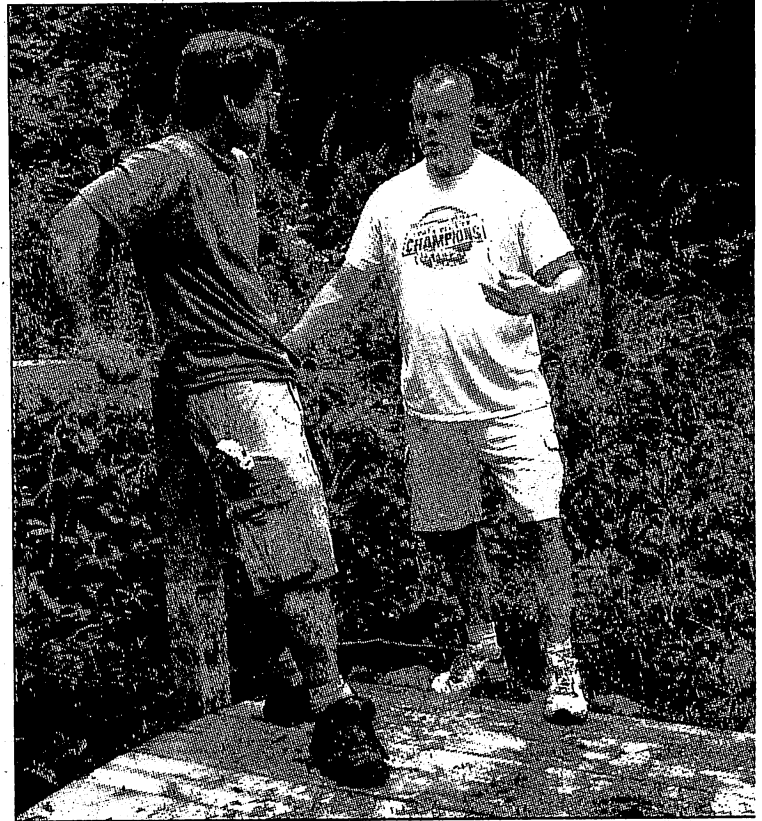
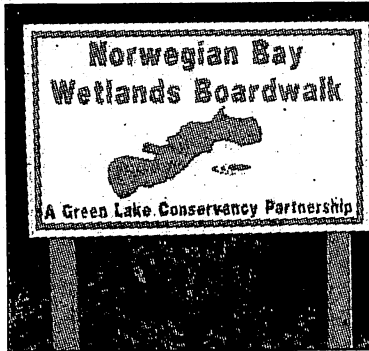


# Land acquisition program preserves areas for future generations



**GREEN LAKE REPORTER PHOTOS**  
**THE NORWEGIAN BAY WETLANDS BOARDWALK** trail begins on Bay Road in Green Lake. From Highway 23, just follow Highway T to Sugar Loaf Road to reach Bay Road. The boardwalk offers a beautiful scenic walk through woodlands and wetlands before arriving at Green Lake.



**GREEN LAKE REPORTER PHOTO**  
**BEN ROWLEY AND GREEN LAKE SANITARY DISTRICT** Administrator Charlie Marks discuss construction progress at one of the bridges in the Green Lake Conference Center property. The owner of Green Lake's Fusion Studios, Rowley built many of the bridges that were necessary for trails throughout some of the properties acquired by the land acquisition program. He also built the boardwalk at Norwegian Bay, teaming up with area students on the project.



**GREEN LAKE REPORTER PHOTO**  
**GREEN LAKE SANITARY DISTRICT Administrator Charlie** Marks explains how invasive species, such as buckthorn and honeysuckle have come to take over much of the forest canopy, shielding the woodland floor life from vegetation.

**By Pamela Schumacher**

Thanks to efforts that started in the 1990s, the Green Lake Sanitary District, the Green Lake Conservancy Foundation, and the State of Wisconsin DNR, have been working together as part of a local land acquisition program. It began when the Sanitary District was approached by a group of people who wanted to form an organization that met to work on land conservation projects. From this meeting and from conversations with the DNR, the land acquisition team was born.

Since its inception, the program has managed to acquire 13 properties covering over 175 acres and over 16,600 feet of water frontage. Purchase expenses paid out for the acquisition of these properties comes to \$1,488,000, however, the current market value of the properties is a whopping \$4,610,000.

The properties were mostly purchased with grant money (\$586,250). Donations from the public helped fund \$446,000. The Sanitary District funded \$325,375 and the Green Lake Conservancy Foundation put in \$110,375. Twenty thousand dollars were received from other sources.

"They've done very well in the land acquisition program," said Jim Hebbe of the Green Lake County Department of Land Conservation. "The only downside is that the county loses part of the tax base, however, the upside is that you get to keep some of the natural characteristics of the land."

The Sanitary District and Conservancy Foundation both maintain the properties. When looking at property for acquisition, they prioritize with the "Three W's": wetlands, woodlands, and waterfront. Especially with Green Lake being heavily populated with waterfront properties, when the team has had an opportunity to acquire Green Lake lakefront property, they have jumped on it.

That just happened to be the case when the team had the chance to purchase two properties from the American Baptist Assembly/Green Lake Conference Center. The first one, located on the west end of the property, has over 1,100 feet of waterfront access to Big Green Lake. The property was purchased for \$100,000 by the Sanitary District and has a current market value of 1,000,000. The second property has over 1,500 of Big Green Lake frontage and will be purchased for \$100,000 although it is valued at \$1,000,000. An offer has been accepted on this property and it is expected to close in early fall.

Even though the ABA/GLCC could develop that property and sell it for much more than \$1,000,000 each, it generously chose to have the land preserved through the efforts of the Sanitary District and Conservancy Foundation.

All of the acquired land is open to the public, however, some of the land has restricted access because of some safety issues, such as steep bluffs. The team does provide orchestrated tours, however, if parties are interested.

Charlie Marks, administrator of the Green Lake Sanitary District said that it seems as if the program has just taken off over the past few years and continues to grow. "Word of mouth is really what has gotten us this far," said Marks.

He said that the program has been able to attain properties for many reasons, one of the most common is that land owners would like to see a piece of land preserved. That was the case with the Mitchell Glen Property, which spans over twelve acres and has hundreds of native plant species. The property houses the origin of Glen Creek and the beautiful area also boasts a waterfall.

Tom Eddy, a local scientist and member of the Conservancy Foundation, studied the vascular flora at the Mitchell Glen Property and documented his findings. He also found a species of plants that is typically found in Northern Wisconsin. In total, he documented 250 species of vascular plants.

"Because of the microhabitat of the glen - it's cool and shaded - these plants can occur here," said Eddy.

Eddy also explored the Norwegian Glen and noted the rare occurrence of the bog bean. He collected data here as well and speculates that the area hasn't been well documented since probably the 1930s.

"There's a lot to be said for the aesthetic appeal of these properties," said Eddy. "You don't have to be a botanist to appreciate it."

There is a trail on ABA/GLCC east property that is believed to have been formed by the Mascoutin Indians many years ago. The trail can still be used and provides a nice scenic hike through the terrain.

The Sanitary District and Conservancy Foundation will be working together to try to get rid of invasive species, like buckthorn, Purple Loosestrife, and honeysuckle, on some of the properties in order to allow other life to thrive. Thinning the densely populated wooded area will allow the vegetation to flourish. They are currently working on putting together a five-year maintenance program for the properties.

If one goes out to explore some of the properties, they may see that work is still being done to carve trails through the densely wooded areas and build bridges over the creeks. Don't be surprised to find artist and craftsman Ben Rowley building a beautiful bridge, or Marks maintaining a

boardwalk—for these men and for many others involved in the program, these properties nestled deep within the landscape provide an opportunity to explore and reconnect with nature.

The Green Lake Conservancy Foundation, Inc. is a non-profit, 501 (c) (3), community-based land trust that “works to preserve, protect, and enhance the aesthetic, ecological, and recreational qualities of the greater Green Lake watershed.”

The mission of the Conservancy Foundation is to “protect, enhance, and restore the quality of Green Lake, to preserve the biodiversity of natural areas within the watershed, and to educate the public—to foster a heightened

sense of environmental awareness, and promote a land ethic based on environmental stewardship and sustainable land use practices.”

In order to fulfill its mission, the Conservancy Foundation accepts tax-deductible monetary contributions to acquire environmentally sensitive lands that impact Green Lake and to fund conservation practices that improve the water quality of Green Lake. It also accepts land donations of significant environmental importance to Green Lake. Visit the Conservancy Foundation at [www.greenlakeconservancyfoundation.org](http://www.greenlakeconservancyfoundation.org) or write to P.O. Box 52, Green Lake, WI 54941 for more information.