Fall 2026

Watershed News

Connection Beyond the Land

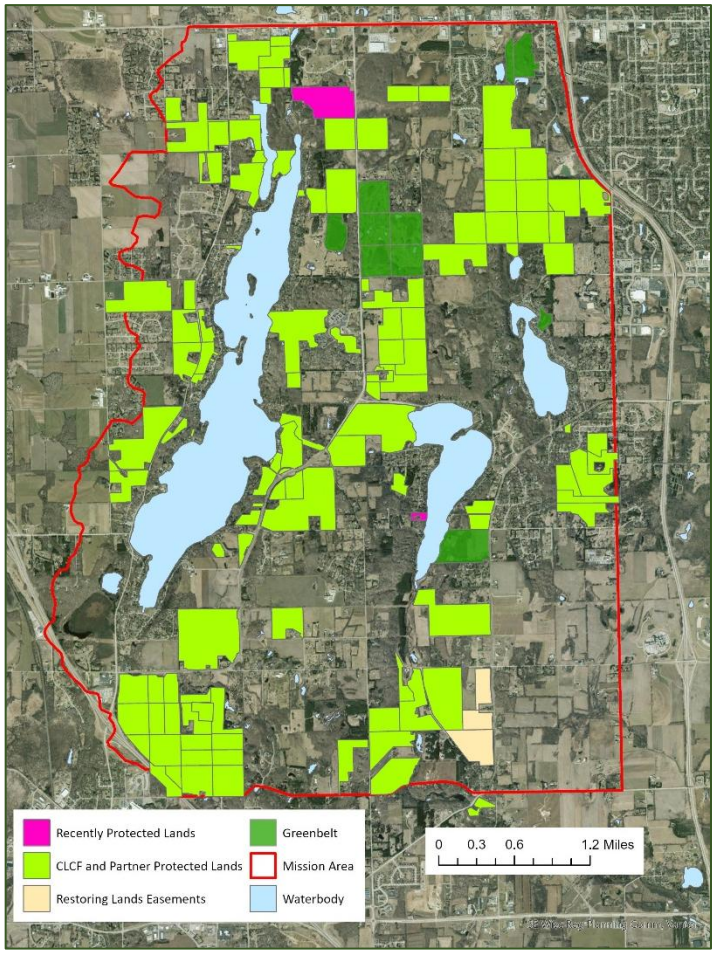
From Sophie Mingari, Executive Director

On the evening of July 25, more than 150 of CLCF's supporters came to The Barn at the Bog to celebrate *Somewhere in Time – Race for Open Space 2026*, and what a celebration it was! Thank you to the Nast and Czarnecki Families, West Bend Insurance Company, and two anonymous families for their generous $125,000 matching grant. Thank you to all our sponsors, whose support was critical to the event's success. Thank you to Mary Beth Carr, Cindy Mestan, and all the Somewhere in Time volunteers for their incredible hard work. And, thank you to all of you, our community members, for your support. In total, between sponsorships, live auction donations and proceeds, and the raise-the-paddle and matching grant, CLCF raised a net of nearly $650,000. We could not do the work we do without your support!



Program at The Barn at the Bog

I am excited to share that over the past two months, CLCF has closed two land protection projects totaling more than 70 acres. These transactions are highlighted in pink below and are known as the Frey Property and the Riesch Property, respectively. Both properties provide a wonderful mix of habitats—including woodland, ephemeral pond, and wetland. In fact, both are designated as Primary Environmental Corridor by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, meaning that they have some of the highest quality natural areas in the region. They also have rich histories in the Cedar Lakes Region.



Map of CLCF's Recently Protected Properties (in pink)

As of today, CLCF has helped to protect 3,281 acres in our community, and we are nearing our 2024-2028 strategic plan target of 3,600 protected acres.

Before you turn the page and explore CLCF's recent exciting projects, I wanted to share a brief personal update with you. I recently got married and, moving forward, I will be known as Sophie Mingari. You can now reach me at smingari@theclcf.org. I would be grateful if you could update your records accordingly.

With that, I hope you enjoy the pages ahead!

The Frey Conservation Easement

On August 25, 2026, the Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation (CLCF) permanently protected 4.4 acres in the Town of West Bend through a land conservation easement, generously donated by Sonia Warner and Oren Frey.



Sophie Mingari, Rich Czarnecki, and Oren Frey

This stunning property lies within the Little Cedar Lake–Cedar Creek watershed of the Milwaukee River Basin and features approximately 332 feet of Little Cedar Lake shoreline with forested slopes.

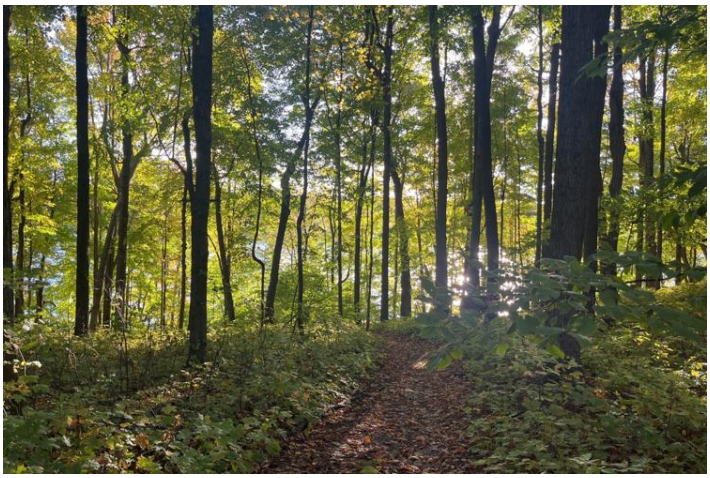
The property has been in the same family for four generations, beginning in 1923 when John and Josephine Lange purchased the land. Their daughter, Oren Frey's grandmother, inherited the property and later divided ownership among her three children: Oren's father, Fred, his uncle Tom, and his aunt JoAnn.

Although Fred grew up in Wauwatosa, he remembered the family's trips in the summer to Little Cedar Lake. Following the passing of Fred, Tom, and JoAnn, the family's legacy continues through the current landowners, Sonia, Tom's wife, and Oren Frey.

For Oren, preserving this property meant more than protecting a piece of land - it meant honoring the generations of family connections rooted there. As he shared with CLCF, "… it definitely felt like an accomplishment after my dad first reached out fifteen years ago. This was the place that brought and kept my family members together over the decades. It was a very special place for them and protecting it felt like my duty … there's always stories connected to the land you help save!"

The Frey Property protects more than its natural shoreline along Little Cedar Lake. Its forests and native vegetation play an important role in protecting water quality by reducing flooding, slowing runoff, and preventing erosion. The property's hardwood forests also provide wildlife habitat and help maintain the health and natural beauty of the surrounding landscape.

Recognized by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) as a Primary Environmental Corridor, the area contains significant natural resources, including undeveloped shoreline and valuable wildlife habitat.



The Frey Property

The property supports a rich diversity of native plant communities, including forested shoreline and southern mesic forest. Its wooded areas are home to species such as sugar maple, basswood, and red oak. Together, these habitats provide food, shelter, and nesting areas for a wide variety of wildlife, including white-tailed deer, small mammals, migratory birds, insects, reptiles, and amphibians. The adjacent waters and natural shoreline also support waterfowl and fish, further highlighting the property's important role in sustaining the ecological health and biodiversity of Little Cedar Lake.

CLCF is incredibly grateful to Sonia Warner and Oren Frey for this incredible donation, which will ensure this property is protected for generations to come.

The Riesch Property

CLCF closed on the 66.5-acre Riesch Property on August 31, 2026. Located in the Town of West Bend, just west of County Road Z, the property sits just north of CLCF's Owen Property and kitty-corner from CLCF's Fritsche I Property.



Ken and Tim Riesch, Rich Czarnecki, and Sophie Mingari

Protecting the Riesch Property will help preserve an important natural landscape while safeguarding water quality in Silver Creek and the larger Milwaukee River watershed. The property provides a valuable buffer of wetlands and forest that helps protect water before it reaches Silver Creek.

The property's wetland is part of the County Road Z Wetland Complex, which drains to Silver Creek and eventually flows into the Milwaukee River and Lake Michigan. Water from the property's upland forest flows downhill, then through the wetland complex and beneath County Road Z before continuing toward Silver Creek.

Wetlands play an essential role in protecting water quality. During rain events, they slow runoff, allowing sediment and other pollutants to settle before the water reaches nearby streams and lakes. The Riesch Property contains a significant wetland community made up primarily of cattails and dogwood.

The property also includes upland hardwood forest, with sugar maple and basswood among its dominant native tree species, as well as several ephemeral, or seasonal, ponds.

These ponds and wetlands provide important habitat for a variety of wildlife, including sensitive species, while supporting the broader diversity of the surrounding forest and wetland ecosystem.



Ephemeral Pond at the Riesch Property

The protection of the Riesch Property also adds to the network of conserved land along County Road Z, helping preserve a connected landscape of forests, wetlands, and open space.

The Riesch family has been part of the Town of West Bend community since 1855, when Peter John Riesch arrived from Switzerland. The property was once home to Riesch Dairy, later known as Cedar Lake Dairy, which was operated by Louis J. Riesch. Since the dairy farm closed, the buildings have been removed, and the property has remained as open space.

CLCF is grateful to the Riesch family for their efforts to protect this landscape in perpetuity.



Wetland on the Riesch Property

New Trail at the Burkepile Preserve

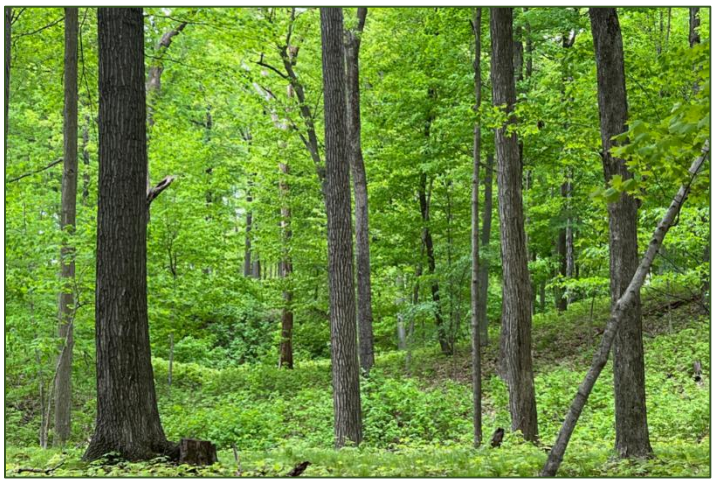
A new trail is coming soon at the 62-acre Burkepile Preserve, located just south of CLCF's Girl Scouts parcel and west of the Girl Scouts of Southeastern Wisconsin's Camp Silverbrook.



Habitat Hike at the Burkepile Preserve in 2025

The property includes a mix of wetlands, hardwood forest, meadow, and pine plantation. Protecting this land helps keep these natural areas connected and provides important habitat for wildlife.

CLCF was able to protect the property with support from generous donors and funding from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program. Created in 1989, the program helped protect wildlife habitat and natural areas, improve water quality, and create more opportunities for outdoor recreation. While the program is no longer active, its impact can still be seen across the state.



The Burkepile Preserve

In the Cedar Lakes region, 800 acres have been protected with help from Knowles-Nelson funding. This means that about 1/4 of the land CLCF has helped to protect has been supported by the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program. This property in particular also became an opportunity to improve the Ice Age National Scenic Trail, as the new trail off of Paradise Drive connects to the existing Ice Age Trail on the Girl Scouts property to the north.



Trailhead Sign at the Burkepile Preserve

Most importantly, the new route eliminated about a half mile of road walking on Paradise Drive. Instead of following the road, hikers are now able to stay on the trail and travel through the Burkepile Preserve. This creates a safer and more enjoyable experience while also connecting several protected natural areas.

This is part of ongoing work the Ice Age Trail Alliance has been executing in the Cedar Lakes region. In 2025, almost a mile and a half of road walking was eliminated by routing the trail through CLCF's Hembel-Lidington Preserve and using existing trails at Fox Hill Nature Preserve.

The new section through the Burkepile Preserve is another step toward creating a more connected and enjoyable Ice Age Trail in the Cedar Lakes region.

Keep an eye out for information about the grand opening event of the new trail!

To learn more about the Ice Age Trail and the Ice Age Trail Alliance, visit iceagetrail.org.

New Boardwalk at Fox Hill Nature Preserve

A new boardwalk is now in place at CLCF's Fox Hill Nature Preserve, thanks to the hard work of CLCF volunteers and the Washington Ozaukee Chapter of the Ice Age Trail Alliance.

In late July, volunteers spent time on the trail building the new boardwalk along a recently added section of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. The new trail route follows an existing trail at Fox Hill Nature Preserve.



Boardwalk Construction in Progress

Volunteers were out on the trail working through whatever weather, rain or shine.

Boardwalks are an important part of maintaining trails, especially in areas where wet conditions can make the ground difficult to travel. A well-built boardwalk provides a better experience for visitors while protecting the natural area around the trail.

With the new boardwalk, hikers can enjoy another improved section of the Ice Age Trail while experiencing the unique landscape of Fox Hill. It is a great example of how volunteer efforts can make a lasting difference on the trails and in the places they pass through.

CLCF is grateful to the Washington Ozaukee Chapter of the Ice Age Trail Alliance and all of the volunteers who helped make this project possible. Their hard work will benefit trail users for years to come.



Volunteer Group on the New Boardwalk

Next time you're out exploring Fox Hill Nature Preserve, be sure to check out the new boardwalk!

CLCF Stew Crew

Join the Stew Crew and help make a difference on CLCF's protected properties! From removing invasive plants to improving trails, there's always something to do.

Stew Crew is a chance to get outside, get your hands dirty, meet other conservation-minded people, and discover more about the plants and wildlife that make our community special. Your time and energy help CLCF care for these treasured natural areas.

Come lend a hand and make a difference with CLCF!

Contact CLCF's Stewardship Manager, Sarah, at smoore@theclcf.org, for more information.

Join CLCF's Email list!

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.

Support CLCF!

Annual Giving
By making an annual contribution, you can support CLCF's land protection projects, stewardship activities, educational and recreational events.

CLCF Nordic
By joining CLCF Nordic, you help support CLCF's x-country ski activities and stewardship of the Fox Hill Nature Preserve.

How to Donate:
You can use the enclosed envelope, scan the QR codes, or go to www.theclcf.org/support-us/make-a-donation/.

Annual Donation

Nordic Pass

Legacy Circle Spotlight: Karin and Rick Gale

Rick and Karin Gale's connection to CLCF began after purchasing a home on Little Cedar Lake in 2004. Inspired by the generosity of those who have supported CLCF for more than 50 years, Rick and Karin chose to include CLCF in their estate plan. "The generosity of many individuals over CLCF's 50+ years is humbling," they shared. "It is their generosity that has provided so much to the region and taught us the importance of including CLCF in our estate plan." Through their Legacy Circle gift, they hope to help ensure CLCF can continue its mission and protect the region's natural spaces for generations to come.



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 Mingari 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
Mary Beth Carr
Susan Crowley
Teri and Rich Czarnecki
Miriam Dani
Mary and John Emory
Rick and Karin Gale
Denise Goergen
John and Carol Harmon
Barbara and John Horner-Ibler
Jeff and Bev Kenkel
Ken and Kathy Klein
Bob Locher
Linda Mutschler
Chet and Maribeth Nielsen
Mark and Cindi Nielsen
R.W. Phelps
Bruce and Yoke San Reynolds
Emmy and Mike Robertson
Jack and Cindy Rusher
Mary Sander and Ray Lipman
Lori Steinbach
Bob Walter and Maria Banuchi
Al Wisnefske

Somewhere in Time

On Saturday, July 25, 2026, the Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation (CLCF) held its biennial Somewhere in Time – Race for Open Space celebration. This year, the event was held at The Barn at The Bog, near the Cedarburg Bog State Natural Area. It was wonderful to welcome more than 150 guests to celebrate with us.

The Cedarburg Bog State Natural Area is the most intact wetland system in southeastern Wisconsin. Wetlands are critical for flood protection, water quality, and erosion control, among other things, making The Barn at The Bog a great place to celebrate CLCF's conservation mission.

For this special event, CLCF received a $125,000 Matching Grant courtesy of the Nast and Czarnecki families, West Bend Insurance Company, and two anonymous families. CLCF exceeded that matching goal, thanks to your support, raising over $650,000.

These funds will allow CLCF to continue its work to protect the natural landscapes of the Cedar Lakes region in perpetuity. Thank you!

Thank you also to the Somewhere in Time Planning Committee, CLCF's Board of Directors, The Bog and their staff, Herb Justman of Justman Auctions, B's Bouquets, Brandt Printing, Windy City Linen, and West Bend Laser Engraving.









2026 Events

This year, CLCF hosted a variety of events and welcomed hundreds of attendees. From favorite annual events to new opportunities to explore the Cedar Lakes region, it was a wonderful year!

In addition to CLCF's Nature Series, sponsored by the Ziegler Family Foundation in memory of R.D. Ziegler, CLCF offered a variety of outdoor activities throughout the year. Participants joined us for the Luminary Hike, enjoyed the Annual Kayak Tour on the Milwaukee River, and explored some of CLCF's beautiful properties during our Bluebird Walks and Habitat Hikes. The fifth annual Race for Open Space was another exciting highlight, bringing our community together in support of protecting open space for generations to come.



Luminary Walk at the Joan M. Pick Nature Preserve

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who participated in our 2026 events. Whether you joined us for a hike, learned something new during the Nature Series, or supported the Race for Open Space, your enthusiasm and involvement helped make each event special.

A heartfelt thank you to our dedicated volunteers who generously shared their time and energy to help make these programs possible. We are also incredibly grateful to our generous event sponsors for their continued support of CLCF and our mission.



Kayak Tour on the Milwaukee River

Thank you to everyone who joined us in 2026! Your support and participation make these events possible, and we look forward to seeing you at future events to come.



Walk and Talk at CLCF's Weninger Property

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/.

Calling all X-Country Skiers and Snowshoers to join CLCF Nordic and embrace winter!

CLCF Nordic is a membership category within Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation Inc. (CLCF) that provides access to parking and expertly maintained x-country classic and skating trails at the Fox Hill Nature Preserve and more open, rustic x-country trails at the Rudorf Farm. Snowshoeing is permitted on both preserves.

- The Fox Hill Nature Preserve parking lot is at 4214 Sleeping Dragon Road, West Bend, WI.
- The Rudolf Farm parking lot is at 5020 Division Road, West Bend, WI.

Visit www.theclcf.org for directions, to download trail maps and to complete your Season Pass application and waiver online. Day Passes are available online or on-site at the Fox Hill Nature Preserve.

You can also complete the form below, sign the waiver on the back of the form and enclose with payment in the envelope provided. Check for updated x-country ski and snowshoe conditions at www.skinnyski.com or www.laphampeakfriends.org.

2026-2027 CLCF Nordic Ski Pass / Family – Individual Membership - $75

Primary Name:_____

Additional Family Members:_____

Address:_____ **City:**_____ **State:**_____ **Zip:**_____

Phone:_____ **Cell:**_____

Email:_____

Email addresses will be used exclusively for communications related to CLCF Nordic and the Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation.

$ 75.00 **Nordic Membership**
$_____ Optional Additional Trail Maintenance Donation
$_____ Total enclosed

Scan here to sign up online:

Please Make Checks Payable to: **Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation**
and return in the enclosed envelope. You will receive your Nordic Season Pass in the mail.

REMEMBER TO SIGN THE WAIVER ON THE BACK OF THIS FORM

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact CLCF's office at 262-353-4866.

RELEASE AND WAIVER OF LIABILITY
PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!
THIS IS A LEGAL DOCUMENT THAT AFFECTS YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS

This Release and Waiver of Liability ("Release") is executed by the undersigned Nordic Member and, if applicable, additional family members and on behalf of minor child(ren) in favor of Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation, Inc. and its officers, directors, employees, volunteers and agents (collectively, "CLCF").

In consideration for CLCF permitting access and use of the Fox Hill Nature Preserve for skiing, snow shoeing, walking, hiking and any other recreational activity ("Activities"), I agree to the following of behalf of myself and, if applicable, my minor child(ren):

I waive, release and discharge CLCF of any claims, liabilities, demands of whatever kind or nature, either in law or in equity arising from bodily injury, personal injury, illness (including communicable diseases such as COVID-19), death or property damage to myself or my minor child(ren) as a result of participating in Activities whether such claims or liabilities arise from my negligence or the negligence of CLCF. I understand that this Release does not release and discharge CLCF from liability or a claim for harm caused by the intentional or reckless acts of CLCF.

Assumption of Risk: I further understand that the Activities may be hazardous to myself, and if applicable, my minor child and that such hazards could include bodily injury, personal injury, illness (including communicable diseases such as COVID-19), death or property damage. I represent that I am familiar with the hazards related to or arising out of the performance of the Activities. I further represent that I have the education, experience, and/or skill to participate in the Activities in a safe, efficient and proper manner. As provided in this Release, I hereby expressly and specifically assume the risk of injury or harm to myself and, if applicable, my minor child arising from the Activities. I have reviewed and understand all of the terms and conditions of this Release and believe them to be reasonable. I acknowledge that I had the opportunity for this Release to be reviewed by legal counsel and I either had such review performed or chose not to have such review performed.

Additional Provisions: I expressly agree that this Release is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of the State of Wisconsin, and that this Release shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of Wisconsin. I agree that in the event any clause or provision of this Release is held to be invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, the invalidity of such clause shall not otherwise affect the remaining provisions of this Release, which shall continue to be enforceable.

I understand I have the right to negotiate the terms and conditions of this Release by contacting CLCF prior to participating in the Activities and that my participation in the Activities without negotiation is deemed to be my acceptance of the Release's terms and conditions.

On behalf of myself and my minor child (if applicable), I have executed this Release as of the day and year written below.

Signature: _____ Signature: _____

Print Name: _____ Print Name: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____

Print Name of Minor Child: _____

Print Name of Minor Child: _____

Print Name of Minor Child: _____

CLCF's Annual History Talk – *Out of the Ashes*

Wednesday, October 14, 5:00 – 8:00 pm
Location: West Bend Country Club

Join us for an inspiring evening with John "Rocky" Dedrick, retired West Bend Insurance CEO, and Chris Zwygart, Senior Vice President and Chief Legal Officer. Discover how West Bend Insurance rose from humble beginnings in 1894 as a fire insurance company to become the company it is today.



Sponsored by: FOCUS

CLCF's Nature Series—Gary Septon: "The Recovery, Management and Future of Wisconsin's Peregrines"

Tuesday, October 20, 2026, 5:00 – 7:00 pm
Location: Town of West Bend Town Hall

Join us for CLCF's Nature Series presentation featuring Greg Septon's overview of Peregrine Falcon recovery efforts in Wisconsin between 1987- 2026. Discussions include recovery methods and approaches utilized in the creation of an urban nesting population along the Lake Michigan shoreline. Also covered will be nest box designs, urban nest site management issues and resolutions, band returns, dispersal of hacked and wild-produced falcons, nesting chronology, prey species, overwintering, environmental contaminants and the role of electric power generating plants in the recovery of the population.



CLCF's Nature Series is Sponsored by the Ziegler Family Foundation in Memory of R.D. Ziegler

CLCF's Annual Meeting

Saturday, December 5, 2026, 9:00 – 11:00 am
Location: The Cedar Lodge at Cedar Community

Save the date for CLCF's Annual Meeting at the Cedar Lodge on the Cedar Community Campus. Join us to review a year of land conservation, stewardship efforts, outreach events, and more.

Sponsored by: OARSMAN CAPITAL Registered Investment Advisor

Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation
P.O. Box 347
West Bend, WI. 53095

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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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West Bend, WI 53095

Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 347
West Bend, WI 53095
262-353-4866

For more information, please visit
theclcf.org

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