



The Chikaming Legacy

Winter 2007

CHIKAMING OPEN LANDS

Galien Meadow Conservation Easement A Natural Sanctuary

What do these three things have in common: ten acres of forest, ten acres of meadow, and thirteen acres of wetlands / natural space? They are all owned by Diane DeWitt and will forever remain in their natural state, thanks to Diane's commitment to preservation.

Chikaming Open Lands recently completed the Galien Meadow Conservation Easement on Diane's property located in Galien Township. The easement covers 33 acres, and fulfills part of Chikaming Open Lands' obligations to the Galien Watershed Project. Protecting the wetlands and riparian features of Diane's property contributes to better water quality.

The property was acquired nearly twenty years ago as a place offering solitude and peace for this retired special education teacher. Diane was attracted to the property for its rolling terrain and small pond, and has especially enjoyed observing the changing seasons.

A portion of the property used to be farmed, then Diane enrolled one of the fields into the Conservation Reserve Program. The permanent grass cover reduced soil erosion on the steep slopes, and provided wonderful wildlife habitat. Deer, fox, turkeys and ducks can be found living on the property, as well as a pair of sand hill cranes that live nearby.

I think it is important to provide homes for the wildlife," says Diane. "They need natural spaces and undisturbed acreage that offers the peace and solitude that we all need."



A small wetland provides habitat for a wide array of wildlife.

On behalf of the Board of Directors for
Chikaming Open Lands, the residents of
the watershed and the wildlife...

Thank you Diane!

PARTNERS IN THE GALIEN WATERSHED



President's Letter

Dear Members and Friends of Chikaming Open Lands:

As COL begins our eighth year of operations I want to share with you the progress we have made in protecting and preserving an area that means so much to all of us. Part of protecting land is education and outreach programs that inform our members, landowners and community about the process of good land stewardship.

In 2006 we broadened our community outreach. We instituted a Second Saturday Series that dealt with native and invasive plants. We are currently planning another series for the summer of 2007. Other educational programs included landowner informational meetings with a program led by Jean Brokish, our Land Protection Specialist, and Jack Pizzo, a land restoration specialist. We hosted a tour of property in Buchanan Township with over 300 acres of woodlands, wetlands and prairie restored to pre-settlement vegetation.

Since being awarded the Galien River Grant in 2005 we have worked diligently to achieve the goals of the grant. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of Jean Brokish we closed on two conservation easements in 2006, protecting over 36 acres, bringing our total acreage protected to over 460. There are several other easements in the pipeline for 2007.

In 2006 COL was awarded a small grant allowing us to do an organizational assessment. This was an important step in acquiring accreditation from the national Land Trust Alliance (LTA). LTA is instituting an accreditation process to insure that land trusts are operating under the highest ethical and business standards.

COL has a Board, a staff and over 400 members dedicated to our mission of preserving open space in southwest Berrien County. We look forward to 2007 being another banner year.

Jean Smith

COL Adds Office Manger



New Staff: Bev Hahn

I have been a resident of Berrien County for most of my life and am excited to be working for Chikaming Open Lands. This may be my first experience working with a land preservation organization, but it is something that I have felt passionate about for a long time.

If I seem familiar, it is because I have been performing music in the area for over 25 years, taught at Lake Michigan College, and previously worked at the Rootseller in Buchanan.

I look forward to meeting the members, learning more about this community, and learning more about preserving the wonderful area we live in!

Please feel free to drop me a line at: Bev@chikamingopenlands.org.



The Chikaming Legacy



Legislators & Conservationists working together

COL members contributed \$200,000 for the purchase of the magnificent 263 acres of forest, open land, frontage on the Galien River and pond that is now the Chikaming Township Park and Preserve. That acquisition, however, could not have occurred without the township's obtaining, in competition with others, three-fourths of the purchase price from the Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund.

Over the years, Michigan obtained title to millions of acres of land because private owners could not pay their property taxes. Part of that acreage forms the state park and forest system. Royalties, fees and rent from some of the properties with oil, gas, or valuable minerals have been the primary source of revenue for the nationally lauded conservation projects supported by the Trust Fund.

A class action lawsuit, brought on behalf of the former owners, their heirs and successors, alleged the State, on foreclosure, obtained only surface rights. In addition to seeking a determination that the State does not own the gas, oil and mineral rights, the suit sought damages based upon the revenues that went to the Trust Fund.

The state legislature passed and in late December Governor Granholm signed two bills intended to secure future revenues for the Trust Fund. The new laws declare that oil, gas and mineral interests revert to the State upon foreclosure unless those rights have been severed and recorded with the register of deeds not more than 20 years before the foreclosure.

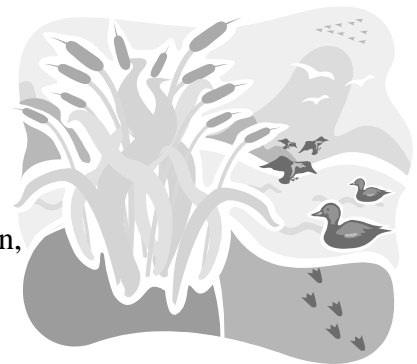
The Chikaming Township Park and Preserve is convincing evidence in our locality of the importance to the public of the Trust Fund. The new legislation helps resolve uncertainties about its future.

COL would like to thank the bill sponsors Senators Patty Birkholz, Liz Brater, Ron Jelinek and the many conservation groups who encouraged the passing of Legislative bills P.A. 519 and P.A. 611.

Upcoming Workshops!!!!

Don't miss these local and affordable workshops, provided by the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission!

- ☞ Wetlands 101 - March 14, 2007, 6-9 pm
LMC, Room 141, South Haven - FREE!!!
- ☞ Filling the Gaps: Local Government's Role in Environmental Protection, *Featuring Mark Wyckoff* - March 12, 2007, 1:30 - 9:00 pm
Van Buren Conference Center - \$10 (includes dinner and materials!)
- ☞ Low Impact Development: Designing for the Future - April 11, 2007, 6-9 pm, Van Buren Conference Center - \$10 (includes materials and refreshments!)



For more information and to register call the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission 269-925-1137 .



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COMING SOON TO A MARSH NEAR YOU! **Three Osprey platforms at the Louis J. Sima Great Lakes Marsh**

Did you Know?

The oldest known osprey in North America was a 25-year old male.

Ospreys choose structures that can support a bulky nest, and that are safe from ground-based predators. Over-water nest sites that are often used by ospreys include buoys and channel markers, dead trees and artificial nest platforms.

Ospreys are generally monogamous. However, polygamy can occur in rare instances where nest sites are close enough together that a male can defend two nests.

Ospreys are not listed under the Endangered Species Act. However, this species is listed as threatened, endangered or a species of special concern in several U.S. states, including Michigan. Ospreys are also protected under the U.S. Migratory Bird Act and CITES Appendix II. They are not listed on the IUCN Red List

<http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu>





The Chikaming Legacy

For The Love of the Land

*Adapted from article that appeared in the Jan 20th South County Gazette
By John Gunner Gooch, Gazette Staff*

Establishing a permanent riparian buffer that preserves over a quarter mile of stream feels like a big victory for Chikaming Open Lands, Mike Jasper and his wife Jeanne. Together they have created a very workable conservation easement agreement for a small portion of an 80-acre parcel Jasper farms off Flynn Road south of Warren Woods Road, and now that it's been completed both parties are very happy that they've been able to work it out.



View of Preserved Parcel

The three acre parcel consists of both grassland and woodland and is located along Deer Creek. Since Chikaming Open Lands is working with a grant that is tied to the Clean Water Act for this conservation easement, the acreage's close proximity to Deer Creek was an important factor. Protecting the vegetation in this riparian buffer zone helps naturally filter any runoff from the adjacent field.



Deer Creek

Chikaming Open Lands sees this little piece of property as the start of something big in their efforts to get more farmers involved in similar conservation easement options. The expansion of easements over the Galien watershed area translates into helping to maintain and improve the quality of water and benefits the wildlife by providing habitat. It is also a step towards bigger farmland preservation efforts.

“What would it be like without the farms, fruit stands, vineyards and wineries that now draw so many tourists to this area? Think about the thousands of people who come to take part in the Apple Cider Century bicycle tour each year. They come because they know they're going to have a very enjoyable time biking out on the country roads and seeing the farms and open spaces we have.” commented Mike. “I want to do my part to try to make sure that people can come here and count on continuing to enjoy those types of experiences.”

For further information on conservation easements and other land preservation programs, you may visit the Chikaming Open Lands office at 14913 Lakeside Road in downtown Lakeside. You may also contact Jean Brokish by phoning 269-469-2330, or email info@chikamingopenlands.org



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Forestry Workshop

Thirty people braved a snowy, cold Michigan morning to attend the Forestry Workshop held February 10th. About half of them were even braver, and joined foresters outdoors in a local woodlot for the afternoon. Although temperatures were in the teens, lively discussion and great presentations kept people active and interested.

Chikaming Open Lands hosted the Forestry Workshop as part of the Galien Watershed Project. **Morning seminar topics included Timber Management, Wildlife Management, Tree Health and Forest Conservation & Water Quality.** The afternoon session highlighted the same topics in a field setting.



Kelly Goward explains the use of a Biltmore Stick while Mark and Susan Henshaw look on.



Elsie Priest welcomes the group to her family woodlot.

Acknowledgments:

Speakers included:

Oliver Grimm of Pike Lumber,
Kelly Goward of Allegan and Ottawa Conservation Districts,
Casey Sullivan from LaPorte City Parks, and
Jean Brokish of Chikaming Open Lands.

The Galien River Steering Committee sponsored the program.

The Conservation Fund provided planning and logistical support.

The Friends of New Troy provided space in the New Troy Community Center.

Elsie Priest welcomed us to her woodlot and home. Kudos!



Participants enjoying the refreshing Michigan winter in the woods.



Ecological Threat

Garlic mustard poses a severe threat to native plants and animals in forest communities in much of the eastern and midwestern U.S. Many native wildflowers that complete their life cycles in the springtime (e.g., spring beauty, wild ginger, bloodroot, Dutchman's breeches, hepatica, toothwort, and trilliums) occur in the same habitat as garlic mustard. Once introduced to an area, garlic mustard out-competes native plants by aggressively monopolizing light, moisture, nutrients, soil and space.

A single plant can produce thousands of seeds, which scatter as much as several meters from the parent plant. Because the seeds of garlic mustard can remain viable in the soil for five years or more, effective management requires a long term commitment. Care must be taken to remove the plant with its entire root system because new plants can sprout from root fragments. Once pulled from the ground, the plants make a tasty treat.

Here are a few sample recipes we hope will inspire you!

Garlic Mustard Pesto

1/2 Cup Olive Oil
1 Cup Pine Nuts or Walnuts
1/2 Cup finely grated Parmesan Cheese
Enough Garlic Mustard leaves to choke a horse (*or to clear a forest floor*)

Finely mince the walnuts and garlic mustard. An electric coffee grinder works like a charm. Add Oil and Cheese, serve with pasta or rice or other whole grain. For vegan pesto use Nutritional Yeast instead of Cheese.

Garlic Mustard Ricotta Dip

1/4 cup chopped garlic mustard
3/4 cup non-fat ricotta cheese
1/4 cup non-fat mayonnaise
McCormick's steak seasoning
White wine Worcester sauce
Salt
Fresh ground pepper

Mix all ingredients together. Adjust seasonings to taste. Serve with French bread, crackers, chips or fresh cut vegetables for dipping.



Young first leaves are best for pesto (and for salads or as a steamed green). Leaves from plants in full flower taste bitter

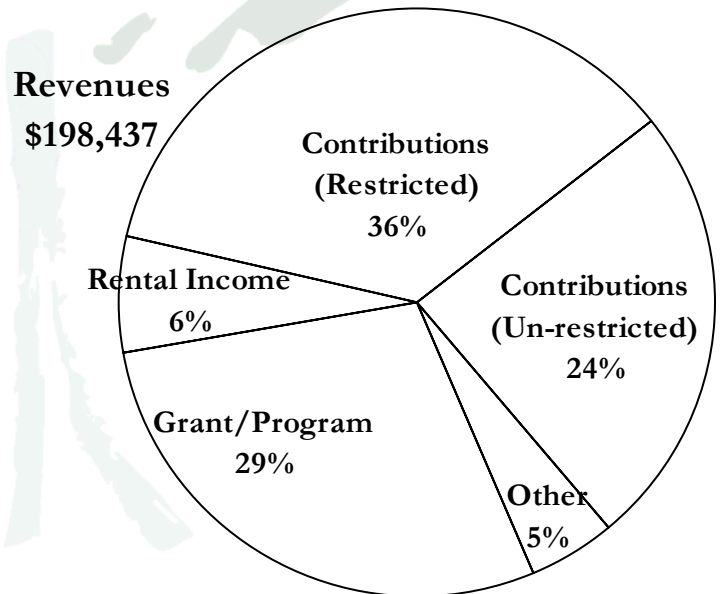
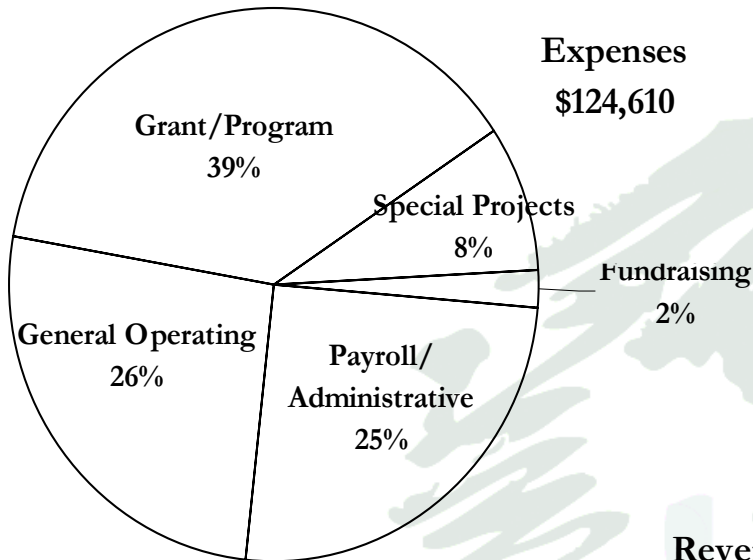


<http://dnr.metrokc.gov>

For more information and recipes visit: <http://www.ma-eppc.org>



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COL Financial Status for the year ended September 30, 2006

According to Steve Smith, Treasurer for Chikaming Open Lands our audited financial statements indicate a healthy and growing land trust. Revenues for the year increased from \$101,261 to \$198,437. This increase was attributed mostly to the increase in funding from the DEQ grant (\$41,795) as well as an increase in membership dues (\$12,381) and an increase in gifts and other donations (\$35,215).

Expenses also increased from the previous year from \$107,699 to \$124,610. This increase is largely due to the increase in payroll expenses (\$17,615). Smith states, "As we move from an all-volunteer land trust to one with both active volunteers and paid staff we will increase our planned expenses, but also protect more acreage in southwest Berrien County."

Smith also states that COL's Balance Sheet remains strong with total assets of \$1,525,982 which is mostly protected land. The only long-term liability the land trust has is a mortgage on its office building for \$104,768.