

Green Lake Conservancy helps preserve special places¹

By Dr. Barry Rogers

Editor's note: The following article is a community perspective by Green Lake resident Dr. Barry Rogers.

Most of us have favorite places outdoors to which we can retreat to counteract the stress of work and busy lives.

My special place is on the Mekan River where, in the evening, I can quietly toss a mayfly pattern to a rising trout. On one bend, the moon will rise over a particular tall pine, the drone of the katydids will begin to fill the air, and an owl may eerily announce his presence.

Here I am at peace; more often than not, I return home completely fulfilled. My special place is preserved by the DNR. I am grateful to the generous neighbors who allow me access to the river.

There are many special places whose only protection is that afforded by property owners desiring to preserve a beautiful spot for their children's children.

Regrettably, pressure from developers to exploit rural vistas, woods and waterfronts, the upward spiral of property taxes, and a need to realize capital gains from appreciated property make it increasingly difficult for these property owners to preserve special places.

The state of Wisconsin has recognized that individual communities do an excellent job of identifying places worthy of protection. Additionally, the state has facilitated private land stewardship by legislation that helps landowners maintain the right to enjoy what is special about their property while decreasing their tax burden and allowing them to realize some

financial gain from their good stewardship.

Land trust organizations such as the Green Lake Conservancy have been invaluable in helping with this process. They've channeled large and small donations from concerned citizens into the preservation of property, secure cost-sharing grants from the DNR and public and private foundations for the purchase of land and easements, and organize volunteer labor to restore and maintain the properties which are put into trusts.

The Green Lake Conservancy — along with its partners the Green Lake Sanitary District, the Green Lake Association and the Wisconsin DNR — now protects and maintains 14 properties along Silver Creek and the shores of Big Green Lake.

All but the Folsom Nature Preserve and Mitchell Glen have public trails, boardwalks or scenic overlooks. Existing and proposed bike trails connect most of them (see map at:

www.heidelhouse.com/fun/loop_the_lake_map.pdf).

The Green Lake Conservancy has fashioned a variety of agreements for easements, ownership and public access for these properties based on the landowners' needs and desires. Some have gone into pure land conservation easements, with the property owners maintaining hunting rights. Other properties are owned outright by the Conservancy and

provide public access for skiing, fishing and hiking.

Still other properties are accessible only by guided tour. The Green Team organizes biking, hiking and kayaking outings to showcase these properties. The outings focus on birds, wildlife, plants, Indian lore, geology and unique features of the properties. Community volunteers' work days help to rid these areas and habitats of invasive species.

For information on Green Team events in 2011, visit

www.greenlakeassociation.com and click on "Calendar of Events."

For more information about conservation easements or donations to the Conservancy, call President Bur Zeratsky at 920-294-3592, me at 920-294-3203 or other board members; or visit our website at:

www.greenlakeconservancy.org.

Dr. Barry Rogers is a Green Lake resident, retired surgeon and Green Lake Conservancy board member.



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