



PHOTO SUBMITTED TO BERLIN JOURNAL NEWSPAPERS
TICHORA CONSERVANCY is located on the northern shore of Spring Lake, south of Big Green Lake.

Green Lake Conservancy walks

What follows is the first in a series of articles describing the Green Lake Conservancy and its properties, which are nearly all open for public use and enjoyment all year round.



People sometimes confuse the Green Lake Conservancy (GLC) with its companion organization, the Green Lake Association (GLA). Simply put, the two organizations serve complementary missions: one, the GLA, protects the aquatic resources of Big Green Lake itself, while the other, the GLC, protects the land resources that surround the Lake, including many sites along its various tributaries.

The GLC enacts its mission as a conservation land trust, a legal entity established to acquire properties or property rights to prevent commercial or residential development on or near Big Green Lake. Since 1995, the GLC has restored and maintained nearly 1,300 acres of prairies, forests and wetlands including nearly 37,000 feet of shoreline on Green Lake and its tributaries.

"By putting these properties into conservancy, the land continues to serve its environmental purpose for perpetuity. These conservancy lands support native communities of plants and animals and also afford local communities and visitors a variety of recreational, educational and scientific opportunities." (Thomas Eddy, 2014)

Unlike the GLA, whose staff

includes full-time administrators, scientists, and program officers, the GLC consists entirely of unpaid volunteers. Over the past 30 years, these people have come from all walks of life, including business leaders, educators, doctors, lawyers, artists, and many more. These volunteers have donated countless hours first behind the scenes working with landowners to acquire sensitive properties, and then on the scenes themselves, working to restore, preserve and protect the properties for public enjoyment.

In some cases, once a property is obtained, the GLC turns that property over to a third companion organization, the Green Lake Sanitary District (GLSD). The GLSD then oversees the restoration and maintenance of the property, often through the Green Team: volunteers, many from both the GLC and GLA, who remove invasive species and replace them with native trees, shrubs, and prairie plants, then create paths for walkers and dogwalkers—like those in the following profile of Tichora Conservancy—to amble through.

Tichora Conservancy

My wife, Diane, and our friends, Peter and Nancy, along with our dogs, Gretel (the leader), Finn (the follower), and Sophy (the cheerleader) often take walks through GLC properties (Diane and Peter are GLC Board Members). On a recent such walk through Tichora Conservancy, located on the southern shore of Green Lake between Emerald Shores and Oakwood Beach Road, we were accompanied by noted local naturalist and bird illustrator, Tom Schultz (also a GLC Board Member), who helped us identify flowers and grasses in the restored prairie, as well as trees in the reemerging oak opening.

Tichora, a Ho-Chunk name meaning "green lake," has been



PHOTO SUBMITTED TO BERLIN JOURNAL NEWSPAPERS
THE TICHORA CONSERVANCY prairie includes wildflowers, tall grasses and more.



PHOTOS SUBMITTED TO BERLIN JOURNAL NEWSPAPERS
ABOVE: A TRAIL THROUGH TICHORA Conservancy offers a beautiful look of Spring Lake in southern Green Lake County. BELOW: GUESTS AT MITCHELL GLEN enjoy hidden gem in Green Lake County. Unlike most Green Lake Conservancy properties, Mitchell Glen is not open to the public.



continuously inhabited since prehistoric times by Native Americans (two Indian mounds have been identified there), boy scouts, and Camp Grow campers, and is comprised of 51 acres between Green Lake and Spring Lake to the south. It was purchased in 2018 with nearly \$2 million in donations from 600 individuals, organizations, and corporations, which were matched dollar for dollar by the DNR through its Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant Program. When the sale was completed, the Executive Director of the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago, the sellers, called the conservation sale a "miracle" because Green Lake shoreline is so valuable to developers.

Before it became Tichora, the land had been a Boy Scout Camp from 1920-1959 and a Baptist church camp, Camp Grow, from 1959-2018. In those years, a boat-house, dining hall, lodge, and other buildings were constructed which have now all been removed and replaced with native landscaping that approximates what the land looked like 200 years ago. The land is open for use for fishing, hiking, hunting, trapping, cross-country skiing, and other low-impact uses such as bird watching. (According to eBird, a total of 118 bird species have been

reported at Tichora.)

The Loop the Lake Bike Trail runs through it between Oakwood Beach Road and Emerald Shores.

On the afternoon we went for our walk with the dogs, we entered from the west at the parking lot opening from Oakwood Beach Road. As we entered the vibrantly restored prairie, I was reminded of accounts by the first European explorers who described fields of waving grasses and flowers taller than their heads (I'm well over 6 ft. tall and the grasses are taller than I am!) Big and little bluestem, Canada wild rye, compass plant, bergamot, purple and yellow coneflower, false sunflower, and many others blew in the breeze. When we reached high ground, we could see Big Green Lake to the north and Spring Lake to the south. A pair of sandhill cranes flew low over the marsh where they nest at the west end of Spring Lake. Overhead a red-tailed hawk soared and screeched. In the lakes, fishermen idled along.

Entering the forest at the edge of Spring Lake, mature oaks and willows hung over the cattail marsh bordering the Lake. Tom heard, then saw through his binoculars, a yellow-bellied sapsucker, and we heard other woodpeckers tapping

away. The woods themselves are composed primarily of deciduous hardwoods, such as oaks, hickories, cherries, maples and elms, interspersed with red pine and white cedar groves planted during the Boy Scout and Camp Grow years. At the top of the woods, we could see both lakes through the trees.

Directions to Tichora

Starting at the stoplight at the corner of State Highway 23 and State Highway 49/County Road A:

Going west, drive 7.5 miles, then left on State Highway 73 for 3.5 miles, then left again on County Road K for 2.5 miles, and finally left once more on Oakwood Beach Road for a mile where it ends at a parking lot for Tichora.

Going south, drive 3.5 miles, then right at Walkers on County Road K for (roughly) 5.5 miles, end finally, with a right on Oakwood Beach Road.

In the coming weeks and months, we will profile several other beautiful GLC public lands.

The preceding article was submitted by the Green Lake Conservancy to Berlin Journal Newspapers. Look for additional articles on other Green Lake Conservancy properties in future editions of Berlin Journal Newspapers.