

remote parcels. In some instances, boats are used to monitor the shorelines of easements on remote shorelines or islands. Recently, interpretation of high resolution air photos as been used to complement other types of monitoring.

Easement monitoring planning begins in winter, when LTC staff decide the dates of the monitoring season, which easement properties will be monitored by air, and which landowners will be contacted to arrange a meeting (the goal is to meet with easement landowners at least once every four years). Stewardship Department staff share in the task of monitoring all 270 easement properties. Typically, monitoring is done by one individual.

Staff strive to be as efficient as possible when conducting on-site monitoring, and usually try to visit multiple properties in a selected region throughout a given field monitoring day. Prior to going afield, staff review the file for each property to be monitored to become familiar with the stipulations of the easement, names of the owners, features of the property, and any recent correspondence or issues. Field materials are also

### Private Conservation Property

The Little Traverse Conservancy holds a conservation easement on this property. The Conservancy and the landowner are cooperating to ensure that the scenic, natural, and open space values of this land will remain protected.

This protected area is private property.

**Little Traverse Conservancy**  
3264 Powell Road  
Harbor Springs, MI 49740  
231-347-0991  
www.landtrust.org



LTC has signage available identifying easement-protected lands. This is a great way to promote the concept of conservation easements and showcase the fact that your land is protected by a conservation easement. The signs measure 7.5 X 11.5 inches and are printed on .063 gauge aluminum. Up to two signs are available free, with additional signs available at cost (\$7.50 each). Please let us know if you'd like a sign for your property.

gathered. A wide range of conditions and habitats are present on LTC's many easement properties, and so "be prepared" is a good motto for LTC staff as well as the Boy Scouts!

When staff arrive at the easement, public road frontage or sometimes interior roads are driven to provide a quick and extensive overview of the property. If there's a house associated with the property, monitors stop in to let anyone home know that monitoring will be occurring. Owners are always welcome to accompany the monitor, either by prior appointment or at the last minute.

Whenever monitors park their vehicle (usually along a road shoulder) they leave a "LTC is monitoring your easement" sign and/or business card, on the vehicle dashboard.

Activities often occur along property boundaries, roads and trails, and edges of building envelopes or excluded areas, so monitors concentrate on inspecting those. Otherwise monitors

try to walk throughout the property "high and low," often concentrating on areas that were not visited recently. A hand held GPS is used to navigate through the property and also to record a track of the monitoring route. "Waypoints" are recorded on the GPS and photos taken as needed to document interesting or special features or problem locations.

Following monitoring, a monitoring report is filled out and filed, along with a map of the monitoring route and any photos that were taken. Monitoring reports are not generally provided to easement owners, but if a violation is observed, LTC staff will make contact to discuss the findings and how the violation can be resolved or prevented in the future.

### Navigating Your Easement Property

One of the most important tools used by LTC staff for conservation easement monitoring is a hand-held global positioning system (GPS) receiver. GPS is a satellite-based navigation system made possible by a network of orbiting satellites that transmit signals to Earth. GPS receivers take this information and use triangulation to calculate the user's exact location.

GPS has come into widespread use in recent years. It works in any weather conditions, anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day. Today's GPS receivers are quite accurate – usually to within about 20 feet. LTC has shape files of every easement property based on the legal description or county parcel data that can be loaded into and displayed on the screen of Garmin brand GPS receivers or a smart phone. If you would like help loading the shape of your easement property onto your personal Garmin GPS unit or smart phone to help you explore your property, monitor the boundaries, mark special features, or plan resource management projects, please contact LTC.



### Please call us, if...

- ...you would like to schedule a specific time and date for LTC staff to monitor your property.
- ...you are selling your easement-protected property. This will ensure the new owners understand the easement.
- ...you plan to exercise one of the rights retained in your conservation easement. Examples might include the renovation of an existing structure; construction of a new structure (including things like fences, gates, decks, campsites, or sheds); conducting forest management activities; land clearing; landscaping, or trail building.
- ...As always, please feel free to contact LTC Stewardship staff for advice or information about your resource protection and management needs.

# Conservation Easement Landowner Newsletter

A newsletter for owners of land protected with a conservation easement.



### Introduction

Little Traverse Conservancy (LTC) accepted its first conservation easement in 1986 on six acres of land on M-119 near Harbor Springs. To date, LTC holds conservation easements on 270 properties totaling almost 21,000 acres. Of these, only 133 (50%) are still owned by the original owner. In recent years, it has become increasingly apparent that as easement properties change hands, many current easement owners don't know much about the organization that holds their easement. In this year's issue of the Conservation Easement Landowner Newsletter, we want to get "back to basics" and let easement owners know more about LTC and our obligation to monitor and enforce conservation easements.

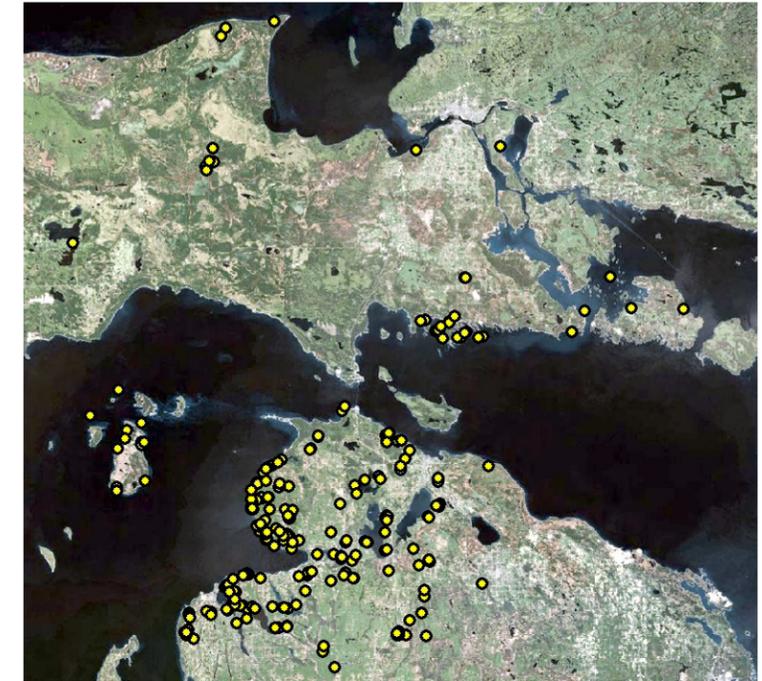
### Land Trusts

LTC is an organization known as a land trust. A land trust is a private, nonprofit organization that, as all or part of its mission, actively works to conserve land by undertaking or assisting in land or conservation easement acquisition, and by its stewardship of such land and easements.

There are approximately 1,700 land trusts in the U.S. To date, land trusts have conserved 37 million acres of land – an area roughly the size of all the New England states combined. More information about land trusts in general is available by visiting the website of the Land Trust Alliance (LTA), an organization that defines itself as the national convener, strategist, and representative of the land trusts throughout America ([www.landtrustalliance.org](http://www.landtrustalliance.org)).

### Little Traverse Conservancy

LTC is a regional land trust – one that generally works throughout a relatively small, local region. There are 25

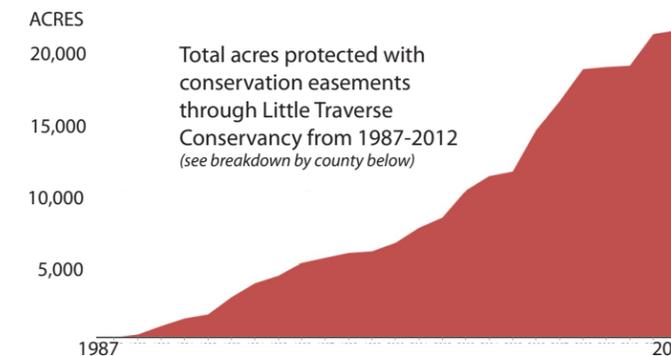


LTC Conservation Easements

regional land trusts in Michigan, covering almost the entire state. LTC is the oldest regional non-profit land trust in Michigan. Since 1972, LTC has permanently protected ecologically significant and scenic lands from development, and created places where the public can enjoy outdoor recreation.

LTC is a membership-based organization with the support of more than 4,100 members. Over the years, LTC has worked with willing private landowners to either acquire land or place a conservation easement on the land. LTC also works with local units of government to help them acquire and protect land.

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County	# Easements	Acres
Charlevoix	70	3122
Cheboygan	56	9235
Chippewa & Luce	18	3538
Emmet	109	4303
Mackinaw	17	509
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>20,707</b>

49,000 acres of land, including 125 miles of shoreline along lakes and streams have been set aside to remain in their natural state throughout Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Emmet, Mackinac, and Chippewa Counties. In addition, LTC also has an education component to its mission. More than 4,000 school-aged children participate in free Conservancy environmental education outings every year.

Only 69 owners of LTC's 268 properties are organizational members. If you support LTC's mission to protect land for ecological, scenic, educational, or recreational purposes, please consider joining and volunteering.

LTC permanently employs 13 professionals working in five departments: Land Protection, Stewardship, Education, Communication, and Administration. Seasonal workers are also employed. The Land Protection Department is responsible for acquiring land and working with private property owners to put conservation easements in place. The Stewardship Department manages and protects nature preserves and monitors and enforces conservation easements.

### LTC's Nature Preserves

Most visible to the public are the 173 nature preserves totaling almost 15,000 acres owned and managed by LTC. Most of these are identified with a distinctive sandblasted wood sign. These nature preserves are all open to the public, with certain restrictions:

#### Permitted Activities on Preserves

- Non-motorized travel such as hiking, snowshoeing, skiing, mountain biking, and horseback riding.
- Harvesting of wild fruits like berries, nuts, or mushrooms.
- Other uses such as wildlife observation, photography, dog walking (although dogs must be leashed), etc.
- Fishing (catch and release is encouraged)
- Hunting with permission (selected preserves only)

#### Prohibited Activities on Preserves

- Motorized vehicles of any kind
- Camping
- Fires
- Creation of unauthorized trails
- Dumping of trash or yard waste
- Cutting of trees
- Removal of plants
- Salvaging firewood, including fallen deadwood.

Hunting is allowed on about half of LTC's nature preserve acreage, with written permission. There are formal trails (mostly single-track hiking trails) on about 50 preserves totalling about 70 miles. Most of these preserves also have a parking area. Most of the other preserves are wild land, where visitors must find their own way throughout a natural landscape.

An interactive map of all LTC's nature preserves showing



LTC Nature Preserves

**Stew Crew 2013**

LTC office  
231.347.0991



Charles Dawley  
Preserve/GIS Specialist



Doug Fuller  
Director of Stewardship



Cacia Lesh  
Volunteer Coordinator



Mike Lynch  
Preserve Specialist



Jay Neff  
Conservation Easement Specialist



An example of a nature preserve sign.

- Past issues of the Conservation Easement Landowner Newsletter are available on our website or feel free to request a hard copy.*
- 2007: An in-depth look at easement baselines, forest management guidelines for easement properties
  - 2008: Managing Conservation Easement property for wildlife and biodiversity
  - 2009: Wetlands
  - 2010: Grasslands
  - 2011: Streams and beavers
  - 2012: Destructive forest pests emerald ash borer and beech bark disease

trail systems and parking areas is available on the website, or by downloading our FREE Nature Preserve App available on Google Play or the Apple App Store - search "LTC Explorer."

### Conservation Easements

People primarily place conservation easements on their property because they want to protect it from future unwanted development while at the same time retaining ownership of the land. A conservation easement held by LTC ensures that the property will be protected forever,

regardless of whom owns the land in the future. A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement that allows a landowner to limit the type or amount of development on their property while retaining private ownership of the land. It is a signed and recorded legal document that restricts

Easement-protected lands are not required to be open to the public and the landowner can sell, give, or lease the property as they wish.

some future uses of the land in perpetuity. The conservancy accepts the easement with the understanding that it must enforce the terms of the easement in perpetuity.

Conservation easements offer great flexibility. An easement on property containing rare wildlife habitat might prohibit any development, while a farm conservation easement might

allow continuation of many types of farming practices and the construction of additional farming related buildings, but not subdivision or residential development.

Another big incentive is that the gift of a qualified conservation easement can be a charitable contribution for Federal income tax purposes. Conservation easements may also result in a reduction of Federal estate taxes and Michigan inheritance taxes.

Landowners may also benefit from reductions in real property taxes or protection from large tax increases upon sale of the property (under provisions of Michigan's "tax cap" legislation).

### Conservation Easements Sometimes Become Nature Preserves

In eight instances, properties or portions of properties that started out as easement-protected properties have become nature preserves owned by LTC. In addition, 21 nature preserves also have easements that were placed at the time of LTC acquisition by the donor or seller as a "double layer" of

protection to help ensure that the donor's wishes are met or that the resources are adequately protected.

The most recent example of an easement property that became an LTC preserve is a 120-acre property on the Pigeon River owned by Lois Ann Reed.

A lifetime of love for the outdoors prompted Lois Ann Reed and her husband Larry to purchase various parcels of land in northern Michigan. In 2009, shortly after Larry's death, Lois Ann donated a conservation easement to Little Traverse Conservancy to permanently protect their 110-acre property with more than 4,400 feet of frontage along the Pigeon River. In December, 2013, Lois Ann donated the property to be managed as a nature preserve open to the public. As a donated property, she chose to name it the Reed's Pigeon River Nature Preserve.



Reed's Pigeon River Preserve

### Baseline Documentation Report

A baseline documentation report is created for every new conservation easement project. The baseline records the physical condition of the land at the time the easement is established. It can be thought of as a snapshot in time of the property. It is an important part of the process of establishing a conservation easement and one that is required by law. The baseline documentation report functions to assure both the Little Traverse Conservancy and the donor/seller that the requirements of the easement can and will be upheld. Three copies of every baseline are created. One is an original copy, which is archived in a fireproof vault (as well as electronically) for safe-keeping. Another copy is intended for routine reference and field use by LTC staff (the baseline is referenced each time the property is monitored). A third copy is provided to each easement donor/seller. If you do not have a copy of the baseline for your conservation easement, please contact LTC and we would be happy to provide a replacement.

In 2012, 256 acres of land were protected by LTC with five new conservation easements.

### Conservation Easement Monitoring

Monitoring is critical to the protection of the natural resource values intended by the conservation easement. Monitoring can establish a record of landowner compliance, detect violations early, and help maintain a good relationship between LTC and the landowner. Monitoring requires LTC staff to visit each easement property annually. Most properties are monitored on the ground, but aerial monitoring is also utilized for large and

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