



CLEAR THINKING

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NOVEMBER 2017

Bringing the Mission to Life

ISSUE No. 15

The Fall leaf colors and cold winds signal an end to 2017. But what a year it's been as the Conservancy made steady progress on our mission to "**preserve, protect, and manage** the natural environment within the watershed and township for future generations". We are thankful for the enthusiastic support of the Clear Lake Township community as we work together to steward our priceless natural beauty through projects, property management and education.

We are impressed with this community's deep interest in learning about the Conservancy's work. To foster this interest, we've created a new Board Committee focused on education. New trustees Katy Hoehn and Sarah Wilson, along with community member Laurie Sellers, will help plan the Knee-high program for youngsters and help create ways to resurrect "Neck-high" programs for the rest of us. Bridget, Laurie, Katy, Sarah or any Board member would love to hear your ideas and suggestions for interesting topics.

Preservation drives our work at Brennan Woods / Clear Lake Nature Preserve (CLNP). Inside is a map of the trail plan and descriptions of the diverse environments nestled so near Clear Lake in CLNP. We'll tie preservation with education in 2018 when the Fremont Schools send over 80 8th grade students to Clear Lake next spring to learn about the CLNP diversity and then engage in hands on community service by clearing trails with Conservancy volunteers. Wooden steps and boardwalks over wetlands will also be constructed in CLNP next summer. You can experience preservation firsthand at CLNP with a hike or by volunteering in 2018.

Protecting the Kasota Island Shoreline is a major Conservancy project we talk about regularly. Good news! We have secured full funding for Phase II of this 3 phase project. Over the winter, work begins to strengthen the Shoreline with glacial rocks and native plantings that will keep sand and rocks in place to reduce erosion from relentless boat waves and natural winds.

We need your help. Kasota Island will look different in 2018. **Don't be surprised next spring when you see snow fencing around Kasota. This fencing is temporary for 2018 but is vitally necessary to get the plantings well established so we don't have to repeat the project anytime soon.** There will still be access points to the Island. You can help explain the project to your guests and neighbors who wonder what's happening at Kasota. Be part of the Education team! Updates are posted regularly on the website and Facebook.

Gratitude and generosity are part of the Clear Lake community spirit. Your gifts, donations and volunteer work bring the Conservancy's mission to life. There are many ways to contribute and we highlight them on the back page. We also enclose an envelope. We value your support for the Conservancy as part of your year-end giving and throughout the year.

As we close 2017, this Ojibwe thank-you (miigwech) prayer captures our Thanksgiving spirit and the Conservancy's commitment to our natural environment and future generations.

"We offer our prayers....and our hearts.

Thank you for the Grandfathers and Grandmothers of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Thank you spirits of the winds, water, fire, and earth.

Thank you spirits of the north, east, south, and west.

Please help us to live a good life."

Source: Beth Dooley, [In Winter's Kitchen](#) (Milkweed Editions, 2015, p. 241).

Clear Lake is such a big part of our "good life". Our best wishes to you and your loved ones for the holidays and the New Year.

Nancy & Bridget

The mission of the Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy is to preserve, protect, and manage the natural environment within the watershed and township for future generations.

Water Quality

The Water Quality Committee and volunteers have been collecting water sampling data from the lake and the four ditches that drain into the lake for most of CTLC's existence. In prior issues of *Clear Thinking* (visit ClearLakeConservancy.org to review), we covered which parameters we test for on the ditches and in the lake and why. Just as importantly, we discussed actions to take or avoid to help protect and improve the water quality of Clear Lake.

September's sunny days treated Clear Lake Township residents and visitors to spectacular stretches of smiling, happy sunflowers. Most of us found it hard not to smile back! In addition to pure appreciation of beauty, we have another reason to smile. The sunflowers were planted as a **cover crop** by Township farmers to combat erosion and enrich soils in the Clear Lake Watershed.

Conservancy Board member Paul Crawford and Township farmer confirms the increasing popularity of using sunflowers as a cover crop in sustainable agriculture practices. Moody & Crew Farms and Ridenour Farms planted several sunflower fields in the Township in 2017, including one on Buck Point Drive between Outer Drive and Indiana 120. While the "flower show" graced September with phototropic heads that "follow the sun", the crop harvest takes place in November after the heads droop.

Sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus L.*) are native to North America, with about 3 million acres grown in the U.S. each year. In addition to making us smile, sunflowers are produced to make sunflower oil, as birdseed, as snack food or as silage for livestock, swine or chickens. Crawford notes that the Township sunflowers are used as birdseed.

What's the connection to Water Quality? Cover crops prevent soil erosion between major crop seasons, reducing the amount of sediments flowing into Clear Lake. Cover crops also increase organic matter in the soil, recycle nutrients, fix atmospheric nitrogen, reduce soil compaction and improve water infiltration. Some cover crops increase pollinators and attract beneficial insects, possibly reducing insecticide applications. All of these traits have positive impacts for water quality.

The Conservancy applauds our Township farm neighbors for their commitment to sustainable farming practices that benefit the water quality of Clear Lake. We also are grateful for the smiles their sunflowers brought us in 2017.

Sources: "Alternative Field Crops Manual", University of Minnesota and University of Wisconsin Agronomy Departments (1990); Robert L. Myers, "Advantages of Sunflowers", jeffersoninstitute.org, revised 10/2002; Abbey Wick, "Cover Crops with Sunflowers", agweek.com, 8/20/2017.



Natural Area Preservation & Environmental Education

The Clear Lake Nature Preserve (CLNP) is our largest Conservancy property at 45 acres and is also our most environmentally diverse with five different ecosystems represented. The soon-to-be developed trail in Brennan Woods at CNLP will offer almost a mile of hiking with beautiful views of these different ecosystems.

Here's a guide to what you see as you enjoy this Conservancy property. On the map, you'll note distinct ecosystems at markers 2 (fen), 3 (open oak woodlands) and 6 (oak savanna). The wetland is at marker 5 (boardwalk) and a remnant prairie is just west of the parking area. First, let's define several terms you'll experience as you hike CLNP—

Ecosystem: A biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment.

Continued, top right.

Continued from bottom left.

Fen: Rare wetland landscape in Indiana sometimes referred to as "wet prairie". Located on a slope and characterized by a continuous flow of cool groundwater in and through the landscape. The result is a lush, diverse collection of prairie plants and a springy surface resulting from built-up peat.

Open Oak Woodlands: Woodlands are marked by greater tree cover (than savanna or prairies but less than a forest) and have a fairly open understory with sufficient light to support a diverse plant population at the ground level.

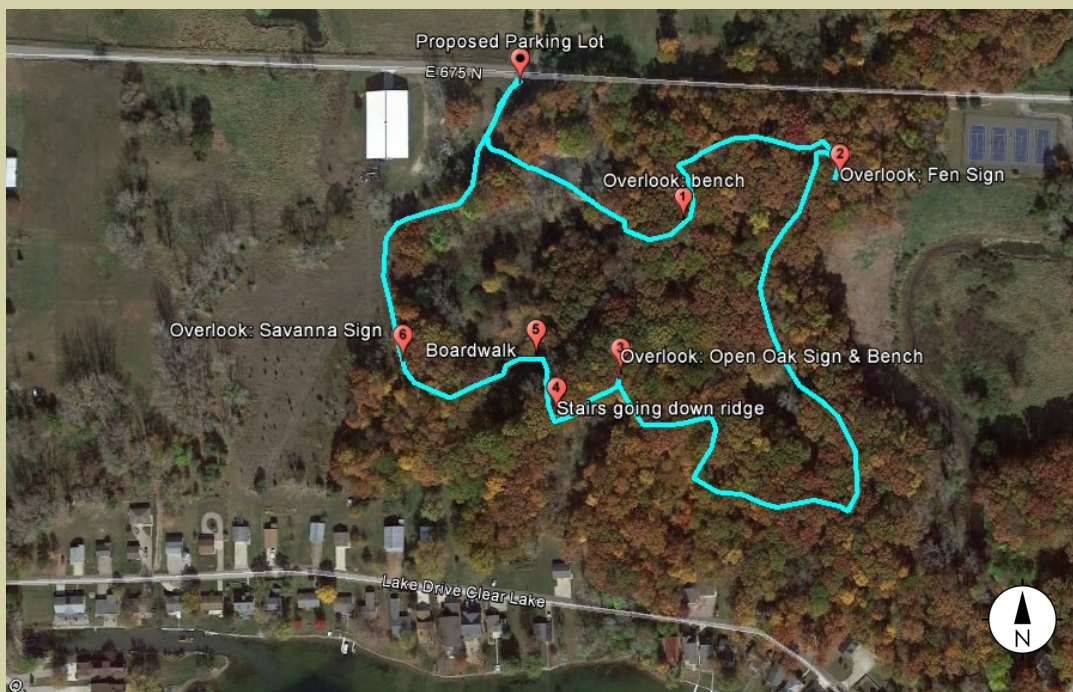
Wetland: An area of land that is saturated with water, either permanently or seasonally.

Oak Savanna: Park-like open area characterized as being dominated by grass cover with widely spaced trees.

Prairie: A tract of grassland, especially a large area of level or rolling land in the Mississippi River valley that in its natural uncultivated state usually has deep fertile soil, a cover of tall coarse grasses, and few trees.

We are fortunate to be able to experience and identify this concentration of environmental diversity right here in Clear Lake Township. Identify nature's many displays on your next hike in Brennan Woods at CLNP. Enjoy a solo hike or watch the Conservancy website or Facebook page for periodic guided hikes led by Executive Director Bridget Harrison.

Sources: Article by Nate Simons of Blue Heron Ministries on fens in the Summer 2017 *Acres Quarterly*; Restoration of Midwestern Oak Woodlands and Savannas, Daniel C. Dye and John Kabrick, US Dept of Agriculture Forest Service; Merriam-Webster Dictionary.



THANK YOU TO OUR RECENT DONORS!*

Edward Roethel
Bob & Nancy Webster

Kasota Island Restoration Project Support:

Paul Crawford
Tony & Beth Gay
Kent Herber
Kevin Herber
Michael Kellermeier
Laurie & Ron Sellers
Marty & Julie Zachrich

Memorials:

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From Chris Slee Family &
Mike & Carol Slee

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From Don & Sandy Ayres
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& Marti, John & Michele, Tim &
Gina

In-kind Support:
Tom Schmidt

*List reflects contributions received after our Sept.
Clear Thinking. We make every effort to be as accurate
as possible, please contact us if you see a mistake.

To get involved or support:

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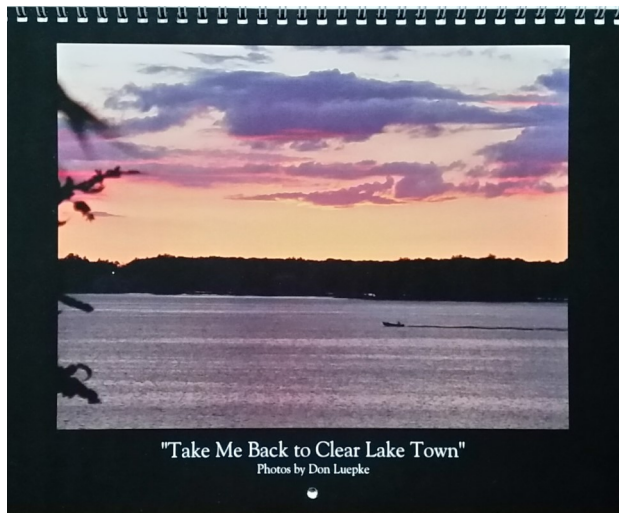
SEVEN WAYS TO SUPPORT CLTLC

- 1) Unrestricted donation;
- 2) Honor gifts for weddings, birthdays, anniversaries and births;
- 3) Sustaining gifts to CLTLC Operating fund at the Steuben County Community Foundation;
- 4) Sustaining gifts to CLTLC Maintenance fund at the Steuben County Community Foundation;
- 5) Memorial bequests for Clear Lake community members;
- 6) Gifts to specific projects such as education, dredging, land acquisition;
- 7) Include CLTLC as a beneficiary in your will or trust.

Contact us for more information on how you can support CLTLC. The success of the Conservancy depends on the tax-deductible contributions of individuals and the community.

2018 Clear Lake Calendar

We only have a few calendars left! A portion of the proceeds will be donated to support the Conservancy. We have copies at the Town Hall or you may reach out to Don Luepke directly at donluepke@juno.com or call 260 495-1253. You will enjoy Don's wonderful photography through all seasons next year. The cost is \$20 with a dollar discount per calendar if multiple copies are purchased. They make great gifts!





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*Thank you to everyone that
voted in the "Land is my..."
video contest. The winning
video will be announced in
December by the Land Trust
Alliance. Congratulations to
Grant Korte for placing in
the top ten!*

Email info@clearlakeconservancy.org to receive this in your email.