

ISSUE 79

SUMMER/FALL 2021

PROTECT IMPROVE LEAD INSPIRE





A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Elan Lipschitz

As the days get cooler, we mark the end of a season – and soon the closing of 2021 – by reflecting on a year of change and possibilities. For so many, change can be uncomfortable, but much like the Michigan seasons, we adapt to our surroundings each day with a new perspective. For me, one significant transition was accepting the position of Executive Director. Taking on this leadership role within Little Forks gave me a new lens to view our work with knowledge from our past and the ability to shape where we will go.

I think about how our work evolved to encompass so much more than when I began my career at Little Forks. Born out of a love of local rivers, we have impacted many things throughout the Tittabawassee River Watershed. As river systems branch out, so has the work we do. We've expanded our focus to include collaborating with partners for more significant conservation impact, creating spaces that provide a variety of outdoor experiences in nature, and community programming to various audiences.

Although change is inevitable, there is one constant in our efforts to protect, improve, lead and inspire - which is your support.

Throughout this newsletter, you'll see a common theme on the role of our supporters in getting our work done, whether it's volunteering at one of our preserves, monitoring the health of our streams, attending a ribbon-cutting, or reaching out to see what you can do to help.

As we get set to celebrate our 25th anniversary this fall, it provides us an opportunity not only to look back at what we have accomplished but, more importantly, to see where the future will take us. This is especially exciting with the role the lands we own will play in our community as a place to recreate, meditate, walk your dog, learn about nature, or spend time with your family. As you know, our work doesn't just stop. We will continue to find new lands to protect, create spaces for the current and future generations to enjoy our natural world, and collaborate with our community partners, educators, and local leaders.

I would love to hear from you - to talk about the work we do and where we are going in the next 25 years. Your feedback is especially critical as we update our strategic plan by discovering how you might use our properties and gather feedback on our programs. Visitors are always welcome at our new office in downtown Midland (125 McDonald). Meeting our community members and hearing your feedback is what helps us be better leaders in conservation.

Thank you for your support and for believing in the critical role we play in our region.

ALL HANDS ON DECK

Sometimes the best way to show your support is by getting your hands dirty while out in the field. Having dedicated individuals assemble to help with tasks, both big and small, makes all the difference when doing our part to protect and improve the landscapes that make up our community.

Volunteering with Little Forks isn't the only way to support the organization. As leaders in conservation, it's our responsibility to take every opportunity to educate on the health of the Cedar River or even how to spot invasive plants in your backyard – inspiring all generations to get involved in stewarding our land and water.

Our most popular volunteer event is the Cedar River Stream Sampling. Twice a year volunteers of all ages gather in search of macroinvertebrates – animals without a backbone – to assess the current health status of the river. The event is team-oriented with groups traveling to six sites to sample sections of the river. Each site is unique with an unknown allure to what bottom-dwelling creatures you'll find!

Visit our website or join our mailing list for regular volunteer opportunities.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: GREG ALLINGTON

Greg Allington has been in the Cedar River collecting macroinvertebrates since 2016. This year Greg will be nominated to MiCorps, the statewide program for stream sampling, for 5 years of volunteering with our program. We reached out to Greg to get his thoughts on volunteering with us. Take it away Greg!

I volunteer for the Little Forks' stream sampling on the Cedar River because it's an easy and fun way to do citizen science in my backyard. I have a cabin on Pratt Lake in the Cedar River Watershed, and also live and work down river near the Saginaw River. I love to explore the wonderful rivers and streams we have here in the Saginaw Bay Watershed. We are very lucky to have so many places to hike, kayak, and fish. Many of these places we wouldn't have without the efforts of Little Forks, along with the help of their partners and volunteers. I feel lucky to be able to help out.

The best memories I have with Little Forks is meeting and working with some amazing people around the area. I am constantly inspired and excited to discover inspirational landowners conserving and protecting their land and waters for wildlife and people to enjoy. Most of all I live to discover new places to explore, hike, and be an amateur biologist again.



HURON PINES AMERICORPS

Be our next Land Steward through the Huron Pines AmeriCorps Program! The Land Steward will monitor conservation easements and engage with private land owners. On conservancy owned land, they will manage invasive species, build trails and boardwalks along with other management practices. Land Steward is responsible for coordinating stream sampling and other outreach events. This position runs from January 12 - November 18, 2022. Apply through the Huron Pines AmeriCorps program by October 15, 2021.

Huron Pines AmeriCorps is a program of Huron Pines and is supported in part by the Corporation for National Community Service, Michigan Community Service Commission, Huron Pines and contributions from host sites.

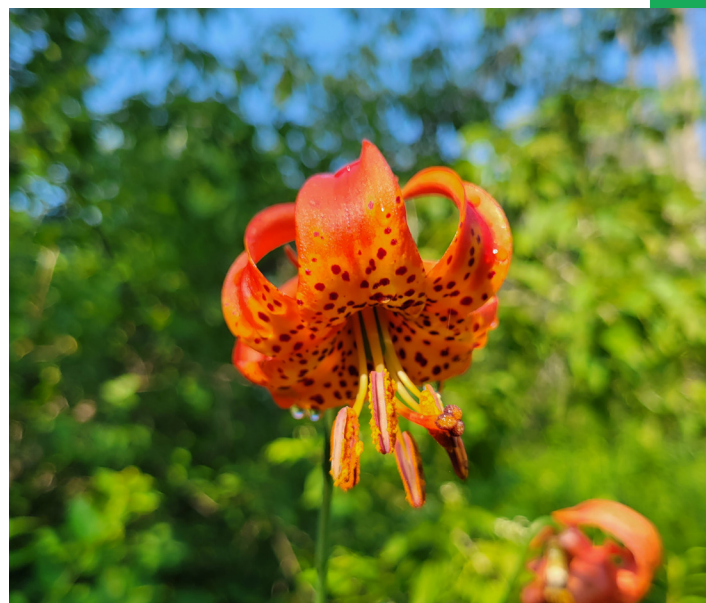


OUTDOORS TOGETHER - FALL HIKE

In celebration of National Coming Out Day, Little Forks along with our partners at Great Lakes Bay Pride and Stand With Trans, will be hosting a fall hike at Averill Preserve on October 10th at 2PM.

In addition to the hike, we'll also have chalk art along the all-access path and fall favorite snacks. This event is free with a recommended \$5 donation to cover food costs.

Let us know you'll be there by registering at: bit.ly/OT-fallhike



MEMORIALS & HONORARY

In Memory of Lawrence DiBasio
Josh and Kristi Jones

In Memory of John E. Grambau
Paula Renker

In Memory of Michael Razar
Deb and Tim Broderick

In Honor of Glenn and Carol's Wedding Anniversary
Carol Sanford

In Honor of Stephanie Richardson
PEO Sisterhood Chapter



LITTLE FORKS GIVES BIG THANKS!

This summer we celebrated the George and Sue Lane Preserve with a public ribbon-cutting event recognizing George and Sue's conservation legacy and the partnerships working together to uphold it. The 270-acre Lane Preserve is located in Gladwin County off of Shearer road. With 2.5 miles of trails winding through panoramic views of forest and grasslands, the preserve is a gem within the rural landscapes of Sage Township.

The preserve also provides numerous fishing access points to the Cedar River. With the river corridor managed in partnership with the Leon P. Martuch Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the cold-water stream is habitat for an impressive population of brown trout.

With regular maintenance and habitat improvements, including recent invasive species eradication by the Chippewa Nature Center and the Central Michigan Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area, the preserve serves as a space for solace and exploration for generations to come.

Visit our website to download the latest preserve map.





OUR PRESERVES & YOU

Trails and public spaces throughout the nation have seen increased usage since the beginning of the pandemic, and our properties are no different. **Our publicly-accessible preserves have seen an overall visitation increase of 90.3% since 2019!**

Many of these visitors were unaware or never have been to one of our properties. The pandemic brought an unexpected level of increase awareness of the public lands right in our backyard - giving visibility to the organizations whose work protects and provides access to these places.

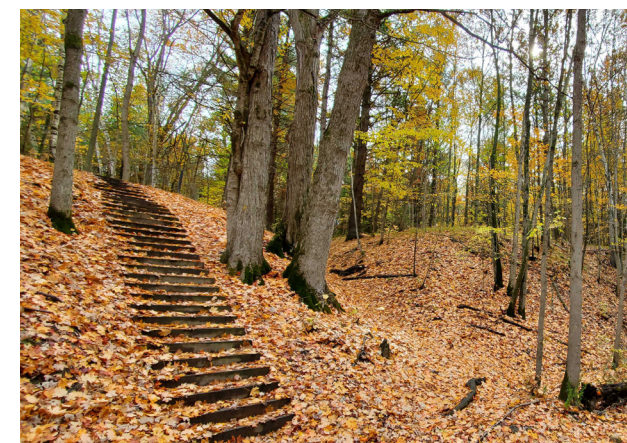
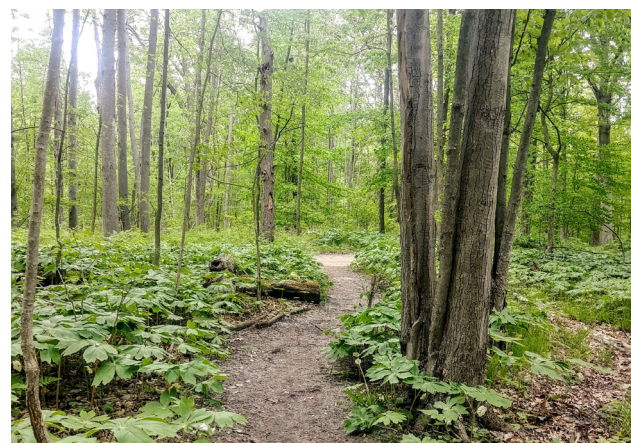
Another positive outcome due to the extra feet on the trails, is the numerous days in the field spent maintaining and developing our trail systems. Sara our Preserves & Volunteers Manager and Kaitlynn our Huron Pines AmeriCorps member spent countless hours, with the help of a number of volunteers, working on the Averill Preserve, Riverview Natural Area and George and Sue Lane Preserve trails.

What does this trail work look like? It can include stabilizing the structural integrity of the hiking path. Digging small trenches for water collection and adding rock material to the first 30 feet of trail at Riverview. It's creating more accessible and less hazardous sections like leveling off hilly spots at Averill. It can also be adding to the existing system like a brand new half mile of trail at Lane.

Our field work is never complete – instead we think of new ways to make our natural areas more enjoyable while maintaining the health of the properties ecosystem and wildlife habitats.

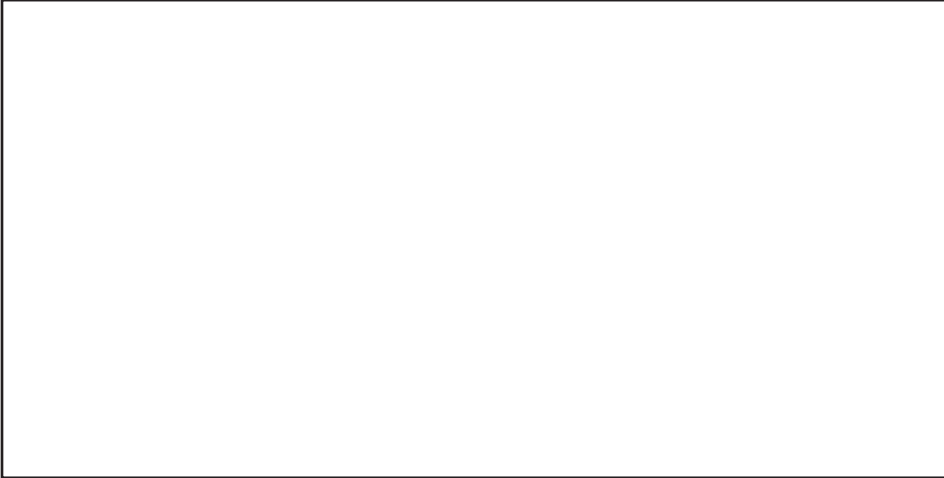
In the near future, we'll be adding additional boardwalks at Riverview. Not only will it keep your feet dry but we are ensuring that the natural wetlands thrive. We do this work with you and our community in mind – and if we learned anything from the pandemic it's having nearby wild places like this to explore isn't optional, it's a necessity.

To learn more about our properties visit littleforks.org/natural-areas.





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The Little Forks Conservancy permanently protects and improves natural environments in Mid-Michigan by leading and inspiring actions that conserve vital habitats and waterways for the benefit of our entire community.

Since 1996, we've protected over 3,809 acres of land, 20 miles of shoreline, and 10 miles of trails.

We strive to have places in nature that inspire connections and communities, serve as a healing and educational space, and allow all ages and abilities access to nature - now and for future generations to come.

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