



Deer Lake Conservancy  
P.O. Box 1139  
St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin 54024

# Deer Lake Conservancy Report



Summer Edition



JULY 2015

## Deer Lake Conservancy in Talks to Acquire Johnson Preserve

The Conservancy is excited to announce a recently signed non-binding letter of intent to purchase the Gustav and Elizabeth Johnson Preserve on the north shore of Deer Lake. The 95-acre property borders 140th Avenue, Hungerford Point Road, and Andersen Lane. It includes approximately 350 feet of lakeshore, multiple wetland ponds, wet depressions, an open area, and deciduous forest. These natural features serve to filter agricultural runoff from the north and provide important wildlife habitat near the lake.

The Preserve was established in 1970 by former Minnesota Governor Elmer Andersen and his wife in honor of Mrs. Andersen's parents who were Scandinavian immigrants living in the Twin Cities. The Johnsons originally purchased the Deer Lake property to be a family retreat, which lasted for three generations. Their son, and current property owner, Julian Andersen seeks to maintain the property as a preserve in perpetuity, avoiding any development. During the course of discussions over the last year and a half, Mr. Andersen gained an appreciation for the work and commitment of the Conservancy and has expressed his belief that the DLC is well suited to meet his family's objectives for the Preserve.

Once the acquisition is complete, the Conservancy intends to restore the original Preserve trails as well as expand the trail system to connect to existing DLC trails at both Rock Creek and Dry Creek. We will also be looking for opportunities to capture additional runoff from agricultural land upstream.

The Conservancy hopes to reach a final agreement for the purchase in the next 45 days and to close prior to year's end. In order to partially fund the purchase, the DLC applied for and received a \$200,000 Land Acquisition Grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The balance of the purchase price will come from DLC reserves earmarked for strategic land acquisitions and donations from Deer Lake residents.

While this is a significant undertaking for the Conservancy, we look forward to substantial support from the community. This acquisition is a truly unique opportunity to not only further enhance the water quality of Deer Lake, but also avoid development of an environmentally sensitive piece of property. In addition, the acquisition will significantly enhance the recreational value of DLC properties.



## 2015 CONSERVANCY OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Phillip Foussard, President	Mark Boyken	Tom McBride
Jim Miller, Vice President	John Patterson	Tom Walther
Tom Pesek, Secretary/Treasurer	John Wright	

## Dedicated to the Preservation of Deer Lake

The Deer Lake Conservancy is a tax exempt organization incorporated in the state of Wisconsin and also registered in Polk County. The purpose of the organization is to preserve Deer Lake and the surrounding land that contributes to its natural, scenic and recreational value. As a 501C (3) corporation, any contributions are fully deductible from federal and state income tax. Contributions may be in the form of cash, securities, property and land easements.

Contributions should be sent to  
**Deer Lake Conservancy**  
P.O. Box 1139  
St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin 54024

Interested individuals may also contact Jim Miller by phone at 715-483-3338

## Project Updates

### BUCKTHORN CONTROL AT ROCK CREEK

2014 marked the fifth year of buckthorn control along the Rock Creek trail. This non-native, invasive shrub was originally planted as an ornamental shrub to create thick hedges of growth. It has since spread rapidly throughout the region including in many forested areas around Deer Lake. First steps in DLC buckthorn control were to remove the large, seed-producing shrubs, some of which were over 30 feet high.

Along Rock Creek, the trail had been narrowed by buckthorn growth. With buckthorn control, walking is much easier. With the reduction of competition from buckthorn, light now reaches the forest floor, and understory plants such as ferns are thriving along the trail. These understory plants will better stabilize the soil and reduce erosion to Rock Creek.

The project received a 50% grant in partnership with the St. Croix Red Cedar Watershed Cooperative Weed Management Area. The Conservancy applied for a grant for buckthorn control in 2015 through the Polk County Forestry Department.

Fall is the best time to control buckthorn. It is readily identifiable because it is the last shrub with green leaves. If you would like to help the DLC with buckthorn identification or control, please contact Jim Miller (715-483-3338).



*Common Buckthorn*

## PRAIRIE BURNS



Periodic fire maintains prairie grassland by removing trees and shrubs and cool season grasses. Historically, this was a natural occurrence. Today, we must maintain the prairie through prescribed burning.

The Deer Lake Conservancy hired a private contractor, Prairie Restoration of Scandia, MN, to complete prairie burns at the Flagstad Farm and Rock Creek prairies in May 2015. In previous years, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources burned the prairies for us. However, budget cutbacks no longer allow WDNR staff to do so.

A visit to one of the Deer Lake Conservancy prairies is an outstanding opportunity to see what approximately one-third of Wisconsin's landscape looked like for thousands of years. The Flagstad Farm and Rock Creek prairies are outstanding examples of prairie restoration with over 100 local ecotype species. Local ecotype species come from seeds from plants in this region of Wisconsin.

Prairie flowers and grasses have deep root structures allowing them to survive periodic drought. These deep roots also create excellent infiltration and soil stability, significantly reducing

runoff and erosion. Prairies make excellent buffers for agricultural and residential runoff. The Conservancy established prairies to buffer agricultural watersheds that flow to the lake. In sunny areas, these plants can be used to buffer residential runoff as well.

The 20 acre Rock Creek prairie is at the base of a 2,300 acre watershed of which 1,500 acres is intensively row-cropped. It was estimated that ninety percent of the phosphorus coming from these fields is taken up by the prairie before water flows to Rock Creek and to the lake. Phosphorus is the nutrient that causes algae blooms in Deer Lake.

Rock Creek is the largest source of off lake spring water flowing to the lake. The spring ponds in the Rock Creek basin along the trails are now crystal clear. Before the Conservancy acquired this property and established the prairie, these ponds were thick with algae. The stream carried the algae along with the phosphorus that fueled its growth to the lake.



## 2015 Annual Meeting

Please join us for our Annual Meeting

Saturday, July 11th  
9:00 a.m.

Trollhaugen  
Convention Center

### WATERSHED 1 POND PROJECT

We reported that the Watershed 1 pond along 140th Avenue was dewatered and accumulated agricultural sediment removed in last year's DLC Report. The final touches on the Watershed 1 pond were completed this past year:

- Added rock check dams along the ditch to slow runoff flow before it reaches the pond itself. Accumulated sediment can be periodically removed from behind these check dams.
- Installed a riser pipe which connects to the outflow culvert. This allows sediment-heavy water to settle before it flows to the lake.
- Removed sediment piles at edge of pond, regraded, and planted native flowers and grasses.

The Conservancy thanks owners Barb Richardson and Barb and Tom Gartland for allowing this important project to take place on their properties.

Conservancy Clean Water Projects like the Watershed 1 pond upgrade are made possible by member contributions which match Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Grants. Thank you.

FREE  
WATERFRONT  
SITE VISITS  
AVAILABLE

Contact Cheryl at:  
Harmony Environmental  
harmonyenv@amerytel.net  
715.268.9992

## Annual Flagstad Farm Celebration

Hosted by the Deer Lake Conservancy

Join your Deer Lake friends and neighbors for live music and refreshments at the Flagstad Farm.  
Saturday, July 25, 2015 • 6-9 PM  
PRAIRIE TOUR!!  
See the best view of Deer Lake!  
All ages and guests are welcome.