

Landowner News

SPRING 2024

Camp Katharine Parsons at
Oak Lake; Phyllis Wheatley
Community Center



SHALESIA JOHNSON

The Drone Takes Flight and Lands at Prince's Summer Camp!

This past summer our drone took flight over Camp Katherine Parsons on Oak Lake in Carver County, a 106-acre property owned and managed by the Phyllis Wheatley Community Center. The Camp, set on a wooded peninsula designated by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as a Big Woods Heritage Site, was established in 1956 for youth from the North Minneapolis community to experience nature—many for the first time. It is named in honor of former Phyllis Wheatley Community Center board member Katherine Parsons, who provided funding to purchase and develop the land.

In 2019, 83 acres of the camp were permanently protected by a conservation easement granted by the Phyllis Wheatley Community Center to the Minnesota Land Trust, ensuring that the natural legacy of the land will be preserved in perpetuity for campers and wildlife alike.

Generations of youth, including the talented musician Prince, found community, mentorship, and safety to connect to nature—mind and body—at Camp Parsons.

Although the camp closed for summer use in 2001, efforts have been underway to revitalize it so it may again provide opportunities for youth from the Twin Cities to experience summer camp in Minnesota.

This year, the Phyllis Wheatley Community Center celebrates 100 years of service to

the community. For the last century, it has been a hub for folks to gather, socialize, and engage in activities such as camping, sports, childcare, and medical services.

In 1962 the Center was included in the Green Book, a guide for African American travelers that identified businesses that would accommodate them while racial segregation was still legal. The book was essential for safe travel during the time before the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

This summer, Camp Katherine Parsons will once again open their doors to Twin Cities youth offering programming centered on the history of the Mississippi River as it flows through the Twin Cities. The program will be an exploration of cultural, environmental, and industrial factors that have shaped the river we see today.

For more information about the history of Phyllis Wheatley Community Center's work throughout the state of Minnesota or to learn more about Camp Katharine Parsons, visit phylliswheatley.org/camp.



2023 LANDOWNERS OF THE YEAR

The Barrett Family

The Minnesota Land Trust was honored to recognize Dale and Betty Barrett at the 2023 Treasured Places event at the Sherburne County History Center this past October. The Barretts exemplify the best of what can happen when a strong partnership is forged between a land trust and landowner. In 2014, having been introduced to the Minnesota Land Trust by their conservation-minded daughter Jen Stewart, Dale and Betty granted a conservation easement to the Minnesota Land Trust covering two-thirds of their 240-acre farm along the shores of Tennyson Lake, permanently protecting forest, wetlands, and shoreline along the lake and Spencer Brook. A wonderful conservation legacy by any account.

But they weren't content to stop there. A few years later in 2018, they closed on a second conservation easement, this time covering the remainder of their farm, doubling the amount of Tennyson Lake shoreline protected in perpetuity.

Andrew Moe Land Trust Director of Conservation Stewardship, and Betty and Dale Barrett with daughter Jen Stewart.



But they weren't content to stop there. Having protected the entirety of their property, their focus turned to the Barrett family farm less than 10 miles south of Tennyson Lake, owned by the Barretts and Dale's siblings. In 2020, the Barrett Farm LLC conservation easement was completed, this time protecting 150 acres of oak woodland and grasslands in the Anoka Sandplain.

But they weren't content to stop there. Around that same time in 2020, Dale and Betty acquired an 83-acre parcel on Tennyson Lake directly west of their farm. You won't believe what they did next...

In 2023, Dale and Betty closed on their 4th conservation easement, protecting the entirety of their newly acquired parcel and adding over 4,000 feet of protected shoreline along Tennyson Lake in the process. As of today, they have had a hand in permanently protecting 468 acres of land, and nearly 12,000 feet of shoreline. A wonderful legacy indeed!

Learn more about the Barretts' work to protect Tennyson Lake at mnland.org/tennyson.

2023 PARTNER OF THE YEAR

Hennepin County

So many of our conservation goals at the Minnesota Land Trust would not be possible without partnerships and collaboration with other organizations. At the 2023 Treasured Places event, the Land Trust was pleased to recognize Hennepin County with its Partner of the Year award. This partnership began in 2018 and has since increased our capacity for quality land protection in a county that faces a lot of development and pressure from urban expansion.

At present, Hennepin County co-holds 14 conservation easements with the Minnesota Land Trust, permanently protecting natural habitat, water quality, and scenic views in the ever-expanding metropolitan area. They have built trusting relationships with landowners to provide guidance and expertise, and they play a big role



Wayne Ostlie Land Trust Director of Land Protection, Hennepin County Commissioner Kevin Anderson, Nicole Witzel, Kristine Maurer, John Evans.

conducting the annual monitoring visits and implementing habitat improvement projects. Thanks to this collaboration, the health of natural resources, wildlife, and residential communities in Hennepin County and beyond are securely protected for generations to come.



An Ode to the Brush Pile

By: Andrew Moe

The first week of April meant spring cleaning time at my house—that time of year where the urge to cast out our more aspirational accretions and reacquaint rags with neglected corners pushes up like a skunk cabbage through thawing earth.

Soon enough, the focus will shift northwards to the Lake Vermilion-adjacent acreage of my in-laws, where the previous years' accretions in the old Finnish cabin lean more Rodentia than human. At the annual cabin opening weekend it's a race for the hand saws, loppers, and brush cutters to join the trails crew. Too slow and you'll be stuck inside with a broom, a dustpan and an N-95.

Out on the trails, the hardwoods limbs and conifer boughs fall with each snip, and the whine of the chainsaw temporarily drowns out the chorus of spring peepers in the distance. Special attention is paid to clearing and fuels reduction within fifty yards or so of the cabin to mitigate fire hazards. But as we clear further out, we resist the temptation to haul all the limbs and branches away, to make everything look so tidy and orderly as we've done closer in.

Instead, larger logs are pulled off the trails and into the woods, where they will slowly decompose, providing habitat for insects, snakes, and salamanders, and returning nutrients to the soil as fungi and microorganisms break down the lignin and cellulose over many years.

Branches and boughs are stacked to shoulder height to create new brush piles or added to existing ones. Like logs, the finer woody debris in brush piles provide important habitat for insects, amphibians, birds, and small mammals. The brush piles can even serve as a natural cage to protect shade-tolerant tree seedlings from deer browsing.

And while many small mammals stay hidden below the snowpack, a visit to the brush piles during winter can be revelatory, with snow cover providing a canvas to see tiny tracks of mice, red squirrels, ruffed grouse, and perhaps also some of the predators who seek them out, including weasels, red foxes, or the wing-print left by an owl swooping down for its prey.

So, next time you're tempted to tidy up the woods, consider the hidden life within those unruly piles. Let them stand as

The Wood-pile

Out walking in the frozen swamp one gray day,
I paused and said, 'I will turn back from here.
No, I will go on farther—and we shall see.'
The hard snow held me, save where now and then
One foot went through. The view was all in lines
Straight up and down of tall slim trees
Too much alike to mark or name a place by
So as to say for certain I was here
Or somewhere else: I was just far from home.
A small bird flew before me. He was careful
To put a tree between us when he lighted,
And say no word to tell me who he was
Who was so foolish as to think what he thought.
He thought that I was after him for a feather—
The white one in his tail; like one who takes
Everything said as personal to himself.
One flight out sideways would have undeceived him.
And then there was a pile of wood for which
I forgot him and let his little fear
Carry him off the way I might have gone,
Without so much as wishing him good-night.
He went behind it to make his last stand.
It was a cord of maple, cut and split
And piled—and measured, four by four by eight.
And not another like it could I see.
No runner tracks in this year's snow looped near it.
And it was older sure than this year's cutting,
Or even last year's or the year's before.
The wood was gray and the bark warping off it
And the pile somewhat sunken. Clematis
Had wound strings round and round it like a bundle.
What held it though on one side was a tree
Still growing, and on one a stake and prop,
These latter about to fall. I thought that only
Someone who lived in turning to fresh tasks
Could so forget his handiwork on which
He spent himself, the labor of his ax,
And leave it there far from a useful fireplace
To warm the frozen swamp as best it could
With the slow smokeless burning of decay.

—Robert Frost

monuments to the wild, echoing Robert Frost's sentiment in "The Wood-pile" as they slowly smolder and enrich the land around them.



You can learn more about the Land Trust's easement monitoring program at: mnland.org/conservation-easement-monitoring.



2024 Monitoring Season Update

Happy May, Landowners! By the time you read this newsletter, we'll have completed six volunteer monitor trainings across the state. This year, we met with approximately 85 new and returning volunteer monitors who are excited to help the Land Trust meet our annual obligation to monitor more than 750 unique properties across Minnesota.

Now that training is complete, Minnesota Land Trust Staff or Certified Volunteer Monitors will be in touch to schedule your annual monitoring

visit. If you're available, we encourage landowners to accompany the monitor on the visit. This is a great time to ask questions about the conservation easement, let your monitor know about any work planned for the property, or even to share a bit of your knowledge and history of the land. If you're not able to accompany the monitor, or if you have any additional questions throughout the year, please feel free to contact any member of the Minnesota Land Trust Stewardship Team.

We will also continue our remote

monitoring program, which is entering its fifth year in 2024. As a reminder, remote monitoring, which utilizes high-resolution satellite or aerial imagery, is only conducted by Minnesota Land Trust staff. Land Trust staff will always visit each protected property at least once every five years in-person per the requirements of our accrediting body, the Land Trust Alliance. That means any property that has been monitored exclusively using the remote method for the past four years will be monitored in-person this year.





THE MINNESOTA LAND TRUST STEWARDSHIP TEAM WELCOMES LAUREN NELSON IN 2023!

Lauren is from Minnesota and grew up catching tadpoles and tracking deer in her backyard in Ham Lake. She attended the University of Minnesota where she gained experience controlling the spread of buckthorn, herding cattle for targeted grazing in oak savannas, and treating ash trees for emerald ash borer.

Prior to joining the Minnesota Land Trust, Lauren was a forester in Pine County, working with landowners to manage forested land to promote wildlife habitat and preserve soil and water quality. Outside of work you can find her coaching softball, working on a sewing project, or exploring local parks!

STAFF
UPDATE

2023 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Matt Bredesen

Successful qualities of a Volunteer Monitor for the Minnesota Land Trust include good interpersonal skills, a keen eye for detail, and a willingness to go off the beaten path from time to time. Matt Bredesen possesses these qualities in spades and typifies the best of our dedicated volunteer corps.

An attorney by profession, Matt has relished the opportunity to get out from behind the desk and help steward 41 Protected Properties in 5 different counties across the state since 2014 and is equally comfortable monitoring in suburban Hennepin County or rural Carlton County.

When the Land Trust needed a volunteer monitor a large, 7-property complex totaling over 700 acres of remote

Shalesa Johnson Stewardship
Coordinator, and Volunteer
Monitor Matt Bredesen
with wife Deb.

forestlands, Matt took the challenge head on without batting an eye. In 9 years as a Volunteer Monitor, Matt has covered over 3,300 acres of Protected Properties in Minnesota.

The gift of time is priceless, so we were grateful to honor Matt at the 2023 Treasured Places event this past fall. Thank you again to Matt, and to all volunteer monitors who work hard statewide to preserve Minnesota's important scenic and natural places!



• STEWARDSHIP AND CONSERVATION BY THE NUMBERS •

166,000

METRIC TONS
OF STORED
CARBON
OFFSETTING
ANNUAL CARBON
EMISSIONS



135,400
CARS EQUIVALENT



495 TOTAL MILES
OF SHORELINE
PROTECTED

100

VOLUNTEER MONITORS

TOTAL ACRES
PROTECTED

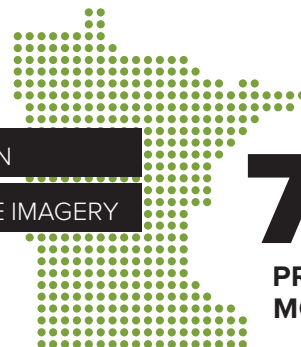
79,421

7,447

TOTAL ACRES
RESTORED

70% IN PERSON

30% SATELLITE IMAGERY



724

PROPERTIES
MONITORED
IN 2023



MINNESOTA LAND TRUST

2356 UNIVERSITY AVENUE W.
SUITE 240
ST. PAUL, MN 55114
651-647-9590 1-877-MLT-LAND
MNLAND.ORG

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



ROSLYNN LONG

Treasured Places

Treasured Places is an annual celebration of Minnesota's places and faces of conservation. The event takes place at a different location in Minnesota each year.

Information about Treasured Places 2024 is coming soon. Sign up for e-news to make sure you don't miss any updates, mnland.org/news.

You can also visit mnland.org/treasured-places for event information.

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

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Sharing Our Values

The Minnesota Land Trust believes that diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) is essential to our mission and values and is committed to embodying the values of DEIJ in all its work, that means by learning, implementing, modeling, and leading a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just conservation community to ensure that nature thrives in Minnesota for everyone, forever. To learn more about our values and vision, go to mnland.org/.

Let's Connect

Get email updates from the Minnesota Land Trust and follow us on social media to learn about our protection, restoration, and nature engagement projects, events, and other outdoor and conservation news from around the state. Go to mnland.org/enews to sign up or scan the QR code with your smart phone.

