

Associations Can Help Protect Land to Benefit our Waters

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The Northwoods Land Trust (NWLT), a 501c3 nonprofit organization based in Eagle River, has collaborated with lake associations in the past to protect land to benefit waters in Vilas County. Protecting natural shoreland and up shore woodlands is one of the most effective ways to protect water quality and fish and wildlife habitat. The stories highlighted here showcase how working together can result in a win-win scenario for landowners, lake associations and conservation organizations.

The Wallmann-Holtzer Nature Preserve

Sybil (Wallmann) Holtzer and grew up enjoying summers on Big Portage Lake in Land O' Lakes. After seeing so many lakefront parcels subdivided and developed, Sybil wanted to give back to the lake. She and her husband, Howard, purchased approximately nine acres of vacant land with 750 feet of frontage with the intention of keeping it natural. To ensure that it remain undeveloped, the Holtzers granted a conservation easement on the property to NWLT. The Holtzers later gifted the remaining interest in the land to NWLT as a bequest when they passed away. NWLT then transferred the property to the Big Portage Lake Riparian Association. Dedicated as the Wallmann-Holtzer Nature Preserve, the Association owns and manages the land and NWLT continues to permanently protect it with a conservation easement. The Association creates reasonable rules

about how the land may be used while following the terms of the easement. Today, the property is one of the few remaining large areas of undeveloped natural shoreline on Big Portage Lake.

Snipe Lake Conservation Easement

Willa Schmidt granted a conservation easement to permanently conserve over 1,500 feet of natural shoreland frontage and about 12 acres of woodlands on Snipe Lake west of Eagle River. This highly scenic, privately owned shoreline provides outstanding fish and wildlife habitat, and is one of the last remaining undeveloped large parcels on the lake. The Snipe Lake Association stepped up by contributing funds to NWLT to help Willa cover the costs associated with granting the easement. A few years later, another landowner on Snipe Lake stepped forward to conserve 56 acres of land with 1,000 feet of frontage through the donation of a perpetual conservation easement to NWLT. The Association assisted once again, and donated funds to NWLT to help with the costs. Costs include NWLT's need to have dedicated stewardship funds set aside for annual monitoring.



Rest Lake Conservation Property

The Manitowish Waters Lakes Association (MWLA) recently accepted ownership of a Rest Lake property after the passing of Mark Leis-tickow - a longtime, local resident. He directed his estate to leave his property to a conservation organization so that it would be returned to its natural state and preserved forever. NWLT was unable to accept the property as a permanent conservation area due to its smaller size and need for hands-on restoration and management. The MWLA, a 501c3 organization, was best suited to accept the land, and they gladly did just that. MWLA determined its mission was aligned with owning and protecting shoreland, as doing so would protect the water quality and native habitat of the Manitowish Waters Chain of Lakes and surrounding waters. The MWLA also received funds from the estate to demolish and remove older buildings and clean up the property. Now they are planning for the restoration of native plants and erosion control of the shoreline.

The Vilas County Lakes & Rivers Association is a partner of the Northwoods Land Trust. Together, the organizations are advancing education and outreach to encourage landowners and associations to protect land and water today for tomorrow. To learn more, visit vclra.org/legacy/ and contact us to start a conversation about how you and/or your association can help protect precious natural resources.