



Geneva Lake Conservancy **Connections**

Spring 2022

Preserve and advocate for Walworth County waterways, natural areas, and working lands

CONSERVANCY RECEIVES 12.5 ACRE LAKE COMO LAND DONATION

Geneva Lake Conservancy announced that it recently accepted the donation of a 12.5-acre parcel of woodland near Lake Como. The property was donated by Cheryl Gibisch and her brother Robert Johnson, whose family owned the property for almost 80 years and had left it almost entirely untouched. It will be named Cimeley Woods Preserve after their grandparents Walter and Myrtle Cimeley.

The new preserve is a mixed hardwood forest, home to forest interior birds, deer, wild turkeys, and other mammals. The addition of this property will contribute to the Conservancy's mission to protect and advocate for the natural areas, waterways and working lands of Walworth County.

"The protected forest will provide habitat for a variety of wildlife and filter carbon from the atmosphere to slow climate change," said Karen Yancey, GLC Executive Director. "We are deeply grateful to the donors because if this property had been sold for development it would have created substantial soil erosion that would have been detrimental to Lake Como as well as degraded an important wildlife habitat."

The property is located near the GLC's Hermansen Woods preserve, a 15-acre property that was donated to the Conservancy in 2000 by Allen Hermansen. The Conservancy plans to talk to the neighboring property owners urging them to protect the forests on their property to create a wildlife corridor between Cimeley Woods Preserve and Hermansen Woods.



The view from Kelly Road of Cimeley Woods Preserve.

The lack of disturbance to the soil also means that Cimeley Woods Preserve is an especially important woodland. Very few invasive species are visible in the forest, allowing the mature oaks and silver maples to grow without competition. When a native tree thrives in this way, it enhances the biodiversity and environmental quality of an area.

"Our ability to protect the ecosystem of one area increases with every additional landowner who is willing to protect their property and restore it to ecological health," said Yancey. "We have several land protection tools available, including land donations, conservation easements and having land certified as a Conservation@Home property."

The property will remain closed to hikers as a wildlife preserve, with public access only by guided tour. To learn more about opportunities to tour the preserve, visit the Conservancy's website or email outreach@genevalakeconservancy.org.

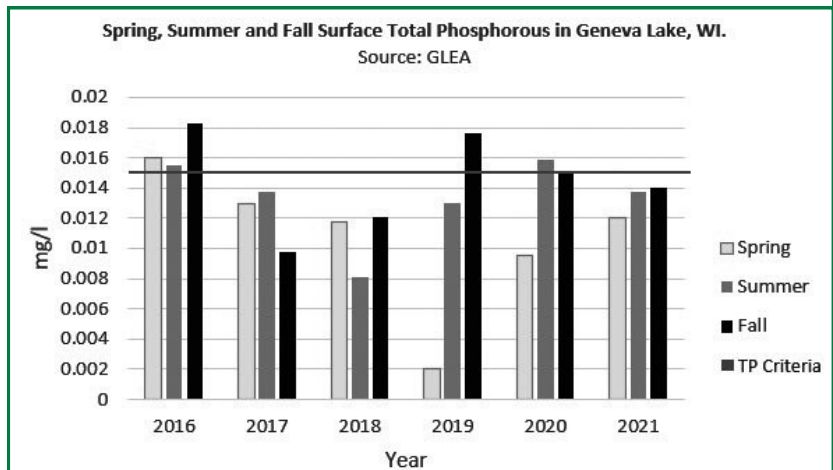
WATER ALLIANCE REPORTS PROGRESS IN ADDRESSING WATER QUALITY ISSUES

The Water Alliance for Preserving Geneva Lake has reported some important results in the last few months.

“We are pleased to have so many organizations moving forward to preserve the health of Geneva Lake. Continued development, climate change, and increased recreational use impact the Lake’s water quality,” said Tom Nickols, co-chair of the Alliance and Vice-Chair of the Geneva Lake Conservancy, which is leading the Water Alliance’s effort.

These results include:

- Obtaining a \$25,000 Surface Water grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to update the Geneva Lake Management Plan.
- Working with the Odling Gravel Pit in Williams Bay to conduct remedial action to stop the flow of gravel and sediment from the property into the Lake.



This chart shows that Geneva Lake phosphorus levels are frequently exceeding the state standards (TP Criteria). Excessive phosphorus can lead to algae blooms and can harm water quality and aquatic life.

- Covering the costs for two additional farmers in the Geneva Lake watershed to plant cover crops, which reduces agricultural runoff into the Lake.
- Completing tests of approximately 15 of the 50 tributaries that flow into Geneva Lake to identify those with high phosphorus runoff and develop plans to mitigate the pollution.
- Working with the DNR Healthy Lakes program to plant more than 14 buffer strips and rain gardens along the Lake to filter phosphorus and other pollutants and obtaining funding to plant an additional 20 gardens.
- Completing an experimental season of the CD3 vacuum equipment at area boat launches to remove invasive species such as Starry Stonewort from boats entering and exiting the Lake.
- Obtaining and implementing a DNR Clean Boats, Clean Waters grant to fund the cost of summer employees at boat launches to educate boaters on the importance of removing invasive species from their boats.

The Water Alliance also encourages local property owners to avoid using fertilizers or chemicals, which can encourage the growth of algae that make the lake unhealthy. Planting oaks and other native trees, shrubs and plants along the shore can help prevent soil erosion and phosphorus runoff.

The Water Alliance was formed in 2019 and is led by the Conservancy and representatives from the Geneva Lake Association, Geneva Lake Environmental Agency, Walworth County Conservation Office, WDNR, Southeast Wisconsin Regional Plan Commission, Villages of Williams Bay and Fontana, City of Lake Geneva, Town of Linn, University of Whitewater and other organizations and individuals.

ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE. – PURCHASE A COMPLETE GARDEN

Pick up in time for Mother's Day on May 8.

How does your garden grow? If you want a garden that will fill your senses with colors and smells year after year, consider planting native perennials. Not only will they come up each year, you will be providing the birds, butterflies and a host of other pollinators with foods they need to survive.

Each year the Geneva Lake Conservancy offers a collection of popular natives at a great price. As part of the Conservation@Home program, we want to help promote bird and pollinator-friendly yards by offering WILDFLOWER GARDEN KITS that include a selection of five native wildflowers to plant in your yard, and come in a decorative basket.

You don't need a dedicated wildflower garden or large area to be successful in attracting and feeding a variety of songbirds, butterflies, bees and other beneficial pollinators. You can create spaces for eco-friendly plants around your house or among your favorite annuals. These plants are seasonal and many are tall, so they can fill in early spring bare spots or add height and color to the back of your annual garden. **All of these native plants need full or partial sun. Each plant will be a healthy 2 - 3 inches tall and ready to plant. Instructions will be included.**



Plant kits from GLC's 2021 Native Plant Sale all lined up in their decorative baskets and ready for pick up before Mother's Day.

NATIVE PLANT SALE ORDER FORM

_____ **KIT 1**—\$15 includes one of each: Wild Columbine, New England Aster, Pale Purple Coneflower, Wild Bergamot, Black-Eyed Susan.

_____ **KIT 2**—\$15 includes one of each: Prairie Coreopsis, Wild Geranium, Smooth Penstemon, Golden Alexander, Purple Prairie Clover.

_____ **KIT 3**—\$15 **for butterflies** includes one Common Milkweed, two Butterfly Weed, and two Swamp (Rose) Milkweed.

_____ **KIT 4**—\$15 **new this year: deer resistant** includes one of each: Nodding Onion, Butterfly Weed, Spotted Joe Pye Weed, Wild Bergamot, Smooth Penstemon.

_____ **KIT 5**—\$15 **new this year: deer resistant** includes one of each: Wild Columbine, Wild Geranium, Cardinal Flower, Tussock Sedge, Prairie Dropseed.

_____ **KIT 6**—\$200 **SUNNY RAIN GARDEN** kit that covers 75-125 square feet and includes 64 plants.

_____ **KIT 7**—\$200 **PARTIAL SHADE RAIN GARDEN** kit that covers 75-125 square feet and includes 64 plants.

_____ **TOTAL COST** Pick up will be on May 5 and 6, or by appointment. Return this form to GLC, 398 Mill Street, PO Box 588, Fontana WI 53125. You can also order online and find more information via the Conservancy website, www.genvevalakeconservancy.org.

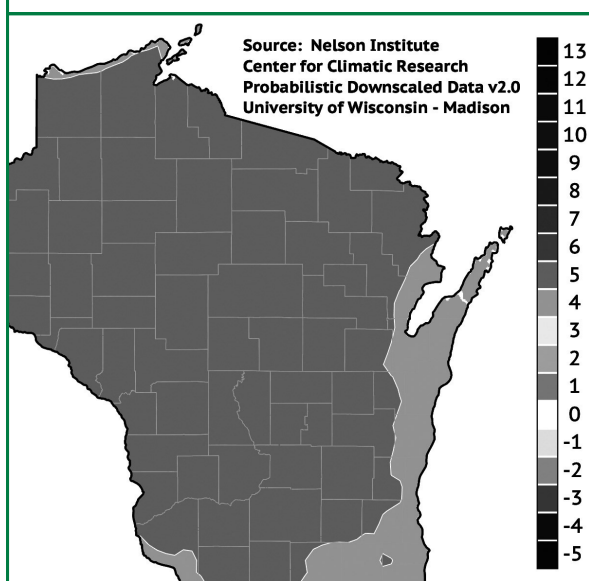
CONSERVANCY LEADS CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVE

Climate change is negatively affecting our land and lakes and will continue to impact Walworth County in the decades ahead.

With a mission of protecting the county's lakes and lands, the Conservancy's board of directors reviewed a new strategic initiative in early 2022 calling for the board and staff to lead programs that mitigate the negative impacts of our warming climate.

A new report by the Nelson Institute for Climate Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison documents that statewide annual temperature averages have increased about three degrees Fahrenheit since 1950. The last two decades have been the warmest on record with rain and snow increasing 20 percent in most areas of Wisconsin.

As the below graph demonstrates, temperatures are expected to rise another three degrees Fahrenheit over the next three decades in Wisconsin, and public and private organizations as well as individuals are seeking ways to mitigate the impact of these changes on our environment.



Expected change in temperature by the mid-21st Century, as projected by the Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts. Southern Wisconsin's temperature is expected to increase between two and five degrees by 2050.

“It is not our imagination that extreme weather, in general, is getting more pronounced and that the price tag for extreme events is rising,” said Steve Vavrus, Nelson Institute Senior Scientist. The report predicts that the number of these extreme weather events will continue to rise.

Warmer temperatures and changing precipitation are also decreasing water quality and changing aquatic ecosystems, according to the Nelson Institute report. Cool and cold-water fish are particularly at risk.

Many of these climate change impacts are already being felt in Walworth County as extreme storms cause a runoff of excess pollutants into our lakes. Phosphorus levels in most Walworth County lakes continue to rise and combined with rising temperatures increase the risk of algae blooms.

The Conservancy, as well as other organizations and landowners, is working to restore the county's forests by removing invasive species to make them more climate resilient while also improving the forest's habitat for declining bird populations.

The Conservancy has and will continue to take the lead in addressing local climate change impacts by:

- Leading the Water Alliance for Preserving Geneva Lake, which is working to slow polluted runoff into our lake, particularly during extreme storms, by proposing and implementing projects to slow stormwater runoff, planting buffer strips along the lakeshore to absorb pollutants, stopping sediment runoff from gravel pits and other sources and identifying and making recommendations to prevent pollutants from entering the lake from its tributaries. The Alliance is also beginning to work with other Walworth County lakes that have asked for assistance in managing the impacts of climate change.

- Protecting open lands to contribute to the federal 30 x 30 Plan to protect 30 percent of the United States as open land by 2030. Plants and soils together are estimated to absorb 30 percent of the carbon dioxide emitted by human actions each year. In the last five years, the Conservancy has protected an additional 1,000 acres of open land, including forests, wetlands and organic farmland that continue to absorb carbon from the atmosphere and contributes to state and local open land protection goals.
- Planting hundreds of oak trees throughout the County, including a new oak savanna at White River County Park. Oak trees sequester more carbon than any other tree in North America and provide habitat for more than 500 species, including many threatened bird species.
- Conducting almost 100 Conservation@Home visits with private landowners to educate and encourage them to plant more native trees and plants to provide wildlife habitat and better filter stormwater.
- Stewarding its 2,500 acres of open land protected by conservation easements by encouraging landowners to remove invasive species and plant native species to make their land more resilient to climate change and to better sequester carbon.



GLC staff Maddie Olivieri (left), Kiera Theys (center), and ecologist Andrea Weissgerber from Eco-Resource Consulting met to discuss the Management Plan and climate resiliency at Bromley Woods.

“The Conservancy will continue to build on these climate change initiatives in the years ahead as well as educate our members and the public on other ways to slow climate change through renewable energy sources and decrease in fossil fuel use,” said Kevin Brunner, Conservancy Chair. “We have a duty to preserve the extraordinary beauty and natural resources of Walworth County for future generations and to contribute to state, national and global efforts to slow climate change.”

HOW YOU CAN HELP SLOW CLIMATE CHANGE

To help slow climate change, the Conservancy recommends that individuals, families and businesses adopt the following conservation practices:

- Support efforts to protect open lands.
- Email or call legislators to voice support for conservation policies.
- Plant native pollinator plants and other native plants for wildlife.
- Filter water runoff from your property by planting a rain garden.
- Plant additional native trees (oaks, sugar and silver maples, hickory) on your property.
- Minimize or eliminate the use of fertilizers and chemicals.
- Drive a hybrid or electric car to minimize or eliminate the use of fossil fuels.
- Switch your sources of electricity for home and business to renewable energy options offered by a utility or install solar panels.
- Choose locally sourced and organic food, and consume less meat.
- Avoid purchasing plastic products or products with plastic containers.
- Recycle aluminum, paper, and plastics.

A FAREWELL TO BEV ZABLER

The Conservancy lost a great friend and supporter when Bev Zabler died of cancer on January 7.

Bev grew up in Milwaukee and earned her Ph.D. in nursing science from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1992. She was a nurse and teacher for many years and received Professor Emeritus status when she retired from her teaching position at University of



The lupines in bloom at Wallace E. Zabler Preserve.



Bev and Howard pictured on a warm spring day.

Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 2019. Bev not only healed people—working with her husband, Howard, they restored his family’s farm in Rochester as a conservation farm and donated 61 acres of the farm to the Geneva Lake Conservancy in 2020. They named the donated property the Wallace E. Zabler Nature Preserve after Howard’s father.

Bev was a smart, kind and generous woman and will be missed by the Conservancy board and staff. Howard and Bev received the Conservancy’s Conservation Leadership Award in 2021. A memorial bench will be added to the Wallace E. Zabler preserve this summer in a place where Bev loved to view the lupines that bloom in the prairie each June.

The Conservancy extends its deepest sympathy to Bev’s family and friends.

CELEBRATE EARTH DAY BY PLANTING SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

On Friday, April 22 the Conservancy plans to celebrate Earth Day with various volunteer and community activities. This Earth Day, we encourage you to give back to our planet and sow seeds (or plant plugs!) for the future.

To participate, you can join us for either volunteer activity on Earth Day, from 9am to 2pm:

- Drop in at any time to remove invasive honeysuckle from Bromley Woods in LaGrange Township.
- Join volunteers caravanning through the county to plant



GLC Staff and volunteers met up at Stevens Family Land Trust to plant native wildflowers for Earth Day 2021.

native wildflowers at four nature preserves.

We also encourage parents to have their children enter our second Annual Earth Day Art Contest. Find the Earth Day poem on our website in both English and Spanish, read it with your child, and encourage them to draw whatever comes to mind as you reflect on the importance of nature.

You can find more information on each activity at www.genevalakeconservancy.org, or call us at 262-275-5700.

Yo soy la Tierra
Y la Tierra soy yo.
Cada hoja de hierba,
Cada arbol de miel,
Cada pedazo de lodo,
Y palo y piedra
Es sangre y musculo,
Piel y hueso.

Y así como yo
Requiero cada pieza
De me para hacer
Que mi cuerpo encajese,
Así requiere la Tierra
El cespel y la piedra y el arbol
Y las cosas que crecen aquí
Naturalmente.

Por eso
Celebramos ese día.
Por eso a través
Del mundo decimos:
Tan largo como vida
Como querido, como libre,
Yo soy la Tierra,
Y la Tierra soy yo.



One of the winning photographs of the 2021 Earth Day Art Contest, submitted by a 3rd grader at Darien Elementary.

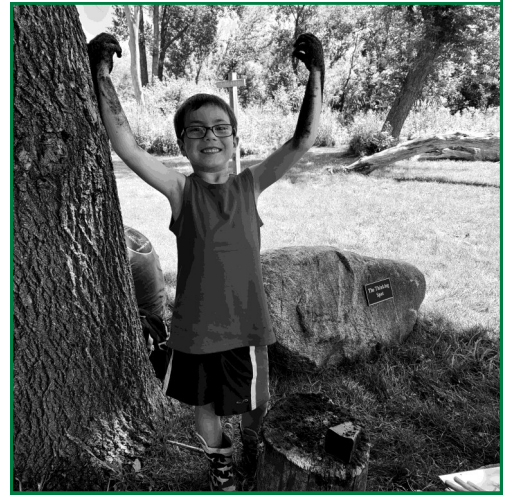
HELEN ROHNER CHILDREN'S FISHING PARK: OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES TO KICK OFF MID-JUNE

Outdoor activities at Helen Rohner Children's Fishing Park will resume this summer, starting the week of June 11th. Join us Tuesdays for Fishing Lessons, Wednesdays for Story Time, and Fridays for Nature Classes.

Last year, children learned about the environment through various classes. They went on bug scavenger hunts & learned how even the smallest creatures are important to our ecosystem; they identified milkweed plants and searched for monarch eggs; and they learned that beauty is anywhere that you look for it – even in the mud! We invite your children to join us for another summer of educational outdoor activities.

Registration is required for fishing lessons and nature classes: you can register through our Website starting April 15th. All classes are free of charge, and open to the public.

"If environmental groups wish to pass on the heritage of their movement, and the ongoing care of the earth, they cannot ignore children's need to explore, to get their hands dirty and their feet wet." -Richard Louv, author of Last Child in the Woods



Oliver Thompson, 7, strikes a pose during GLC's 2021 Mud Art Nature Class.

MARY CONSTABLE JOINS CONSERVANCY BOARD



The board welcomed Mary at their December meeting.

Mary Constable joined the board of the Conservancy in December. She graduated from University of Wisconsin with a bachelor's degree in marketing and was fortunate to study abroad in England and travel Europe. Using her marketing expertise, Mary started a company, Atlas Design, shortly after she moved to Chicago. With Universal Studios, Chicago Public Schools, and a number of properties in Chicago as clients, she grew and oversaw her company for 25 years.

Mary and her life partner, Dr. Glenn Aldinger, purchased their Fontana home in 2005. Glenn is a Board member of Country Club Estates (CCE) and is working with the Conservancy to preserve land owned by CCE and address invasive species. Mary's love of nature is fostered in her hobbies which include photography, boating, skiing, mountain climbing, and beekeeping. She is also a trained yoga instructor.

As an avid photographer, Mary has taken multiple photo trips to Cuba, South America, Asia, and Africa. She is active in many local and regional organizations, and she is looking forward to supporting the Conservancy's goals.



Mary attended a work-day at Bromley Woods on March 4. The GLC would like to thank all volunteers who assisted with our efforts to remove invasive honeysuckle and improve the ecological health of the oak savanna.



Geneva Lake Conservancy

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Our mission is to preserve and advocate for Walworth County waterways, natural areas and working lands.



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GENEVA LAKE CONSERVANCY AND
YERKES OBSERVATORY PRESENT



RSVP BY 04/29/22
Registration online only at
www.GenevaLakeConservancy.org.
For assistance please call
262-275-5700.

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FRIDAY MAY 6 | 4 PM & 7 PM | \$50/PERSON

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