

Like father, like son: conserving connected lands

With your support, Mark and Anne-Marie Hein have conserved 120 acres of woodland and farmland just east of Ettrick, Wisconsin. The land is adjacent to that owned by Mark's parents, Bill and Mary Ann Hein, who signed a conservation agreement last year with the Conservancy for their 360-acre working farm and woodlands.

"Yesterday my wife and I took a horseback ride on the land," said Mark Hein. "My son was three-and-a-half when we bought it. And now we have a grandchild on the way."



Bill and Mary Ann Hein after a horseback ride on their protected land in Trempealeau County.

protected corridor of 480 acres of habitat has been created. Habitat corridors such as this are known to improve survival rates in wildlife.

The Hein property (top) includes a mix of woodlands, pasture, and cropland.

The land includes 600 feet of frontage on the South Fork of Beaver Creek, the largest trout stream within the Beaver Creek watershed, plus intact oak woodland, including white, black, and red oak; and habitat for blue-winged warblers, ruffed grouse, fisher, bobcat, and black bear.

The Hein family is leading by example with a land ethic that has been passed down from one generation to the next. Combined with the 2018 conservation agreement with Mark's parents, a permanently

Imperiled oak woodland protected

Steep, wooded bluffs enfold broad, sloping pastures for sheep and horses where Gene Amsrud and Patty (McNamee) Amsrud have permanently protected their 150-acre land near Genoa by signing a conservation agreement with the



The Amsruds share their land with an abundance of native plants and wildlife near Genoa.

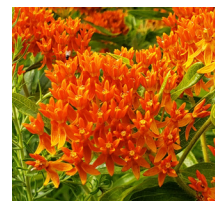
Conservancy. The prospect of more houses on their road motivated them to protect the woodland habitat.

Their property is exceptionally diverse, with large, mature open-grown oak and shagbark hickory throughout. Such oak woodland is now considered critically imperiled in Wisconsin. By contrast, the Amsrud property has not only retained mature

oak seed trees but has oak regeneration occurring within the understory. Reconstructed prairie on the property is an important habitat for area pollinators.

In a pasture recently mowed, the couple pointed out a tiny patch of vegetation Gene had mowed around. Within the patch is a single plant of butterfly weed, its showy orange flowers favored by bees and butterflies. Patty said that she has had a lifelong hobby of identifying flowering plants, and this was the only place on the property where she had found butterfly weed. "Don't mow down the butterfly weed," Gene said, repeating what Patty says when he goes out with the tractor and mower.

The butterfly weed has a special place on the Amsrud's conserved property.



What's working? Nature-based climate solutions

Recent studies have identified natural climate solutions (NCS) with the greatest potential to mitigate climate change. Among them are conservation, restoration, and improved management in forests, grasslands, agricultural lands, and wetlands. Thanks to you and the generous landowners who have permanently protected land with the Conservancy, many natural solutions are being practiced here in the Driftless Area, as shown in the examples below.



Conservation practices on agricultural land above Coon Creek in Vernon County.



Wetlands protection below Angel Bluff in Buffalo County.



Conservation and restoration of prairies and grasslands in La Crosse County.



Forest management in Monroe County.

The role of land trusts in the race against climate change

The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says that, from a scientific standpoint, land conservation and management are central to how the world can mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts. The Land Trust Alliance (LTA) said the recent IPCC report made clear that ... "it is our responsibility to take our work to new levels of scale, effectiveness and sustainability in a very short time."

Recognizing that responsibility, Mississippi Valley Conservancy's Board last winter established a Study Group on Climate Change. The study group has recommended the conservancy work to increase public knowledge of how conserved land captures and holds carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas that is causing climate change. And studies continue on ways to change land management to make land more resistant to the erosion and other effects of the intense storms of a warming climate. Board President Rob Tyser said he agrees with the LTA that we're in the right business at the right time.

The Conservancy's Study Group on Climate Change meets to review the latest research (below).



The Trail Trek Challenge is 365x more fun! Sign up today!

The Trail Trek Challenge is now a year-round hike/walk program in the nature preserves you've helped protect. It's not too late to join 400+ participants by signing up FREE to receive a trail guide with hike descriptions and a place to log the qualifying hikes and events you've completed. Hike at least 5 trails to be eligible for a drawing at next year's Earth Fair, where another year of hikes and walks will be kicked off! Share your hiking fun with photos at [#trailtrekchallenge](https://twitter.com/trailtrekchallenge).

Details and free sign-up are at www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org/TTC

Many hands make light work in the La Crosse Blufflands!



The response to our call for community care of the La Crosse Blufflands has been terrific! Individuals, partners, clubs, and businesses have stepped up to help with habitat restoration, outreach communications, and signage.

In the program's first year, attention is focused on the north end of the blufflands. The activities are now in full swing. If you want to receive notifications of scheduled activities, sign up on the Volunteer page of our website. **To see what's been done and learn more about *Love the Bluffs*, sign up and join us for a Love the Bluffs hike on Saturday, Nov. 16th!**



Massive amounts of sumac were cut and treated by volunteers this summer in an effort to restore bluffland habitats for pollinators. This view from Lookout Prairie shows some of the great results. We thank Friends of the Blufflands, La Crosse Mayor's Crew, WisCorps, and many individual volunteers for partnering to protect the city's most valuable treasure, the La Crosse Blufflands.



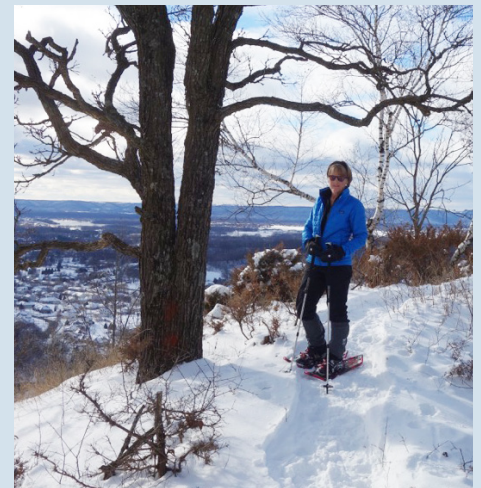
Above: A crew of Home2 Suites employees chose Love the Bluffs as their team's community service activity for summer 2019. Conservancy board member Mike O'Brien led the crew. Below: Our interns engaged hundreds of students at UW-L's Volunteer Fest in early September.



Cold weather fitness: Safety tips for exercising outdoors

Colder temperatures can discourage even the most motivated exercisers. Without motivation, it's easy to pack away your workout gear for the winter. But you don't have to let cold weather spell the end of your fitness routine. The following tips can help you stay fit, safe, and warm while exercising outdoors:

- Check the forecast before heading outside. Temperature, wind, and moisture, and duration are key factors in planning a safe cold-weather workout.
- Dressing too warmly is a common mistake when exercising in cold weather. Dress in layers that you can remove as soon as you start to sweat and then put back on as needed.
- Protect your head, hands, feet, and ears. When it's cold, blood flow is concentrated in your body's core, leaving your head, hands, and feet vulnerable to frostbite.
- Know the signs. Early warning signs of frostbite include numbness, loss of feeling, or a stinging sensation. Hypothermia symptoms include intense shivering, slurred speech, loss of coordination, or fatigue.
- Choose footwear that will help prevent falls. If you're likely to encounter snow and ice, consider strap-on cleats for your walking, hiking, and running shoes.
- Don't forget about hydration. It's just as important during cold weather as it is in the heat. Drink water or sports drinks before, during and after your workout, even if you're not really thirsty.



MAYO CLINIC
HEALTH SYSTEM

Connecting habitat can help endangered species

A message from the Conservancy's Executive Director



Carol Abrahamzon

Scientists have learned that loss of habitat drives most extinctions. When subdivisions are built, forests are clear-cut, or wetlands are filled in, habitat is fragmented and isolated wildlife populations are less likely to survive. A new study suggests that connecting these patches to create corridors of habitat can help save plants and animals - far more than scientists ever knew.

Research has shown that as corridors of undeveloped land are connected, new species arrive and survive in these areas. In fact, the annual rate of colonization was 5% higher than in unconnected patches—a surprisingly large boost, as reported in *Science*.¹

In another study, *Natural climate solutions for the United States*,² authored by The Nature Conservancy and 21 institutional partners and published in the journal *Science Advances*, 21 different natural solutions, from restoring forests and grasslands to a range of agricultural practices, were investigated. This U.S. study shows that if all 21 solutions were applied, they could prevent or sequester more than one-fifth of annual U.S. greenhouse gas pollution—the equivalent of removing the emissions from all U.S. cars and trucks on the road.

So what does this mean for the Driftless Area?

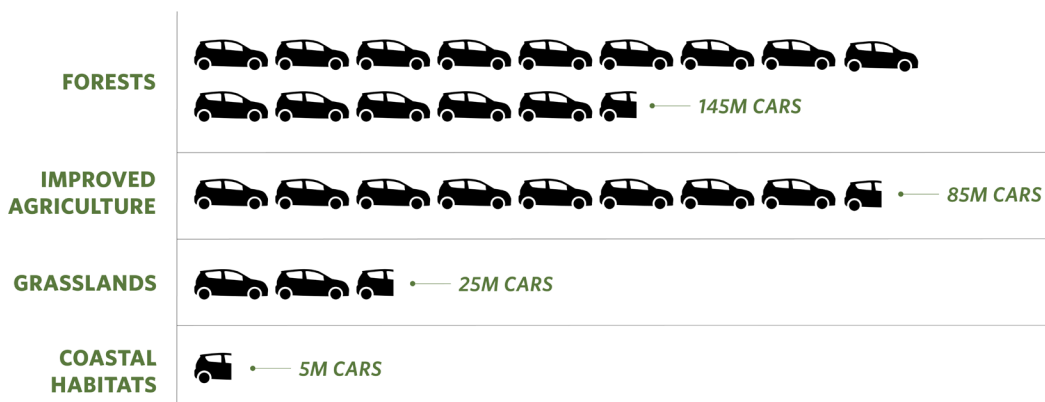
It means that with your support, Mississippi Valley Conservancy can stop future destruction of wetlands that prevent extensive flooding and provide a home for turtles, frogs, dragonflies, and all who depend upon them. We can prevent extensive cutting of the forests that feed and shelter birds, bats, owls, and bobcats. Together we can save deep-rooted prairies, home to butterflies, bees, and other pollinators essential to growing our food. It means we can connect fragmented pieces of habitat, which will help endangered species recover for the benefit of future generations and do our part to prevent and counter the damaging effects of greenhouse gas pollution.

Together in conservation,

Carol Abrahamzon

NATURAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

In the U.S., nature has potential to remove **21% of the nation's carbon pollution**—equivalent to removing emissions from **ALL cars and trucks on the road**...and then some.



1. *Ongoing accumulation of plant diversity through habitat connectivity in an 18-year experiment*, *Science* 27 Sep 2019: Vol. 365, Issue 6460, pp. 1478-1480, <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/365/6460/1478>

2. *Natural climate solutions for the United States*, *Science Advances* 14 Nov 2018: Vol. 4, no. 11, eaat1869, <https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/4/11/eaat1869>

U.S. Mitigation Potential: Approximate Number of Cars Removed Each Year in Millions

= 10M cars

Driftless Harvest

GATHER WITH FRIENDS
OLD AND NEW TO
LEARN ABOUT RECENT
LANDS PROTECTED,
CONNECT WITH
CONSERVANCY STAFF,
AND CELEBRATE WHAT
MAKES THIS PLACE
SO SPECIAL —
PEOPLE LIKE YOU!

Mississippi Valley Conservancy Fall Fundraiser

Friday, November 8 at 5:30 p.m.
The Radisson Ballroom

*Conservancy Update • Harvest Grazing Menu • Coins for
Conservation • Wheel of Wine • Silent Auction • Live Auction*

Tickets \$55 in advance. \$65 at the door, if available.
(We sold out last year!)

RSVP by November 1
nancy@mississippivalleyconservancy.org
or call 608-784-3606 ext. 1

Auction travel packages may be previewed at www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org/events/fall-fundraiser-driftless-harvest

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Make a tax-free distribution from your IRA.

If you are 70½ or older, you can make a tax-free distribution from your traditional or Roth IRA to Mississippi Valley Conservancy. You can donate up to \$100,000 each year without incurring income tax on your withdrawal – it's an efficient way to protect land, air, and water. For more information, call Carol Abrahamzon today at 608-784-3606 x 4.



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Mississippi Valley Conservancy is a regional, non-profit land trust based in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The Conservancy has permanently conserved 20,839 acres of blufflands, prairies, wetlands, and streams in and around the Mississippi, Kickapoo, and Wisconsin Rivers since its founding in 1997. Over 5,000 acres are open to the public for hiking, bird-watching, hunting, fishing, photography, and snowshoeing.

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Three more lands protected thanks to you!



La Crosse County farmland and habitat protected

A recently signed land conservation agreement will protect valuable wildlife habitat and farmland in La Crosse County. The landowner (anonymous) takes pride in knowing that the 75-acre property will continue to be farmed using conservation-friendly practices, protect wildlife habitat, and provide the public with beautiful scenic views for generations to come.

La Crosse County has experienced fragmentation of natural landscapes and farmlands as a result of housing development. This land includes some areas designated as prime farmland and others designated as “farmland of statewide importance.” The property, which has frontage along the La Crosse River, is adjacent to other protected lands and features perennial cover and native vegetation that help provide flood protection to downstream communities by slowing runoff during extreme weather events. Thanks to the stewardship efforts of the landowner, who personally has planted over 4,000 trees on the property, the land has incredible natural resources that benefit wildlife, pollinators, and the community.