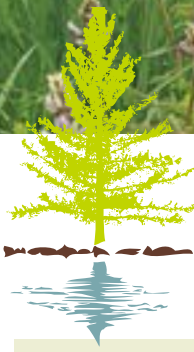


NATURE *Near You*

NEWS FROM SIX RIVERS LAND CONSERVANCY



Six Rivers
Land Conservancy

2023 | SPRING NEWSLETTER

Nature Near You is published for the supporters and partners of Six Rivers Land Conservancy

THE CONFLUENCE

By Christopher Bunch, Executive Director



MARCH 15, 2023

Land protection is the core of our mission. Permanently preserving land in its natural or agricultural state through securing conservation easements, acquiring

nature preserves, and helping public agencies acquire parks and natural areas. The results go far beyond protecting habitat and scenic views, providing access to nature and space for recreation. There are also big benefits for sustainability, reducing carbon impacts, supporting climate resilience, protecting water quality.

Named for major rivers flowing through our service territory, this last benefit has been an important part of our work, serving as a major driver for determining land protection priorities and evaluating whether to take on a project. While there are a myriad of other factors we consider and benefit through our work, water quality is an ever present theme—what happens to the land happens to the water.

In late 2021, we received a Water Quality Pilot Project grant through the Land Trust Alliance (the national association for conservancies) that was funded by the Mott Foundation. We then secured some additional funding from the Americana Foundation. These grants funded the development of a GIS water quality tool that calculates the water quality benefits of land we preserve. It tells us what pollution is AVOIDED by keeping a property in its natural state, preventing it from being converted to uses producing runoff and pollutant loading. What used to take hours using spreadsheets and calculations can now be done in minutes, at anything from individual parcel level to discrete portions of a parcel or larger approaches including multiple parcels.

Continued on page 2

Land Protection

TURTLE WOODS

Six Rivers is excited to be working with Oakland County Parks and Troy School District to preserve 70 acres of land in Troy known as "Turtle Woods". On February 16th Oakland County Parks held an Open House to receive public input on their preliminary plans to create a new county nature area located in northeast Troy on Square Lake Rd.

Approximately 75 people attended the Open House to share their thoughts and their stories about this property with staff members from the county parks team. For many years, this property has been owned by the school district and has remained in its natural state.

No longer needed for another school, the board has stood strong in its desire to see it remain natural, and now has this opportunity with Oakland County Parks to make it official. Residents of the area have long enjoyed the property, the woods, the rustic trails and the abundance of wildlife found here. Several outstanding, civic-minded and nature-loving city residents like Mary Bogush, who have long championed the idea of this property being protected from development and remaining natural, were in attendance to share their support.

The county is currently preparing to submit a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant application in April to help acquire this property. Six Rivers is helping facilitate this exciting project and looks forward to seeing this property preserved in Oakland County.

ACQUISITION ASSIST PROGRAM

The Six Rivers Land Conservancy Acquisition Assist Program is available to any township, city, or county agency in our five-county service area that is interested in acquiring land for greenspace and/or parks. These agencies can work together with Six Rivers to make sure the land they are interested in acquiring is secured for conservation/recreation purposes before it's acquired for development. When appropriate, Six Rivers can step in and acquire the property from the landowner to get it out of harm's way, and hold onto it so that the agency has time to come up with the funding to then purchase it from Six Rivers. Once the process is complete, the agency ends up with the property and can control its future. For details and more information, please contact Brian Marzolf, Land Protection Manager at bmarzolf@sixriversrlc.org or (248) 601-2816 x460.



Towering trees in Turtle Woods in Troy, a new 70 acre preserve.

Continued on page 3

THE CONFLUENCE *Continued from page 1*

We initially pursued this to support efforts to secure funding for individual protection projects. Many funders want to know specific quantitative outputs of property we seek to protect—how much pollution is prevented? We often compete for funding with restoration projects, which are specifically developed around pollutant load reductions realized when restoration is completed. We fully recognize these projects are critically important and that much more needs to be done to reverse the negative impacts of our past behaviors. We also know “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”, or in the case of our work, “\$100,000 worth of preservation/prevention is worth \$100 million of restoration/mitigation”.

The tool has been a big success, with many other uses surfacing. It is being piloted by a local regulatory authority to evaluate permit applications; it is being

used by a local park agency to evaluate park development and redevelopment plans, and it is being upgraded to assess runoff volume for flood prevention and mitigation purposes.

We are extraordinarily grateful to our funding partners and to our friends at HRC Engineering, who developed and are applying the tool for us. We are excited to report another metric of our work beyond bucks and acres—as one example, we have protected 1166 acres in the Clinton River Watershed, which prevents 790 lbs. of nitrogen, 190 lbs. of phosphorous, 4640 lbs. of biological oxygen demand load, and over 20 tons of sediment from entering the river annually. We look forward to applying it to other uses in our work, and are excited about developing tools to assess and report other sustainability metrics of our work like carbon capture and biodiversity measures.



Support Our Mission

Contact Kristen Myers, Deputy Director

Phone: 248-601-2816 x475

Email: kmyers@sixriversrlc.org

www.sixriversrlc.org



Six Rivers

www.sixriversrlc.org | info@sixriversrlc.org | 248.601.2816

Land Conservancy 4480 Orion Road, 2nd Floor, PO Box 80902, Rochester, Michigan 48308-0902

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Stewardship
Technician

Land Protection Continued from page 1

DO YOU KNOW WHAT A CONSERVATION EASEMENT CAN DO?

When a property is considered for preservation, it typically has natural, agricultural, scenic or historic values and attributes that make it worthy of preserving for the future. A conservation easement can be just the tool to use to keep that land preserved. It's a legal document/agreement that is developed together with a land owner and Six Rivers Land Conservancy. It's designed to restrict and/or allow certain uses of the land and is custom-tailored to meet the needs of the landowner(s). Conservation easements are retained in perpetuity and are attached to the property forever – offering peace of mind that the land is preserved for generations to come.

- Each is uniquely designed to meet the goals of the landowner and the conservancy
- Managed to protect unique habitat, species, or natural/historic character
- Create or add to important habitat corridors
- Protect native natural communities
- Protect and preserve threatened and endangered species

OPTIONS FOR PROPERTY OWNERS RELATED TO LAND CONSERVATION:

- Donate a conservation easement to Six Rivers on all or part of your property - you retain ownership and we'll help protect it. The easement can restrict certain things like any future development on the land, and/or allow things like recreational trails or fishing access, though public access is not a requirement. A gift of a conservation easement may provide you and your estate with significant tax deductions. A stewardship gift is often requested to assist with enforcing the restrictions of the conservation easement on the land over time.
- Donate your land to Six Rivers Land Conservancy and we'll protect it permanently – you can do this now or upon death using a Will or Living Trust.
- Donate your land with a retained life estate – you can live on it the rest of your life.

Six Rivers currently holds 29 conservation easements covering 1,960 acres of land in our five-county service area. To gain a better perspective of how much land this is, it represents an area of approximately 3 square miles! If you or someone you know is interested in protecting/preserving their property, contact Six Rivers Land Conservancy to get started today.



This 58 acre parcel, acquired through the Six Rivers Acquisition Assist Program will become a public park in Highland Township, Oakland County.

Twilight Chorus

By Ian Ableson,
Stewardship Manager

FROGS AND TOADS OF SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN

Spring is here, and all around us the #naturenearyou reacts accordingly. In early March the red-winged blackbirds returned to Michigan from their long winter vacation. But if the red-winged blackbird is our first true bird of spring, what, then is the first frog to awaken from the cold of winter? The question is a little trickier than it first appears, but if you want to identify the frogs and toads in your neighborhood, it's easier to use your ears than your eyes.

We can roughly divide our calling frogs into three temporal categories: those that start calling in the early spring (they might have already started!) and may or may not continue calling into the summer, those who start calling late spring, and those who generally don't start calling until summer is already creeping in. As far as the spring frogs go, the really early risers—starting as early as mid-March if we've had a mild winter—are the wood frog, the chorus frog, and the spring peeper. The chuckling, duck-like call of the wood frog, a little brown frog with distinct dark brown patches just behind the eyes, can often be heard in forests and wooded areas, even those with only small pools of standing water. The chorus frog has a call that's often described as running a fingernail over the teeth of a comb. It's a little quieter than some of the other frogs, but once you identify it you'll never forget it. Meanwhile the tiny spring peeper's one-note call sounds more like an insect or a bird than an amphibian.

Later in the spring, we'll start to hear the American toad, the leopard frog, the pickerel frog, and the eastern gray tree frog. In spite of its bumpy appearance, the American toad's call is a deceptively musical trill. The groaning calls of the leopard frog and the pickerel frog can be difficult to differentiate at first, just as the two species themselves are difficult to tell apart (Look at the spots between the ridges on the frog's back—the pickerel frog has two rows of large spots that are usually in neat rows, whereas the leopard frog's spots are smaller and less organized). The tree frog has a fluttery call that consists of a series of notes. Like the wood frog, it's often heard emanating from the forests. You may even see these little frogs on the side of buildings and lampposts.

And finally, we have the green frog and the bullfrog, both of whom typically wait until mid-May or early June before starting to sing. The green frog's one-note call has been likened to the twang of a plucked banjo string, and a large population sounds like dueling banjo players competing to play the best singular note. The bullfrog is the bass of the frog chorus, and their deep, resonant call is a common sound in ponds throughout Southeast Michigan.



American Toad

Photo by Steve Elzerman



Green Frog

Photo by Melanie Nebeling



Green Tree Frog

Photo by Donald Drife

LOOKING FOR
PRACTICE IDENTIFYING FROG CALLS?

Check Out:

www.froggyvoice.com to hear
the voice of every frog in Michigan.
Or: [https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/education/
michigan-species/reptiles/frogs-and-toads](https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/education/michigan-species/reptiles/frogs-and-toads)
to learn more.



FREE

Nature at Night Hikes

BAT HIKES

Join Six Rivers for three free evening bat hikes this summer! We will use echo meters with our phones and iPads to monitor bats

WHEN

WHERE

Friday, July 21
8:30pm

Golden Nature Preserve
Springfield Township

Friday, August 11
8:30pm

Nicholson Nature Center
Clinton Township

Friday, September 15
7:30pm

Belle River Park
Casco Township

BLACK MOON HIKE

A Black Moon is also known as the new moon. If you want to spot a Black Moon, you're out of luck: they are invisible! But a moonless Black Moon sky is ideal for stargazing. Take a walk with our naturalist and experience *The Nature Near You* at night.

WHEN

WHERE

Friday, May 19
9:00pm

Sutherland Nature Sanctuary
Hadley Township

Parking is limited, so please call our office at 248-601-2816, x463 or email info@sixriversrlc.org to register.

We try to minimize the use of flashlights to maintain night vision, but you are welcome to bring a flashlight.



Photo by Winnie Chrzanowski

STAY UP-TO-DATE ON SIX RIVERS' ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS



Facebook: facebook.com/sixriverslc



Twitter: twitter.com/SixRivers



Instagram:
instagram.com/sixriverslandconservancy/



LinkedIn:
linkedin.com/company/six-rivers-land-conservancy/



Visit our website
by scanning this
QR code with your
phone!



Get Involved!

JOIN A STEW

The days are getting longer and the weather is getting warmer which means we are getting closer to the start of our stewardship season and our popular events! We could really use your help to make it a success by volunteering in community outreach events, removing invasive species from natural areas, and so much more.

Invasive species spread aggressively through natural areas, pushing out the native plants that wildlife need. We need your help to remove these invasive plants from our natural areas!

2023 STEWARDSHIP PLANS

Here are a few stewardship projects that we would love to tackle this year. If you would like to support any of these projects, please consider making a donation either by mail or on our website at sixriversrlc.org. As always, we are so thankful for your dedication to protecting the *Nature Near You*. We couldn't do it without your support.

- Treat phragmites at East Pond Creek Preserve- this preserve in Bruce Township in Macomb county consists of two different wetland ecosystems divided by a central berm. Roadside phragmites has invaded the southern marsh, creating a dense monoculture of phragmites that threatens to engulf the native wetland plants and animals.
- Mow down encroaching shrubs in a wildflower meadow in Sutherland Nature Sanctuary- A wildflower meadow at Sutherland Nature Sanctuary in Lapeer county is being encroached upon by woody shrubs. Six Rivers staff were able to cut back many of the invasive shrubs earlier this year, but mowing the rest of the shrubs would open up the meadow and allow the wildflowers (and pollinators!) to thrive.
- Control woody invasive species at Anchor Bay Woods Preserve- This wet-mesic flatwood in New Baltimore is one of our most unique preserves and one of the rarest ecosystems in Southeast Michigan. While this preserve is generally in very good condition, a few invasive shrubs (including Japanese Barberry, privet, and autumn olive) threaten this wonderful wetland.



CREW!

You or your group can be a part of a Six Rivers StewCrew by volunteering for one of our stewardship workdays! Spring is a great time to tackle garlic mustard and dame's rocket, invasive species that can spread quickly in a short period of time. Join us at one of our May StewDays, and help us preserve the *Nature Near You!*

StewDays will be postponed or cancelled if steady rain or thunderstorms are present. It's fun and easy, and we provide tools and refreshments. Sturdy waterproof footwear recommended.

Contact Ian Ableson, Stewardship Manager, at 248.601.2816 or iableson@sixriversrlc.org with questions or to volunteer for StewDay events.

MAY STEWDAYS

WHEN	WHERE
Saturday, May 6 9:00am - 12:00pm	Murray Conservation Easement West Bloomfield (Address and directions will be provided)
Tuesday, May 9 9:00am - 12:00pm	Bear Creek Nature Park Conservation Easement 740 W. Snell, Rochester, MI 48306 In partnership with Oakland Township Parks and Recreation
Tuesday, May 16 9:00am - 12:00pm	Paint Creek Trail 4480 Orion Road, Rochester, MI 48306 In partnership with Oakland Township Parks and Recreation
Friday, May 19 9:00am - 12:00pm	Drayton Plains Nature Center 2125 Denby, Waterford, MI 48329
Saturday, May 20 9:00am - 12:00pm	Sutherland Nature Sanctuary 3998 Diehl, Metamora, MI 48455
Monday, May 22 9:00am - 12:00pm	Golden Preserve for Biological Diversity Springfield Township (Directions will be provided)
Wednesday, May 24 9:00am - 12:00pm	Nicholson Nature Center (In conjunction with Lake St. Clair Cisma (www.lakestclaircisma.com) 21777 Dunham Road, Clinton Township, MI 48036



DO YOU OR YOUR GROUP WANT
TO VOLUNTEER FOR STEWDAY EVENTS?

Contact:

Ian Ableson, Stewardship Manager, at
248.601.2816 or iableson@sixriversrlc.org
with questions or to volunteer
for StewDay events.



VISIT SIX RIVERS AT LOCAL *Community Events*

Here's where you can expect to see us over the next few weeks!

DETROIT ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY GREENFEST:

**Saturday, April 15 and Sunday, April 16,
9:00am - 3:00pm**

Enjoy a weekend long sustainability celebration with exciting activities and learning opportunities to further ignite your passion toward environmental stewardship. The 2023 theme "In With the Old" is a nod to all things repurposed, recycled and shared. The event will focus on conserving natural resources by turning old materials into new products.

MICHIGAN SCIENCE CENTER:

Saturday, April 22, 10:00am - 4:00pm

Learn from interactive exhibits and activities at MiSci and Axalta Coating Systems' Community Free Day. Tickets are free but visitors must make reservations in advance to attend. For more information visit mi-sci.org.

BURGESS SHADBUSH NATURE CENTER:

Saturday, April 22, 10:00am - 2:00pm

Celebrate Planet Earth with educational stations, guided hikes, eco-friendly crafts, tree plantings, and a local artisan market with live bluegrass music!

DRAYTON PLAINS NATURE CENTER:

Saturday, April 22, 10:30am and 1:30pm

Explore the variety of ecosystems on display including oak forests, riverside floodplain forests, and native prairie. Choose either the morning or afternoon hike led by Stewardship Manager, Ian Ableson. Please contact info@sixriversrlc.org to register!

ST. CLAIR COUNTY EARTH FAIR:

Friday, April 28, 9:00am - 4:00pm

Saturday, April 29, 10:00am - 4:00pm

Michigan's largest two-day Earth Day event that focuses on raising the level and capacity of environmental stewards with demonstrations, workshops, exhibits, artisans, and activities. Learn how your actions impact our local environment and the significant role we play in the health of our economy and ecosystem.



INTERESTED IN BECOMING AN OUTREACH VOLUNTEER? INVITE SIX RIVERS TO YOUR EVENT!

If your group or organization is interested in conservation and passionate about protecting and preserving the natural areas in our region, email qtiffany@sixriversrlc.org.



WATCH OUR WEBSITE FOR UPCOMING EVENTS!



JOIN US FRIDAY, MAY 5
8:00am - 3:00pm

CLAYS FOR CONSERVATION

AT THE HUNTERS CREEK CLUB IN
THE HILLS OF METAMORA

All proceeds help to fund our land preservation work!



TICKETS:
\$250 each or
Team of 5
for \$1000

Each registration includes:

- Breakfast
- 50-Rounds
- Lunch
Includes pheasant prepared by

Chicken Shack 

For additional information
or to register, visit:
www.sixriversrlc.org/clays
or contact

Kristen Myers 248-601-2816, x475
email: kmyers@sixriversrlc.org

*Deadline for registration and
payment is May 1, 2023*





Chippie's First Camera by Melanie Nebbeling

Nature Near You PHOTO CONTEST



Submit up to five photos celebrating our natural environment in Southeastern Michigan in a JPEG (.jpg) file format to SixRiversPhotos@gmail.com. Photo submissions will be accepted until September 5, 2023.

All photos that meet our guidelines will be eligible and available for public viewing. We have two categories for submission: Juried (photo files of 5MB or greater) and Enthusiast (photo files less than 5MB). In the Juried category, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place award winners will be determined by a distinguished panel of judges. People's Choice Awards in both the Juried and Enthusiast categories will be determined by an online vote after the due date.

Follow us on Facebook or sign up for our mailing list at www.sixriversrlc.org for updates and voting info!

JURIED CATEGORY PRIZES

First Place	\$200
Second Place	\$150
Third Place	\$100
People's Choice	\$150

ENTHUSIAST CATEGORY PRIZE:

People's Choice	\$100
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Entries must be accompanied with a completed submission form. See our website at www.sixriversrlc.org for complete rules and submission forms.



2022 First Place Juried winner by Ruth Achterhoff-Aust



2022 People's Choice Juried Winner by Glen Robertson



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
Total Assets	\$2,018,262	\$6,134,739

LIABILITIES

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

NET ASSETS

Unrestricted	\$1,797,454	\$1,886,100
Temporarily Restricted	—	—
Total Net Assets	\$1,797,454	\$1,886,100

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND

NET ASSETS	\$2,018,262	\$6,134,739
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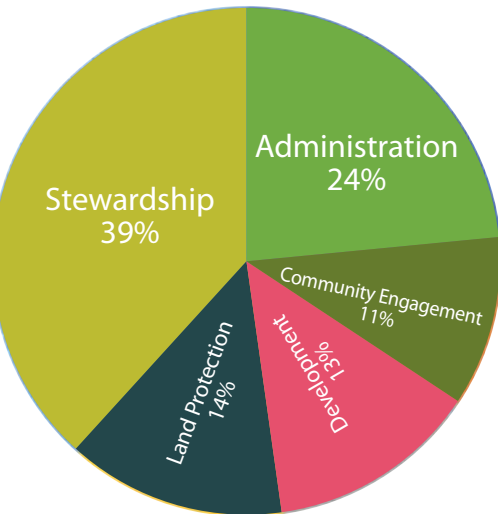


Photo by Lauren Hiltz

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



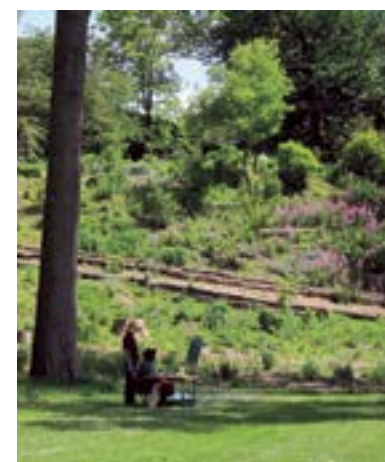
Oakland Township - 23 acres



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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*Continued on
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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!

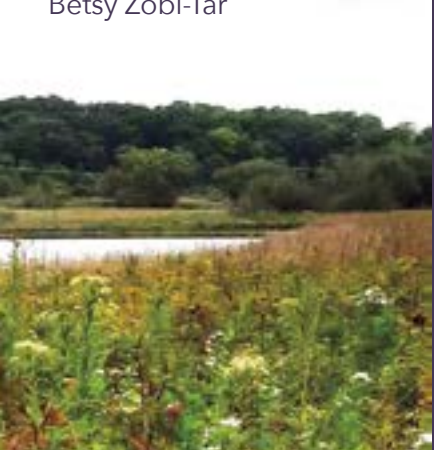


2022 StewDay volunteers at East Pond Creek venture out to tackle woody invasives

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