



Press Release

Contact: Maddie Olivieri

Phone: 773-245-6856

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (All Walworth County)

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Geneva Lake Conservancy purchases 20 additional acres for Bromley Woods Preserve

Geneva Lake Conservancy purchased 20 acres of oak woodlands adjacent to its existing 40-acre Bromley Woods Nature Preserve on October 27.

The land was purchased from the Bromley family with a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Knowles Nelson Stewardship Fund and private donations.

The additional property will allow the Conservancy to create a trail around the preserve's 8-acre kettle pond and to protect oak and hickory trees that serve as important habitat for declining forest interior bird species as well as other wildlife.

"Oak woodlands are very efficient in absorbing carbon and are one of the landscapes we are seeking to protect in Walworth County because of their important role in slowing climate change," said Kevin Brunner, Conservancy chair.

The purchase brings the size of the Conservancy's Bromley Woods preserve to 60 acres. Because it is adjacent to the 22,000-acre Kettle Moraine State Park, Bromley Woods helps support the type of landscape-scale protected areas that scientists say are essential to stop the decline of biodiversity and to create large carbon sinks that can absorb the carbon dioxide created by fossil fuels.

The Conservancy will manage the oak woodlands to make them more climate resilient by removing invasive species, including buckthorn and honeysuckle that steal nutrients from the soil needed by the oak trees. Removing these invasive species will also help restore a healthy understory of native plants that are essential to wildlife.

"Bromley Woods is an excellent example of a Kettle Moraine landscape," said Brunner. Its kettles and moraines (ridges) were created by glaciers between 18,000 and 15,000 years ago. This environment

provides important habitat for several species of concern, including warblers, purple martins, and red-headed woodpeckers.

The 20 acres recently purchased by the GLC have been owned by the Bromley family since 1844. Under the federal government's Land Act of 1820, William and Martha declared their intent to homestead the land on January 6, 1844. They paid \$25.00 for the land and finished the required period of land occupancy on February 1, 1848. The federal government gave them full legal title by a document called a land patent.

"As we move forward in our efforts to protect open lands, Bromley Woods serves a dual role of providing several miles of excellent recreational trails for hiking and wildlife viewing while also protecting important conservation features essential to the ecological health of our region," Brunner said.

The Conservancy also has a contract with the Bromley Family to purchase an additional 23 acres of Bromley Woods on the south side of Greening Road in 2022. This will further increase the preserve size to 83 acres and provide a whole new trail system for hikers. The Conservancy has already received a Knowles Nelson grant to cover half of the cost and will begin raising the remaining funds from private donations later this year.

"We are grateful to our members and donors as well as the staff of the Knowles Nelson program for their support in completing this important land protection project," said Brunner. Brunner also recognized Rep. Amy Loudenbeck who helped obtain the Knowles Nelson grant approval needed by the Wisconsin State Legislature's Joint Finance Committee.



Mark Bromley, relative of William and Martha Bromley, poses in his family's woods.