



Spring 2026

# Watershed News

## Welcoming Spring in the Cedar Lakes Watershed

After many years of service, Executive Director of the Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation (CLCF), Linda Mutschler, has shared her decision to retire from CLCF and to remain at the University of Notre Dame for another year. While we will miss her leadership, we are proud of the legacy that she leaves behind.



**Linda and Jock Mutschler at the University of Notre Dame**

When Linda stepped into the Executive Director role in 2017—having already served five years on CLCF's Board—she took on the vital task of transitioning CLCF from a founder-led organization to the resilient, professional land trust it is today.

Under her guidance, CLCF has seen:

- A 33% increase in protected land, growing CLCF's footprint to over 3,200 acres;
- The implementation of two strategic plans that have provided a roadmap for CLCF's current success;
- And the strengthening of essential partnerships with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Ice Age Trail Alliance, Washington County, and the Town of West Bend.

One of the hallmarks of a leader is growing the next generation. Accordingly, we are thrilled to announce that Sophie Gosetti will officially succeed Linda as Executive Director.

"It has been a privilege to lead CLCF through this period of growth," said Linda. "From my early days at CLCF, I have been inspired by our community's commitment to the land. I am thrilled to see Sophie Gosetti take the helm; she has the vision and the dedication to lead CLCF's next chapter."



**Sophie Gosetti at the Joan M. Pick Nature Preserve**

Since joining CLCF in 2022, and particularly during her tenure as Acting Executive Director over the past year, Sophie has proven herself to be both dedicated and highly capable. Her background in Conservation Biology and Nonprofit Management, combined with her deep passion for CLCF's mission, makes her the ideal person to lead CLCF into its next chapter.

"We are immensely grateful for Linda's leadership," said Rich Czarnecki, CLCF Board President. "She leaves us in a position of historic strength, and we have full confidence in Sophie to continue this momentum."

Please join us in thanking Linda for her years of service and in welcoming Sophie as she steps into this permanent role.

## Fehring 2

On December 18, 2025, the Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation (CLCF) finalized a conservation easement protecting 12.8 acres of farmland located just south of Pleasant Valley Road in the Town of Polk. Owned by the Norman J. Fehring Family Trust, this newly conserved land adds to the 133 acres placed under permanent protection through a conservation easement in 2023.



### Fehring 2 and Surrounding Protected Property

The property holds conservation value due to its close proximity to other CLCF protected properties, including the Klassen, Franz, and Ziegler-Burg properties. When the nearby Restoring Lands' protected properties are considered, there are 389 acres of protected land in this area. In addition to the importance of connectivity of natural lands, the property's sloping topography and location along Cedar Creek strengthen its environmental significance.

If you drive by the farm, you are likely to see the cattle grazing in the pasture or on the hill where Pleasant Valley Road starts to wind (steeply) up towards Hillside Road. You may also notice prairie areas along Cedar Creek. These areas are intentionally maintained as prairie habitat to protect the shoreline and waterway.

The protected property includes pasture and southern mesic forest, both of which slope toward Cedar Creek along the property's eastern boundary. About 550 feet of Cedar Creek runs adjacent to the property, and a portion of the creek's floodplain is wetland. The property lies within the Cedar Creek watershed of the Milwaukee River Basin, where its protection will help safeguard water quality and reduce erosion.



### Cedar Creek Adjacent to the Fehring 2 Property

In addition to its ecological value, the property offers scenic open space, featuring productive farmland, forested areas, a stream corridor, and distinctive kettle moraine topography that is visible from the surrounding area. The conservation easement protects those landscapes, preserves the land's agricultural values, and promotes responsible soil and water stewardship that benefits the broader watershed.



### Fehring 2 Property

This project was completed in partnership with the Norman J. Fehring Family Trust and brings CLCF's total protected acreage to 3,211 acres. The Fehring Family has farmed land in the area for five generations and continues to set an example of thoughtful land stewardship. CLCF is deeply grateful for the Fehring Family's ongoing commitment to protecting the natural environment of the Cedar Lakes Region.

For more information about land protection options, please visit [theclcf.org/protect-your-land/](https://theclcf.org/protect-your-land/) or scan the QR code.



## Weninger Berms

During October of 2025, CLCF partnered with Washington County Conservation Staff to construct three berms, also known as Water and Sediment Control Basins (WASCOBs), on CLCF's Weninger Property.

A berm is essentially a raised mound of earth with a drainage system running perpendicular to the slope. Their purpose is to slow and temporarily store water as it flows downhill during rain events. By reducing the speed of runoff, WASCOBs allow sediment to settle out before clean water is gradually released through underground outlets.



**CLCF's Stew Crew Placing Erosion Matting**

According to Washington County Conservation Staff, the strategically placed basins are projected to reduce 93 pounds of total phosphorus and 67 tons of sediment from entering Big Cedar Lake each year—a significant reduction in the nutrients that fuel harmful algae blooms and degrade water quality.



**East field constructed WASCOB (yellow line) along the road and tree line. Photo courtesy of Washington County**

The 32-acre Weninger Property was selected for this project because it drains directly into the lake through a road ditch and culvert. Its slopes and proximity to the shoreline make it especially influential in determining how much sediment and nutrient runoff reaches the water.



**Middle field constructed WASCOB (yellow line) along the tree line. Photo courtesy of Washington County**

More than half of the property's soils are classified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as prime farmland and soils of statewide importance. These soils have the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing crops with minimum inputs of fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, and labor. Protecting these high-quality soils from erosion not only benefits the agricultural productivity of the land but also protects the water quality of Big Cedar Lake.

CLCF purchased the Weninger Property on August 23, 2024, with support from Washington County's Conservation & Heritage Grant Program and CLCF supporters. After the property was purchased, Washington County Conservation Staff connected CLCF with the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which provided critical funding for the berm construction.

Similar conservation practices were installed in the 1990s on CLCF's adjacent Rudolf Farm, where they continue to reduce soil erosion and runoff into Big Cedar Lake.

Join us on June 18, 2026, at CLCF's Nature Series Walk and Talk at CLCF's Weninger Property for a firsthand look at the newly constructed berms. This in-person visit at the berms will be guided by CLCF and Washington County Conservation Staff.

## Spring Ephemerals

As we welcome spring, I'm sure many of you are on the lookout for the first flowers of the season! As some of the first woodland plants up in spring, these are often called spring ephemerals. As their name, 'ephemerals,' meaning short-lasting, suggests, these species don't stick around all year. This comes from the Greek word ephēmeros, "lasting a day."



**White Trillium at CLCF's Fox Hill Nature Preserve**

By emerging before the trees leaf out, these plants can take advantage of the plentiful sunlight reaching all the way to the forest floor. After this short window in March, April, and May, they then die back to the ground, storing energy underground to lie dormant and bloom next spring.



**Hepatica at CLCF's Fritsche 1 Property**

Looking to get involved and spend more time outdoors on CLCF properties?

Join CLCF's Stew Crew! To learn more, contact Stewardship Manager Sarah Moore at [smoore@theclcf.org](mailto:smoore@theclcf.org).

Their presence gives a vital early food source for pollinators by providing nectar before anything else is blooming. To attract these pollinators, including beetles and flies in addition to bees, some of these plants evolved unique attraction strategies, like using scents. Skunk Cabbage is one example that uses a skunk-like stink to attract flies in early spring. Look for it the next time you're walking near the edge of a wetland!



**Skunk Cabbage at CLCF's Mueller-Jerome Property**

All these spring ephemerals pictured are great examples of native plants. Their presence often indicates high quality environments with lots of different species. However, not all early spring plants are good news.



**Wild Geranium at CLCF's Fox Hill Nature Preserve**

Garlic Mustard, a widespread and well-known invasive species, is also an early grower in spring. It spreads quickly and densely, crowding out other native plants, especially understory wildflowers. This overlapping timing makes it even more critical to remove this plant and open up the habitat for our spring ephemerals.

Visit any one of CLCF's open preserves to experience these beautiful spring ephemerals for yourself!

## CLCF's Board of Directors

CLCF is pleased to announce that Rich Czarnecki has been named the new President of the Board of Directors. Rich has enjoyed the beauty of Big Cedar Lake and the surrounding area since the early 1980s and began volunteering for CLCF in 2001. Rich and his wife, Teri, have three children and live on Big Cedar Lake. They enjoy sailing, x-country skiing, and hiking the trails in the area. We look forward to Rich's guidance and leadership in the year ahead.



**Rich Czarnecki, CLCF Board President**

We are also excited to welcome Ross Anderson as the new Vice President of the Board of Directors. Ross has lived on Big Cedar Lake for almost 50 years and is an active volunteer with CLCF and other nature conservancies. He and his wife Heidi raised their three sons on Big Cedar Lake and now enjoy sharing the lake and the land protected by CLCF with their grandchildren.



**Ross Anderson, CLCF Board Vice President**

CLCF is incredibly grateful to have had Mike Nast as its President since 2020. During his time as president, CLCF protected 770 acres of land. Mike will remain on the Board of Directors and continues to share his skills and support with the organization on the Land Conservation Committee and the Executive Committee.

We also extend a thank you to Denise Goergen, who is stepping down from her position as Vice President, which she held for the past three years. She will remain on the Board of Directors and continue to provide her expertise with CLCF on its Land Conservation Committee.

Finally, CLCF offers a heartfelt thank you to Mary Beth Carr, who has concluded her seven years of service on the Board of Directors. Mary Beth played an instrumental role in planning CLCF's events and fundraisers and served as Chair of the Community Relations Committee since joining the Board in 2019. While stepping off the Board, she remains actively involved with CLCF, contributing her talents to both the Community Relations and Fundraising Committees.

### Stay up to date on all things CLCF!

Be the first to hear about exciting events, new projects, and community updates. Scan the QR code to receive CLCF's monthly E-news and other exclusive updates.



CLCF's previous newsletters can be found on our website at [theclcf.org/resources/newsletter/](https://theclcf.org/resources/newsletter/).



Thank you to Fleet Farm for their donation towards a new chainsaw for CLCF! This generous contribution will help us maintain our trails and care for our properties, making it easier for everyone to explore and enjoy the beauty of the lands we protect.

**Fleet  Farm.**

### CLCF's Legacy Circle Planned Giving Program

By joining CLCF's Legacy Circle Planned Giving Program, you can help to preserve the lakes and lands you love for generations to come. Legacy Circle members will be recognized in listings within CLCF's reports as well as on our website. If you prefer, you may request to be listed anonymously.



There are two funds to which you can direct your donation: Conservation Support, which will be used for all facets of CLCF's operations, and the Founders Fund, an endowment fund named for CLCF's visionary founders. The interest and appreciation from this permanently restricted fund will help support CLCF year after year. For more information, please contact Sophie Gosetti at 262-307-6660.

Please consider joining these CLCF Legacy Circle Donors.

Anonymous (5)

Gary and Jean Britton

Robert P. and Marie E. Bucholtz Charitable Fund

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Susan Crowley

Teri and Rich Czarnecki

Miriam Dani

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Emmy and Mike Robertson

Jack and Cindy Rusher

Mary Sander and Ray Lipman

Lori Steinbach

Bob Walter and Maria Banuchi

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### Gathering Waters Wisconsin Land Trust Conference

In mid-March, CLCF staff and Board President Rich Czarnecki had the opportunity to attend the annual Wisconsin Land Trust Conference, hosted by Gathering Waters, in Milwaukee. The conference brought together conservation professionals, board members, partners, and supporters from across the state for a few days of learning and collaboration.



CLCF Staff and Board President, Rich Czarnecki

Gathering Waters is Wisconsin's Alliance for land trusts. They support over 40 land trusts in the state and provide resources for landowners and communities to protect the natural places that make Wisconsin special.

The Wisconsin Land Trust Conference offered a valuable opportunity to connect with peers and exchange ideas on a wide range of topics relevant to land conservation. Sessions covered areas such as land stewardship, organizational leadership, strategic planning, fundraising events, communications and social media, and financial management. Attendees were able to learn from experts, share best practices, and explore approaches to advancing conservation efforts in their communities.

A highlight of the conference was a field trip to visit protected properties managed by another Southeastern Wisconsin land trust, Restoring Lands.

CLCF is grateful for the opportunity to participate in this event. The knowledge gained and connections made at the conference help guide our ongoing efforts to protect and preserve the natural beauty of the Cedar Lakes Region for generations to come.

## CLCF's Upcoming Events

### CLCF's Nature Series

A heartfelt thank you goes to the Ziegler Family Foundation for sponsoring CLCF's Nature Series in memory of R.D. Ziegler. With their generous support, we are excited to be able to host a wonderful lineup of programs, including:

**April 16, 2026:** David Mickelson, University of Wisconsin-Madison – "Geology of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail"

**May 7, 2026:** Documentary Screening – "Ripples of Plastic"

**June 18, 2026:** Walk and Talk – CLCF's Weninger Property Berm Tour

**July 11, 2026:** Schlitz Audubon Nature Center – "Reptiles and Amphibians"

**September 23, 2026:** Larry Nielsen, North Carolina State University – "Lessons from Great Conservationists of the Past"

**\*Dates are subject to change**

### Kayak Tour: June 13, 2026

We hope you will join us for CLCF's Annual Kayak Tour. This year, we will be paddling a beautiful section of the Milwaukee River, as the land protected in the Cedar Lakes Region is in the Milwaukee River Watershed!

We are grateful to partner with Forward Outdoor again this year, offering an option for a shuttle service and equipment rentals.



## SAVE THE DATE!

CLCF is excited to host its biennial *Somewhere in Time – Race for Open Space* celebration on Saturday, July 25, 2026!

We hope you will join us for this special evening at The Barn at The Bog in Saukville, WI. Invitations will be sent out at the end of May.

Unable to attend, but still want to support by Raising-the-Paddle? Contact CLCF's Development Manager Nicole Tennes at 262-353-4866 or [ntennes@theclcf.org](mailto:ntennes@theclcf.org) for more information.

### Race for Open Space: October 11, 2026

CLCF is excited to host its 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Race for Open Space, 10K and 5K Trail Run and 1-Mile Trail Walk! This event will once again be held at CLCF's beautiful Fox Hill Nature Preserve.



Register today at [runsignup.com/openspacewi](https://runsignup.com/openspacewi), or scan the QR code.



### Support CLCF!

By making an annual contribution, you can support CLCF's land protection projects, stewardship activities, education, and recreational events. Your continued support is critical to our success. Thank you for being a vital part of our mission.

### How to Donate:

You can use the enclosed envelope, scan the QR code, or go to [theclcf.org/support-us/make-a-donation/](https://theclcf.org/support-us/make-a-donation/).





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Sarah Moore, Stewardship Manager  
Nicole Tennies, Development Manager  
Max Whealon, Operations Coordinator

The Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation, Inc. (CLCF) is a non-profit land trust whose mission is to conserve the natural environment of the Cedar Lakes region.

CLCF's office is located at the  
Joan M. Pick Nature Preserve  
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[theclcf.org](http://theclcf.org)

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