



Press Release

Contact: Maddie Olivieri

Phone: 773-245-6856

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (All Walworth County)

January 11th, 2022

GENEVA LAKE CONSERVANCY RECEIVES 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 the Cimeley Woods Preserve and Hermansen Woods.

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 we work with 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 properties 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 property, visit the Conservancy's website or reach out to outreach@genevalakeconservancy.org.

The Geneva Lake Conservancy is an accredited land trust that has protected almost 3,000 acres of open land in Walworth County. Formed in 1977, it offers five public nature preserves for hiking and other recreational activities as well as other programs and educational activities for children and adults, including its Conservation@Home program. For more information, go to genevalakeconservancy.org.

-----end-----



The view from Kelly Road of Cimeley Woods Preserve, photographed during a walk with GLC staff and board members in October 2021.