



Geneva Lake Conservancy Connections

Protecting the environmental character of the Geneva Lakes area

Fall 2015

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Chair

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“A String of Pearls”

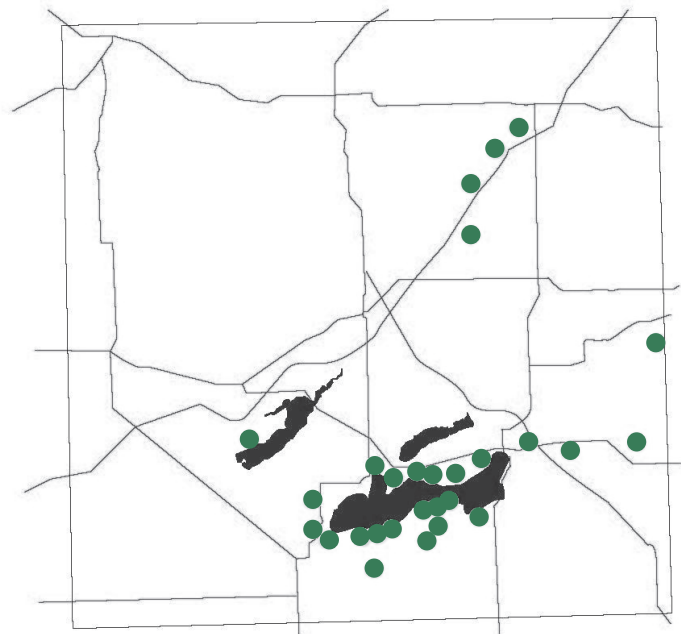
The phrase “a string of pearls” means different things to people.

It can bring up images of fine jewelry or the song by Glenn Miller and His Orchestra from the big band era. In the conservation area, a string of pearls refers to protected properties and the areas between the properties.

The Geneva Lake Conservancy is proud to have 28 pearls, our conservation easements. We also have three fee-owned properties, which also are pearls. Our mission to protect the environmental character of the Geneva lakes area is furthered by these easements, and our goal is to continue to increase easements in Walworth County.

Below is a map of Walworth County, and on the map are our 28 easements, pearls totaling 1,958 acres that are protected forever. Our newest pearl is Colman Woods, a 28-acre wooded parcel that has been lovingly restored. Another pearl is Hermansen Woods, a 15-acre treasure on South Como Road just north of Highway 50. Turn to page 2 to learn more about Hermansen Woods.

To learn more about conservation easements, look on our Web site where there is an educational piece on conservation easements and a link to a YouTube video that explains why a property owner may want to place a conservation easement on his or her property.



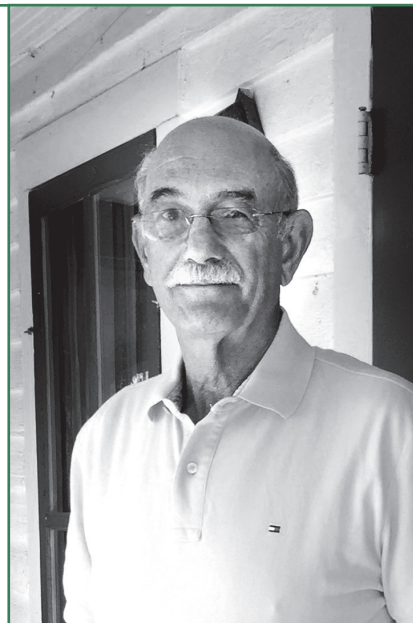
Dennis Jordan New GLC Chair

Longtime GLC supporter and board member Dennis Jordan was named chairman of the Conservancy at the August annual meeting.

He brings to GLC his vast managerial experience and passion for protecting the environment through conservation easements. He has served on GLC's Land Protection and Finance committees.

Jordan, who retired this spring, was the City of Lake Geneva administrator from 2003-15. Prior to that he was city administrator for Bozeman, Montana.

A Waukegan, Illinois, native, he attended Southern Illinois University in Carbondale and received a B.A. in government with a minor in history. With over 30 years in city planning, GLC is pleased to have his expertise available as the organization continues to grow.

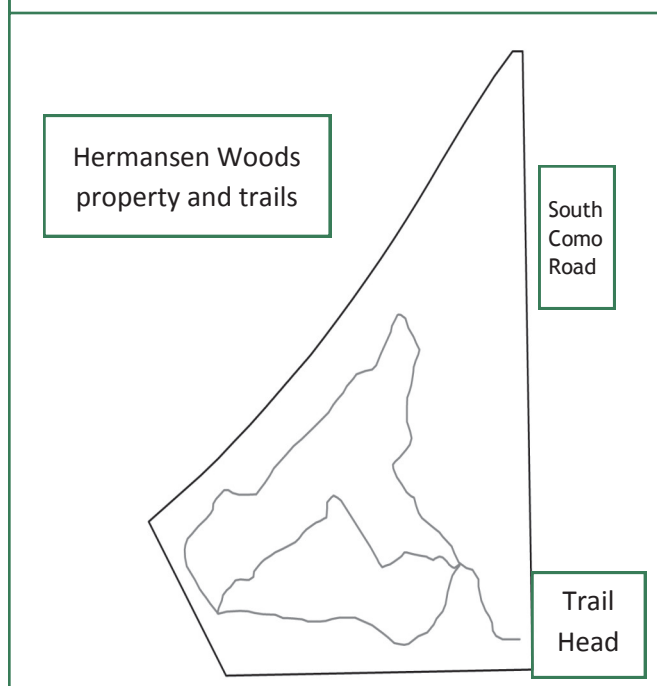


Hermansen Woods, One of GLC's "Pearls"

"Hermansen Woods is a hidden treasure. It's located about half way down Como Road (where Pesche's is located), north of 50. This woods is part of the Geneva Lake Conservancy and offers heavily wooded trails that have been creatively organized into three separate trails that wind through a hilly wood. All trails start and end at the same spot and are outlined with tree rails so you can't veer off the path." (This is from BestofLakeGeneva.com.)

Hermansen Woods, 15 acres of rolling hills and maple trees, was donated to the Geneva Lake Conservancy in 2000 by Al Hermansen. When walking through the property you feel as if civilization is miles away.

"In the autumn, the maple trees in the woods are in their peak. As the sunlight gleams through the golden leaves, it sheds a gold aura throughout the entire woods," wrote Lynn Ketterhagen, GLC's Manager of Land Protection and Operations, after a visit to woods.



Visit Hermansen Woods this fall, and enjoy GLC's hidden treasure!



Above, Hermansen Woods welcome sign at the trail head.

CONNECTIONS photo, by Jim Frost, is a red winged blackbird flying over a wet land at Kiswaukétoe.

White River County Park Update

In February 2014, the Geneva Lake Conservancy engaged with Walworth County government to support the opportunity to make the White River County Park a special natural area. This park, consisting of 195.5 acres with approximately 9,200 linear feet of shoreline along the White River, is located at the intersection of Short and Sheridan Springs roads in Lyons Township.

This support included developing a land-management plan for the woods, streams, and prairies that would guide the restoration of the property to its natural state and make the property more educational and desirable by the public. That plan document was completed this past March, and implementation is well under way.

Implementation of the plan is being realized through the efforts of County government and the new Friends of White River County Park. The facilitation of the formation of the Friends group was one of the initiatives we included in our proposal of support to the County. Since its inception last November, the Friends group has held work days and raised funds for park improvements.

The improvements wish list includes, among other things, phased prairie/grassland restoration, canoe launch, picnic shelter, barn renovations, and two wooden, arched bridges. The bridges represent a critical component of the improvement plan, as they provide access to the portion of the park located south of the river.

Shortly after formation, the Friends group received an offer to fund the construction of one of the bridges. The Conservancy, in support of the Friends, became the conduit for funding this project.

During the planning and bidding phase of the project, the donors decided to include both bridges. One is 50 feet long with two 30-foot approaches, and the other is 60 feet long with two 80-foot approaches.

The bridges will span the river at two locations identified in the County master plan. The design will provide clearance for canoes and kayaks to pass underneath, and minimal environmental impact will occur during construction.

A special thank you to the Wagner Foundation, the Wagner-Essman Foundation, and the O'Neill Foundation for their generosity in funding these great park improvements. Through efforts of the foundations – and the efforts of Walworth County to obtain required DNR permits – the completion of the bridges is anticipated prior to the end of this year.



Above is a photo of a bridge similar to the bridges being installed at White River County Park.

GLC Sustaining Sponsors

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Shoreland Zoning Update

We at the Geneva Lake Conservancy continue to be concerned about changes to State of Wisconsin shoreland zoning laws that set township zoning standards to a minimum level for all lakes statewide. These changes were included in the recently signed State 2015-17 budget bill.

The bill affects a number of existing shoreland zoning standards:

- * eliminates a township's ability to require the use of best practices during land disturbing and construction activities.
- * facilitates vegetation (trees and shrubs) removal within shoreyards.
- * loosens restrictions on what can be rebuilt or changed on structures close to the lake.
- * eliminates restrictions on lighting in shoreland areas.

While these apply only to townships, remember more than 60 percent of shoreland on Geneva Lake is township land and so is most of the shoreland on Delavan Lake, Lake Como, and the three Lauderdale lakes – Green, Middle, and Mill. We want to protect them all.

All of these changes have impacts on the waters of our area causing soil erosion and elimination of the natural shoreline beauty of Walworth County lakes. Reducing local control of shoreland construction will reduce checks and balances in regard to specific local situations.

We don't know all the ramifications of the law change, and are working with the Walworth County government to learn the specifics of how the law will be applied. We will communicate what we learn and watch for unintended consequences.

GLC 10.5 Mile Lake Path Walk

On Saturday, October 3, over 30 enthusiastic walkers gathered in Library Park, Lake Geneva, to walk 10.5 miles from Lake Geneva to Fontana along the north shore. It was a windy day, with gusts over 17 m.p.h., but the walkers were lucky to have the wind at their backs. The walk was led by personal trainer John Palmer, who, always smiling, greeted the walkers and met them along the way, offering encouragement and snacks. Join us next year on Saturday, October 1.



Geneva Dark Sky Initiative

The Geneva Lake Dark Sky Initiative is a broad-based community movement committed to raising awareness about light pollution in the Geneva Lake area. The Initiative is designed to educate about the adverse effects of light pollution and its simple solutions. Stars can be seen more vibrantly by implementing sustainable and intelligent light sources in the Geneva Lake area. For more information, visit GLDarkSky.org.

Colman Woods Walkabout, A Conservation Easement Learning Event

In early July, former Conservancy board chairman Charles Colman hosted *Colman Woods Walkabout* during which guests strolled among the uncommon variety of native botanicals and observed the natural characteristics of the woods. Guests then dined on farm-to-table fare and learned how a property's natural environmental characteristics can be preserved in perpetuity for the benefit of generations to come.

The 28-acre property has been in the Colman family since 1906 and was placed into a conservation easement with the GLC this year.

The evening began with tours of the restored woods. Restoration efforts have ensured that the invasive species would be kept at bay and native plants, such as jack-in-the-pulpits and trillium, once again would flourish.

Dinner was held in Colman's "man cave," an architecturally designed space that houses his boat collection, office, and guest quarters and where he pursues his work on the woods.

Attendees were able to learn more about the Colman's love of the property and their important easement decision by watching a short video. GLC shared "Conservation Easements", a booklet that describes the basics of conservation easement in layman terms. Both the video and booklet are accessible on the GLC website.

To conclude the evening, Shawn Graff, the executive director of the Ozaukee Washington Land Trust of West Bend, Wis., gave an overview of his organization's mission and drew parallels to the successes and challenges of our own GLC.

Colman Woods Walkabout is the second summer Walkabout held by GLC. The successful events have provided an enjoyable evening which enable GLC supporters to enjoy a natural restored landscape and hear a conservation speaker. 2014 *Stonebeigh Farm Walkabout* speaker was Peter Layton, owner of Tall Grass restoration, and President of the Chicago Wilderness Trust.

Stay tuned for details on the 2016 Walkabout!

To learn more visit:
<http://www.genevalakeconservancy.org/what-we-do/>



**Conservancy gratefully acknowledges a \$10,000 grant received from the
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to assist with organizational growth.**

Thank you to our Volunteers!

Kirsten Larsen • Jim Frost • Stephen Geldermann • Al Hermansen • Charlie Obligato
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GLC Celebrates Its “String of Pearls”

December 5 marks the annual Holly Ball, and the Conservancy will be celebrating our “String of Pearls,” our 28 conservation easements.

The Conservation Stewardship Award will be given to Christopher Mann, cofounder of Michael Fields Agricultural Institute in East Troy and an avid proponent of organic farming. Mr. Mann’s Nokomis Farms was placed in a conservation easement in 2000.

This 215-acre pearl represents a unique and forward-thinking easement. Written into the easement is the provision that the property continue to be farmed organically.

Inspired by Mr. Mann, the committee is planning a gala that celebrates protecting open spaces with a richness provided through texture and natural elements, such as birch and blue spruce.

Join us as the Holly Ball committee uses its youthful and creative energy to put on the grandest ball yet.

Holly Ball Principal Sponsor

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