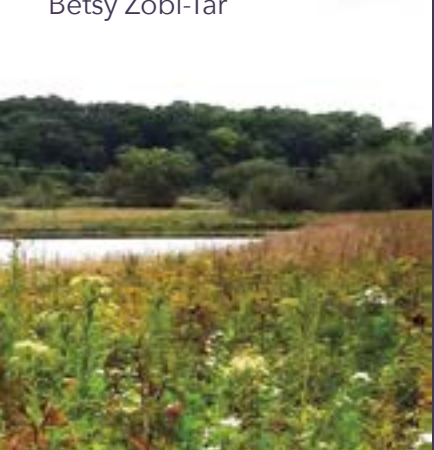


*2022 StewDay volunteers at East Pond Creek venture out to tackle woody invasives*

Jess Ableson  
Doris Applebaum  
Katie Baker  
Leonardo Bogeovski  
Jadwiga Borowiecki  
Paul Borucki  
Camryn Brent  
Lauren Brosch  
Ruth Devine  
Alexis Durocher  
Anita Favell  
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Sue Greenlee  
Nancelee Halle  
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