



Winter/Spring 2019 | Issue 74



Director's Note

Greg Yankee

A new year gives us all an opportunity to revisit why we do the things we do and to realign priorities where necessary. For the staff of Little Forks, we spend a lot of time thinking through the actions described in our mission statement: protect, improve, lead, and inspire. Everything we do – and every reason behind those actions – can be found in one of those verbs.

Protect: since the last newsletter, we have helped a partner protect over 1000 feet along the Chippewa and have secured funding to continue important work in the Cedar River watershed

Improve: work on our preserves, through programming and our management plans, is an ongoing activity to do what we can to have our ecosystem operating the way it should; these activities include removing invasive species and restoring habitat for native flora and fauna as well as river cleanups and much more

Lead: Little Forks and the individuals that comprise it engage in collaborative leadership across many levels – local, regional, statewide, and national. To a person, we all want a future where people respect and enjoy the benefits of our natural resources. We work every day to ensure that future.

Inspire: All generations are needed for that to happen. We must inspire all people to understand the value of our land, water, and wildlife. We actively work with youth, college students, young professionals, families, and retirees – in fact, at a 2018 gathering for committee members, there were representatives of every decade from teens to nineties!

Readers who have recently looked at our mission statement will notice a final verb: to conserve. We will conserve our 4,000th acre in 2019 and we are so thankful for all of you who have helped make that possible.

Szok Family Protects Land on Chippewa River

Along the banks of the Chippewa River, a small piece of land was purchased by Peter and Cameron Szok with the intent to donate the property to the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy (CWC) as a resource to the community. The 3.4-acre piece of property has roughly 1,000 feet of frontage on the Chippewa River and will serve as a key entrance point to the river.

Prior to donating the property to CWC, Peter and Cameron Szok worked with Little Forks Conservancy to develop a conservation easement for the property to ensure the land will be protected while allowing for future river access. This provided a unique opportunity for Little Forks to strengthen a valuable partnership with CWC, protect and improve a vital waterway, and establish a lasting relationship with the Szok family. Little Forks will steward the conservation easement and partner with CWC on the long term protection of the property. "This is a win-win opportunity for all by not only permanently



Cameron & Virginia Szok

protecting a unique property on the Chippewa River, but it provides public access in a much needed location on the river," commented Elan Lipschitz, Director of Land Conservation. Little Forks will work closely with CWC to create a safe launch area for kayakers and canoeists.

"Peter and Cameron's dedication to protecting natural areas and sharing with the mid-Michigan community the opportunity to access these special places is remarkable. It speaks volumes to their commitment to conservation," commented Greg Yankee, Executive Director.



Averill Ribbon Cutting

Last September, members of the Little Forks' staff and board, as well as volunteers, funders, and supporters, participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Averill Preserve Access for All project. Hosted by the Midland Chamber of Commerce, the ceremony celebrated the success in creating an accessible preserve accessible to all who seek connections with nature. Attendees were encouraged to explore the preserve after the ceremony and partake in

Cedar River Watershed Project

Own land in the Cedar River Watershed in Gladwin or Clare County? In 2018, we received funding for our Preserving Land in the Cedar River project from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to build upon our previous successes working with private landowners to develop conservation easements within this important watershed. Through this grant we will reach out to landowners interested in learning more about the conservation tools we use to protect land.

In addition, we will conduct outreach within the local community to connect with that next generation of conservation-minded landowners. This project will not only benefit water quality but

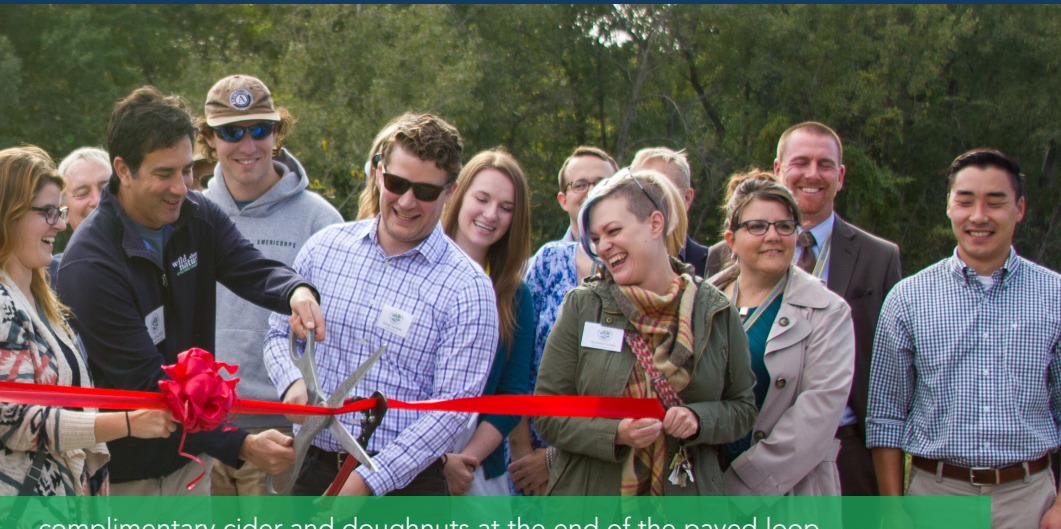
ensure high-quality habitat for wildlife, preservation of natural areas and help improve recreational opportunities for the public through the preservation of this high priority watershed.

Key to the success of this grant is working with our existing partners to tie in our work to other projects occurring in the Cedar River watershed including improving fish passage and reducing sediment into the river, working to clean up the river system, citizen science projects, and the development of a non-motorized trail that connects the communities of Gladwin and Beaverton.

We're happy to welcome our new Huron Pines AmeriCorps member, Mindee Goodrum! From Saco, Maine, Mindee graduated with a BS in Environmental Science from Saint Michael's College in May 2018. Since then, she did a half year term of service with the Maine Conservation Corps at the South Portland Parks and Recreation Department where she learned about invasive plants and insects and was involved in other outreach and volunteer projects. Mindee is excited to spend her term



of service with Little Forks to learn more about non-profits, land management, invasive species, and to explore many new parts of Michigan.



complimentary cider and doughnuts at the end of the paved loop.

The Access for All project kicked-off in Summer of 2016 and was completed in the Fall of 2017. The key project features included the development of a paved lookout area over the Tittabawassee River, a paved pathway extending nearly 1,000 feet, a paved parking lot, a nature play area, and a wheel-chair accessible facility. Little Forks' staff and board thank all who funded, logged hours, got their hands dirty, spread the word, and came out to celebrate this beautiful land that all may enjoy.

Stewardship Series

Our Stewardship Series is in its third year and we've expanded to five workshops, two of which are in Gladwin County.

We provide free workshops as a way to educate volunteers and landowners about ways to take care of their own land and give them the skills/knowledge to excel as a volunteer in conservation.



May 29th 6PM at 105 Post St.
Little Forks' Program Highlight –
Conservation@Home

June 4th 6PM at 105 Post St
Invasive Species with Megan Rider
from Central Michigan CISMA

July 20th 1PM Midland Location TBD
Eye on the Forest with Julie Crick from
MSU Extension

August 21st 6PM in Gladwin County
(TBD) Natural Shorelines with Gladwin
Conservation District

September 5th 5:30PM at George
and Sue Lane Preserve Trail Building
101

Register by contacting Sara at
Shuettelman@littleforks.org



The Little Forks Conservancy
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Winter/Spring Newsletter



MiCorps Stream Sampling

MiCorps Spring Sampling

Join us in continuing our stream monitoring program! Data collection of the Cedar River at the Gladwin City Park will take place on

Saturday, May 18th at 9AM

Volunteers can also help identify samples at the Little Forks Office on

Tuesday, May 21st at 5:30PM

Cedar River Cleanup

Save the date for the Cedar River Cleanup on

July 11th at 9AM

Volunteers will paddle down and clean up the Cedar River in Gladwin, taking about 4 hours to complete. Some canoes and kayaks will be available but if you have your own please bring them.

To register, call 989.835.4886 or email mgoodrum@littleforks.org.

Memorials

The following donors have made gifts to The Little Forks Conservancy on behalf of friends and family.

In Memory of George & Sue Lane
 Brook Haske

In Memory of Hugh & Eileen Starks
 Libby Starks Thompson

In Memory of Chuck & Toni Vial
 Tim & Deb Broderick

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.