



Door County Land Trust

LANDINGS

Journal of the
Door County Land Trust
Fall 2025, Vol. 28, Issue 2

Connecting You to Door County's Vital Lands & Waters



Our strategy for land protection

Honoring the land with a giving challenge

Prairie safeguards stream quality in Southern Door

Insider stories of stewardship



Door County Land Trust

Door County Land Trust protects the wild places, scenic beauty, and ecological integrity that make the peninsula and islands so special. The Land Trust is a local, member-supported, non-profit organization. It is thanks to members and donors that over 10,000 acres are now protected. Land Trust nature preserves, located throughout Door County, are open for hiking and other low-impact, non-motorized recreational activities—all at no charge to the public.



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On the Cover

By Tawnie Perkovich

From the photographer's perspective:

“Protecting and maintaining the native habitats here in Door County is one of the things I am most passionate about and a large part of that is the tedious but rewarding removal of invasive species. It was inspiring to see, and be along side, my fellow volunteers digging the invasive Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) out of the stubborn ground along the banks of the Ship Canal on a humid day in July.”

A Letter from the Executive Director

With another season flying by, I have been thinking a lot about time—and how little of it we seem to have when it comes to protecting the places we love. Development pressures are accelerating, and the funding landscape for conservation is growing increasingly uncertain. Grants we once relied on are shrinking or disappearing altogether, and every opportunity to protect land feels more urgent than the last.

At Door County Land Trust, land is not protected randomly. Our team works with intention. We are guided by science, biological data, and a strategic conservation plan. We identify priority areas—places that hold ecological, recreational, and community value—and we act swiftly when opportunities arise within them.

It is not always visible from the outside, but every decision we make is rooted in purpose—which you will read about on the following pages of this issue.

Our work is guided by a vision: a Door County where nature and community thrive together. We utilize ecological data, community input, and long-term planning to identify the places that matter most—not just for today, but for generations to come. When a chance to protect one of those places arises, we move quickly, because we know what's at stake. It's intentional, strategic, and deeply personal.

This kind of intention and personal belief is demonstrated by people like Rose Warner and her late husband David—a man whose life was deeply enriched by the natural beauty of Door County. Following his passing, his wife and two children have established a \$200,000 matching challenge gift to benefit Door County Land Trust.

The gift honors David's legacy while encouraging others to support the continued protection—and expansion—of the wild spaces he cherished. Read more about Rose & David Warner's story on page seven.

Thank you for being part of this community. I believe in our team, and I believe in you—our supporters, neighbors, and friends—who make this work possible.

Emily A. Wood
Executive Director



P.S. Do you know we have 15 free nature preserves in Door County? If you or someone you know needs a trail map, reach out and I will personally mail you one!

Congratulations to Emily for being a Lake Michigan Champion of Conservation!

Nominated by Meredith Coulson & awarded by Lake Michigan Stakeholders, a partner group of the Lakeshore Natural Resource Partnership

"As soon as I read the nomination criteria, I thought of Emily. Her humility, sense of humor, and bottomless passion for protecting natural beauty are contagious and have inspired me to fight harder to protect the incredible treasures we have here in Door County.

She has led the amazing team at DCLT in an unprecedented burst of land protection, helping DCLT surpass the milestone of 10,000 acres protected. Emily is also an avid angler, spending any free moment on the ice, in her boat on the bay, or wading the streams feeding Lake Michigan, giving her knowledge of and a connection to our Great Lakes that goes beyond her work. We need people like Emily to relentlessly fight for the protection of our sensitive lands and waters in Door County." —*Meredith Coulson*


Stony Creek Prairie

This narrow stretch in Southern Door was planted in row crops for years. The area contains a natural spring which feeds into Stony Creek, a Lake Michigan tributary. In addition to being a difficult location to grow crops, run-off from the compacted field eroded the streambank.

After protecting this land in 2021, we worked with U.S. Fish and Wildlife's Partner Program and the Fund for Lake Michigan to establish a prairie on the former agricultural field. The prairie contains plants native to Wisconsin, such as big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), switchgrass

(Left) Stony Creek Natural Area in Spring. (Right) Stony Creek Natural Area in Summer

(*Panicum virgatum*), wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*), and showy goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*). Their roots grow deep to anchor the soil and reduce erosion. This restoration effort has attracted pollinators and benefited water quality and fish habitat in southern Door County's largest stream system.

Door County historically did not have prairies due to its northern location and coverage of thick forests. Today, by converting non-forested land to prairie, we can improve biodiversity, benefit native pollinators which are essential to agriculture, and set the stage for healthy succession back to native landscapes. 



Wild bergamot and brown-eyed Susan



Bee collecting pollen on goldenrod. Photos by Lucia Hodkiewicz

Stewardship by the Numbers

Stew Crew—the name we lovingly use for our stewardship team—has the glorious and sometimes grueling job of being our boots on the ground, covering thousands of acres while managing invasive species, building and maintaining trails, surveying property, and more. That means when it's 85° and humid. When it's wet and muddy. When it's cold. And of course on beautiful days, too! Luckily, Stew Crew is assisted by awesome volunteers on stewardship workdays, and together, they accomplish a lot. Here are some numbers from projects they have tackled so far this season!

4

types of native seeds collected from Oak Road Nature Preserve's prairie to spread in other areas for diversity: golden Alexander, prairie coneflower, purple prairie clover, & purple coneflower



22

trees down on or near the trail in White Cliff Nature Preserve after 70 mph gusts hit Egg Harbor during a brief but damaging thunderstorm on August 9th



10,040

pounds of waste removed from preserves so far this year, including fencing, abandoned farm equipment, & invasive species



(Top) Deb Hagman-Shannon carefully harvests seeds from a purple prairie clover. Photo by Paige Witek. (Middle) The cracked trunk of a large maple tree. (Bottom) Jeff Urban stands in a trailer of items removed from Three Springs Nature Preserve on Earth Day. Photos by Lucia Hodkiewicz

A photograph of a field of tall, dry grasses and milkweed seed pods. The scene is captured in a soft, golden light, likely during the "blue hour" of sunset or sunrise. The sky is a pale, clear blue, and a bright, circular sun is visible in the upper center. The foreground shows several milkweed seed pods in various stages of maturity, some with their fuzzy white seed heads still attached. The background is a dense field of similar vegetation, slightly out of focus.

Honoring the Land

The Warner family's challenge to support conservation in Door County, in memory of husband and father, David.

In conservation, what does it mean to honor the land? The lake? The lady slippers? A luna moth? Surely it has something to do with respect. It is about holding each in highest regard. It is about protecting and nurturing; about giving each room to root, to grow, to live, and live on without getting too much in the way.

For Rose Warner and her two children, Lindsay and Seth, honoring the land means offering up a matching challenge gift to the Door County Land Trust Stewardship and Conservation Campaign in memory of husband and father, David. This generous match amplifies the efforts of individual donors two-fold, doubling every donation that comes in through the end of 2025.

For David, honoring the land was about connecting with it. Rose explains, “He was deeply enriched by the natural beauty of Door County” and he found ways throughout his life to honor the wild places he adored. “In recent years, he took up the guitar, practicing daily beneath the trees or beside the water. Music became another way he connected

with the landscape and was a quiet, personal expression of joy and presence.”

David’s life was cut short by glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer. Though his time was briefer than hoped, his days were filled with joy, meaning, and deep appreciation for the lands and waters of Door County. The Warner’s \$200,000 matching challenge gift honors

David’s legacy while encouraging others to support the protection and expansion of the wild spaces he cherished.



Many who call Door County home, or a second home, or are simply traveling through, end up finding magic in its sweeping sunsets, quiet cedar woods, and cool limestone bluffs. They’ll discover, like David and Rose, that it has changed them, that there is a fondness for these lands and waters, and a persistent hope to keep it safe.

For Rose, honoring the land is inherent in the family’s generous donation. “There’s something special about knowing our gift helps care for the places we love to walk, making us feel rooted in the land rather than just passing through,” Rose said.

You have double the power to keep Door County wild.

The Warner's generous matching challenge gift honors David's memory and longstanding connection to the land, and with others joining the challenge to move land protection forward, the gift becomes transformational. Matching gifts like theirs are what catalyze land protection and help it sustain and thrive for generations.


David, like many of us, developed a deep love of nature at an early age; a love that was modeled by important people who saw its value and planted a deep need to be part of nature and to care for it.

For him, that love of land was fostered by his father who took David and his six siblings on a boat journey around the Door County peninsula—an experience that left a lasting impression on him and shaped his lifelong connection to the land. If we mine our own histories, we likely can trace back to the moment when we fell in love with the natural world or felt deeply connected to it.

“David had a quiet but profound way of connecting to the world around him,” said his family. “Whether sailing, walking, or playing music in the parks, he was seeking to understand the beauty and meaning of the places he loved. This gift is a way to carry that spirit forward.”

David teaches us that to honor the land means to connect with it. To appreciate it. To be part of it and to care for it. Rose and her children, Lindsay and Seth, teach us that to carry the spirit of land protection forward is another way to honor the places we hold dear.

The Warner's matching gift to honor David and the wild lands he loved doubles the impact of donations made to the Door County Land Trust, helping not only to preserve existing natural areas, but also to expand the number of lands protected for future generations.

The Warner family hopes this gift will encourage others to explore, protect, care for, and honor the wild places that inspire and delight all who find themselves inextricably connected to Door County. 

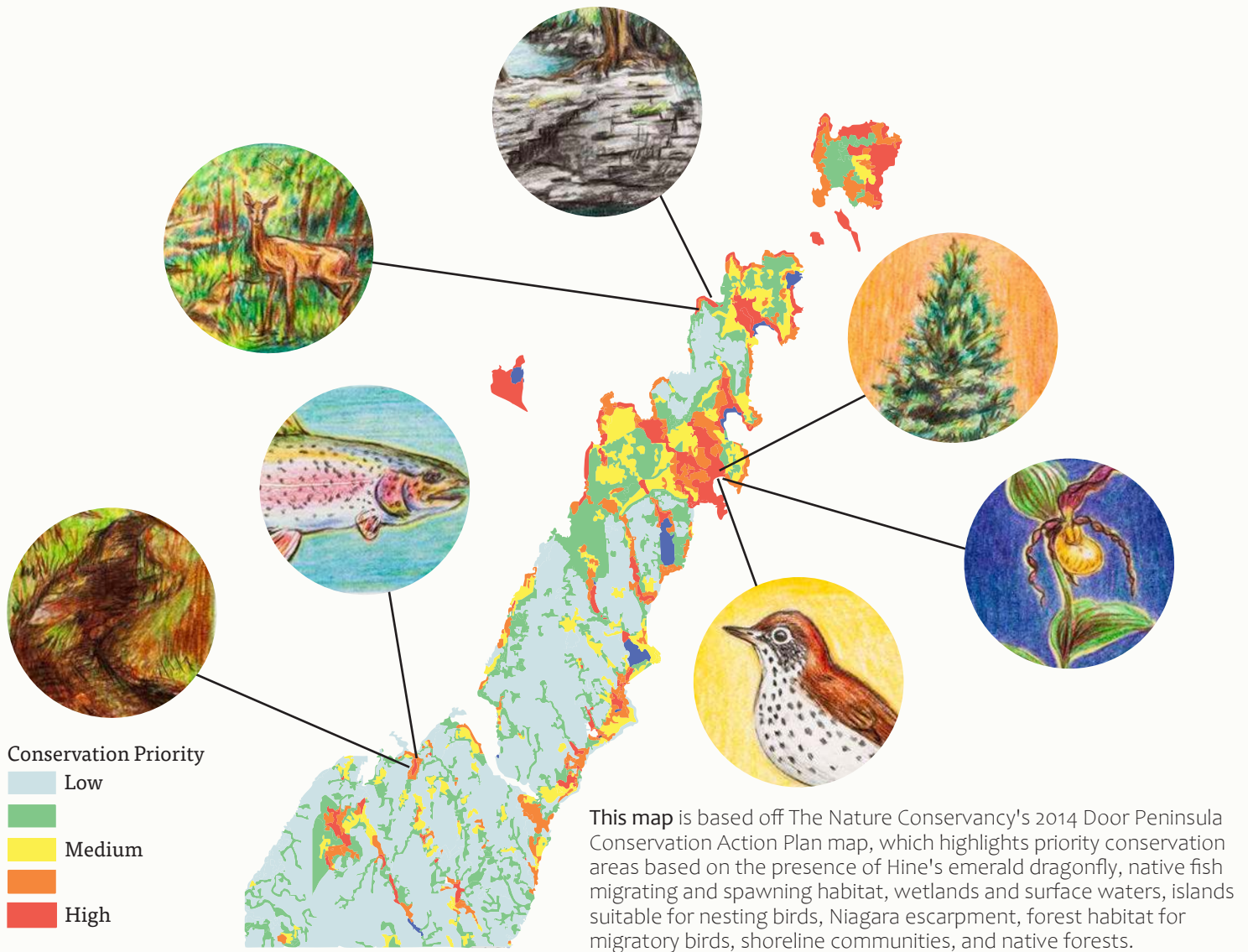
Door County's lands and waters are threatened by development and climate change. **Give today to protect these rare ecosystems.**

Donate online or enclose your gift today to ensure places throughout Door County will be protected...*forever.*

*Give online! Scan the QR code or visit
doorcountylandtrust.org/WarnerChallenge*



Our Strategy for Land Protection



How do we determine which lands to protect? On a peninsula with over 300,000 acres, countless natural features, and development pressure increasing, how to protect Door County's ecological wellbeing is an urgent puzzle we are continuously working to solve.

At Door County Land Trust, we love puzzles. In our breakroom, pieces usually cover half the table. Lunches are balanced carefully around the edges. Piece by piece, the picture comes together in a week or so. Then, we begin again.

When it comes to the big picture of protecting Door County's exceptional lands and waters, we take the same approach: one piece at a time, though on a much longer timeline. Teamwork,

strategy, and intention are important parts of our approach, helping to keep our promise to protect these lands forever.

Door County's Conservation Team

"There is no competition in conservation," says our executive director, Emily. "This is why our plan for land protection includes input from other conservation organizations." Scientific data like hydrological studies and biological inventories have been shared between Door County's conservation groups in order to plan protection strategies.

Cooperation is essential to the shared goal of maintaining the wellbeing of Door County's

lands and communities. The Land Trust has collaborated with organizations like The Ridges Sanctuary, Crossroads at Big Creek, Wisconsin DNR, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and The Nature Conservancy to develop an intentional course for land protection.

Each organization has certain strengths and areas of focus, with some overlap. To know which protection projects are best managed by the Land Trust, the strategy starts by identifying what we think are the core pieces of the puzzle—our **conservation priorities**.

Pieces of the Puzzle

Our conservation priorities are natural features that are most vital, fragile, and unique to Door County's ecosystem. They are: **1.** Significant geological features (like the Niagara escarpment and its unique microhabitats), **2.** Native forest communities, **3.** Surface and groundwater resources, **4.** Fish habitat, **5.** Ecological and riparian corridors that allow the safe movement of wildlife, **6.** Migratory and breeding bird habitat, and **7.** Rare species.

Connecting the Pieces

When several conservation priorities are found in one place—such as a groundwater-fed creek that supports rare species, native forest communities, and bird habitat, like at Three Springs Nature Preserve—we identify that place as a **priority conservation area**.

The Land Trust has 33 priority conservation areas. These are the places most critical to Door County's ecological wellbeing. Focusing our efforts in these places ensures our resources have the greatest conservation benefit. Many of our preserves and natural areas are within priority conservation areas.

Strategy for Success

When the Land Trust commits to protecting a certain piece of land, we are committing not just current resources, but also future resources. This is why our approach to land protection must be strategic. Every potential project goes through a thoughtful review process before we take action.

First, a new project goes to the Land Policy Committee for evaluation, then to the Board

of Directors for a final vote. Once approved, the Land Trust begins the work of securing the property's protection, writing grants, and raising private funds. Once acquired, a stewardship plan is developed and put in place for the resilience and health of the property.

Intention—The Key to Conservation

Conservation will never happen by accident. Without landowners willing to work with us, new conservation efforts would be impossible. Outreach is targeted towards property owners in priority conservation areas, and education is provided to anyone interested in conserving or stewarding their land.

Those who choose to work with us share a vision of Door County's future—where clean water flows, forests teem with birdsong, creeks run with trout, and open spaces stretch out along the roadside. Like the reference image included in every puzzle box, the key to this conservation puzzle is the shared intention to care for Door County long into the future. 🌿

Written and illustrated by Lucia Hodkiewicz with credit to Laurel Hauser's 2017 article, From Conservation Vision to Nature Preserve.



Makaylee, Paige, Cinnamon, Maddie & Carrie take a break from Door County's conservation puzzle to solve a bird puzzle in the DCLT breakroom. Photo by Don Krumpos



Boots on the Ground

Chatting with our Seasonal Stewardship Assistant, Maykaylee Kuhn

Lucy: Describe your favorite project you worked on this summer. What made it enjoyable?

Makaylee: I have two answers for this haha! Here they are 😊

- i. Kestrel banding with Jeep Pagel: This was such a cool and unique experience being able to help Jeep band some of the kestrel chicks on one of our nature preserves. I was able to hold a few chicks and help determine their gender while Jeep educated us about the species and told us stories from his life as a bird bander. It was an exciting opportunity to do something new and gain some valuable experience – especially in a field of study that I had never been a part of before!
- ii. Chambers Island trip: In early August, we were able to take a trip out to Chambers Island to help monitor phragmites and garlic mustard on DCLT property. This was a very full-circle moment for me since my grandparents had been lighthouse keepers on the island for 47 years and I had spent many summers with my family out on the island. We were able to kayak the entirety of Lake Mackaysee while looking for phragmites and spotted a bald eagle! It was wonderful to spend the day with some of the islanders, like my great uncle and some other family friends, and be able to discuss the Land Trust’s work and mission with them in a place near and dear to my heart.

Lucy: Tell a story of a day or project that was memorable (good or bad experience).

Makaylee: Around my second or third week of the season, I was driving back to the office one day when I felt a tick attached to the outer part of my ear. I was freaking out a bit when I walked into the office, but thankfully Jesse (along with the help and support of Emily, Carrie, and Kristi) was able to jump into dad mode and help remove the tick with a cool, counter-clockwise Q-tip maneuver. Of course, as I was a bit disgusted and stressed, they were in awe of how the tick had climbed up into the fold of my ear and were admiring how cute the little guy was. It was a memorable experience and humorous start to the season!

Lucy: Give a few reasons why you think Door County is special/worth protecting.

Makaylee: Before I started at DCLT, I knew that Door County was a special place after spending every summer here with my family throughout my life. For years I had been able to enjoy the beaches, parks, hikes, and other places that made Door County a one-of-a-kind location. However, I wasn’t fully aware of how many truly unique places and ecosystems were here that I had never seen or experienced before. Door County is such a diverse and beautiful place, which is both a blessing and a curse at times. Even in the past 20+ years that I have lived here, I have witnessed numerous changes and developments due to increased tourism and overall growth. While many people think of Door County as a vacation, recreation, or shopping destination, this place would truly not be the same without its natural habitats and the species that call these places home. I have seen firsthand how important these communities are to the county and its livelihood. Now, more than ever before, I realize how vitally important it is for us to continue to protect the landscapes and ecosystems that make Door County our home.



Continued>>>>



Lucy: What was the most important project you worked on this summer?

Makaylee: One of the most important projects I worked on this summer was the prairie restoration at Legacy Nature Preserve at Clay Banks. This restoration was honestly one of our largest and most grueling tasks this summer, but our hard work has definitely paid off. Over the course of multiple weeks (and numerous 8-hour days with 30-pound backpack sprayers on our backs), we were able to treat various invasive species throughout the prairie and have now witnessed the renewed growth and success of our native species in this area. If you take a walk through Legacy, you can physically see the drastic changes that have occurred. It is now becoming a beautiful, flourishing habitat that we will continue to improve and protect for years to come.

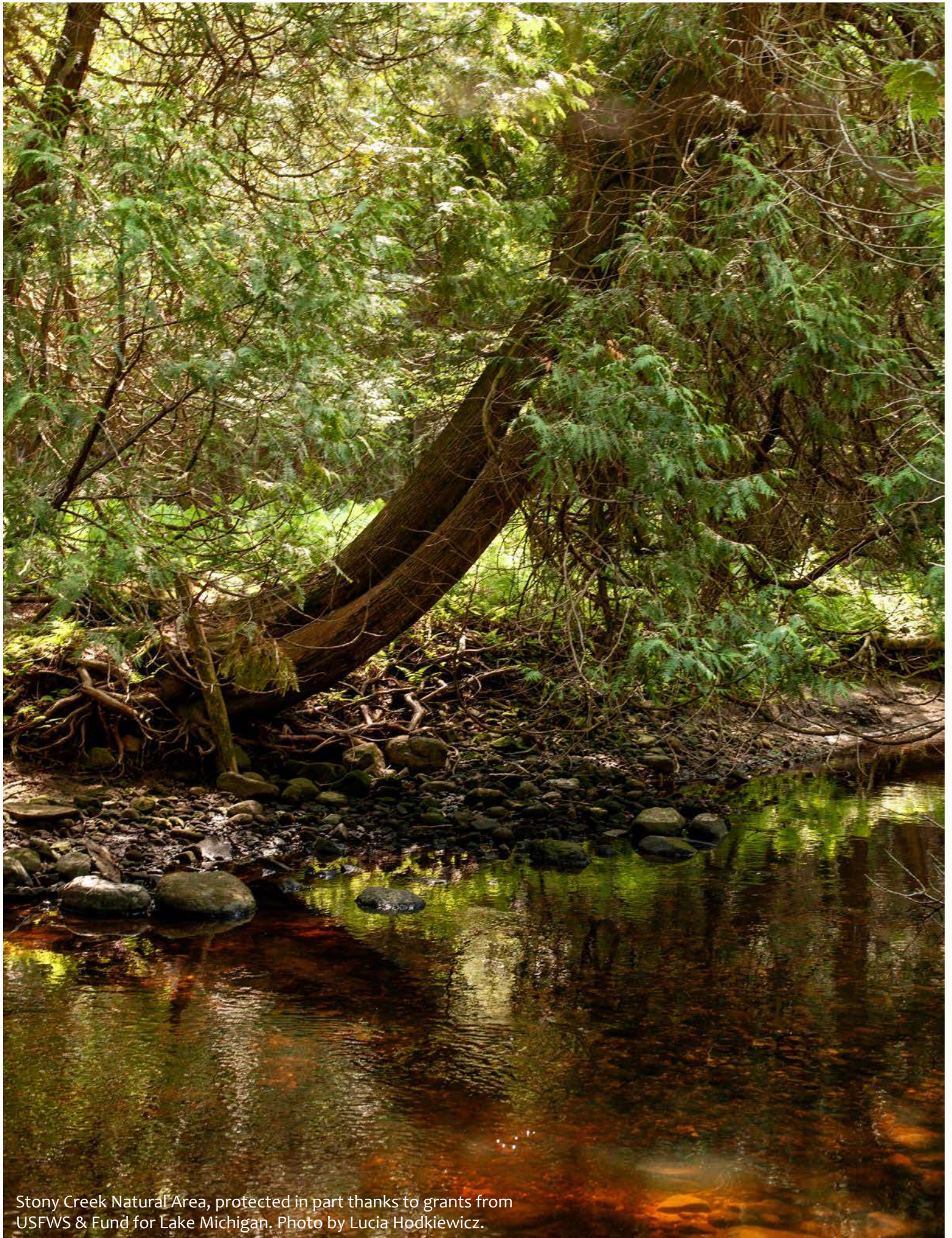
Lucy: Describe your experience overall working for DCLT this summer.

Makaylee: My experience working for DCLT this summer has been nothing short of transformative. All the DCLT staff members have been so welcoming and supportive of me in this new role, and I could not be more grateful. It has been such an eye-opening experience for me being able to witness firsthand what the Land Trust is all about and being able to discover so many wonderful new places while gaining valuable experience in this field. Although there were some long, tiring days spent in the heat of the summer, it was all worth it being able to be a part of the work and success of such an important and invaluable organization. No matter where my path takes me next, I truly hope that one day I can return to help the Land Trust continue its work in whatever way possible.

THANK YOU to Makaylee for your hard work this year, and for sharing your stories 😊 and shout out to Alanna, our Seasonal Restoration Assistant, for being a rockstar this season too! Thank you both! 🌿

To see a collection of Makaylee's photos from this summer, visit doorcountylantrust.org/boots/





Stony Creek Natural Area, protected in part thanks to grants from USFWS & Fund for Lake Michigan. Photo by Lucia Hodkiewicz.

Your generosity means more than ever before




What **you** do

Your gift will be used to keep Door County natural and wild, care for threatened species that live and grow here, protect water quality, build hiking trails for the public, and other conservation and stewardship efforts—with twice the impact, thanks to Rose Warner.

What we do **together**

Since 1986, with the help of generous donors, DCLT has permanently protected and cared for over 10,000 acres of shoreline, forests, wetlands, ecologically significant wildlife habitats, and some of the most beautiful scenery in Wisconsin.

Join a **community** that believes...

-  Door County is like nowhere else on earth and that it is our obligation to defend and steward Door County's lands and waters...forever.
-  Healthy lands and waters improve the quality of our lives and that of future generations.
-  Well-cared for lands and waters and connected native landscapes are essential to support the diversity of Door County's ecosystems.

Give today. Keep Door County wild! A gift of \$35 or more makes you a member. Mail in the included envelope, donate online, or call DCLT at **920.746.1359** to make a donation & join.

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Door County Land Trust

Protecting Door County's Exceptional Lands and Waters...Forever

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