

Conservation Easement Landowner Newsletter *Fall 2020*



Conservation Easement Owner and Member Spotlight

John and Mary Merrill donated a conservation easement on their 35 acre parcel in northern Emmet County, in 2013. Besides protecting their land, they show their passion for conservation through being preserve monitors and participating in other volunteer activities with Little Traverse Conservancy, as well as being members. Mary shares her thoughts on why she thinks it is important to be a member of LTC:

"John was very interested in preserving our property and sought out information through LTC and learned about conservation easements. We were guided through the process by Ty Ratliff. At the time, I thought that putting the property into a conservation easement was enough of a "gift" to LTC. What I did not realize was the scope of the work that LTC does to protect land in our area and that it requires ongoing financial support. We are members at a level that we can afford and have the donation debited monthly directly from our checking account. It's as important to me as making donations to public radio and paying bills."



"LTC has an ongoing mission to protect the north country that we love. I am also inspired by LTC's mission for educational outreach to the schools so that the next generation learns to love the land and then are inspired to protect it. That is our future. LTC is vital to our community and to us as a couple. We enjoy hiking, skiing and snowshoeing in the preserves and have recently volunteered to be preserve monitors. It is our way of giving back."

**We would love for you
to join us!**

Through ownership of conservation easement land, you are already a powerful ambassador for Little Traverse Conservancy. You quietly or loudly proclaim the value of conserving land through your actions and words. We would be proud to have you as a member as well. Joining requires a gift of \$1 or more each year. In return you are helping protect what makes northern Michigan a special place to live, steward all the land in our care, and get thousands of school children outside to explore the natural world. Simply call our office at 231.347.0991 or visit landtrust.org.

Saving Eastern Hemlock

Not only are hemlock trees lovely in their attire of soft, evergreen needles, they are an important species for food, shade, and shelter for a variety of wildlife, benefiting deer, elk, Red Crossbills, Black-capped Chickadees and much more. They are an integral component of northern Michigan forests, are found growing in a variety of natural areas on public and private lands, and are planted for landscaping purposes. Unfortunately, Eastern hemlock is yet another tree being threatened by an invasive species.

Native to Asia, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) was first observed in Virginia in 1951. Infestation of Eastern hemlock trees has spread to at least 19 states, devastating hemlock populations. It was detected in southwest Michigan in 2016 and with a collaborative effort of vigilant monitoring and rapid response to new infestations, the hope is to prevent it from creeping any further north.

HWA can be moved from tree to tree by birds, other wildlife,

and short distances by wind. It can also travel further via humans on gear, equipment, vehicles, and clothing, on infested nursery stock, or disposed of branches. Several concerned organizations are partnering and working on keeping the spread from reaching our area. There is still an opportunity to save this species from collapse. These groups have information regarding identification, treatment, what to do if you find hemlocks with Woolly Adelgid growing on your property, and may be able to help monitor your hemlocks. There are several other things that could be on the hemlock branches that look similar to HWA, so accurate identification is necessary.

It is very important that you do not allow affected hemlock to be moved off of your property. If you think you have found it on hemlocks growing on your property, please do not take a sample to show someone. Take PHOTOS and contact one of the groups below.

For more information about HWA, visit the following websites and publications:

- Michigan Department of Natural Resources: MDA-Info@michigan.gov or call MDNR at 800-292-3939
- Charlevoix-Antrim-Kalkaska-Emmet Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CAKE CISMA): www.michiganinvasives.org/cakecisma-2/ or 231.533.8363, ext. 5
- Midwest Invasive Species Network (MISIN): www.misin.msu.edu
- DNR Website: www.michigan.gov/HWA
- MSU Extension Bulletin E-3300, December 2015: [https://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/resources/pdfs/hemlock_woolly_adelgid_\(e3300\).pdf](https://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/resources/pdfs/hemlock_woolly_adelgid_(e3300).pdf)
- SAVE MI HEMLOCKS: www.savemihemlocks.org/

Photos courtesy of Michigan DNR



Healthy hemlock branch

Eastern hemlock is a long-lived conifer that grows well in shade. Reaching heights of 60' – 70', this evergreen has short (3/8" – 5/8"), flat, flexible, green needles with two white bands on the undersides, attached by short leafstalks. Its small cones (5/8" – 3/4") have rounded cone scales that hang down at the end of twigs.



Hemlock branch with Woolly Adelgid

Hemlock woolly adelgids are tiny (1/16") insects that feed at the base of hemlock needles, stealing nutrients from the tree and eventually causing its death within 4 – 10 years. To protect their eggs, they secrete waxy, white, ovisacs that look like small cotton balls. These can be found on the underside of the needles, most easily from late fall through early summer.

2020 Easement Owner Updates

Monitoring

Monitoring started late this year due to Covid-19, but is well underway with plans to complete all ground monitoring by November 13th. Air monitoring will occur this fall. Monitoring occurs Monday through Friday, between 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. We welcome you to join us for site visits! If you are not available during the general monitoring schedule, arrangements can be made to meet outside those days and times.

Current Conditions Reports

Baseline documentation reports provide detailed information of the physical conditions and uses of a property at the time of an easement donation. It remains a critical document for each easement in perpetuity, but as time passes and changes occur on easement properties, the original baseline becomes less effective for monitoring purposes. Therefore, Little Traverse Conservancy plans on preparing Current Condition Reports for properties on which we hold a conservation easement. Basically this report will include current photos of boundaries and specific features from locations consistent with the original baseline photo locations. It will also include photographs of any recently permitted structures, permitted activities, or changes created by natural causes.

We will be starting with a few per year and focusing on properties that have older conservation easements or have

had changes to the property. This report will be done during the annual monitoring visit. Taking photos is a common practice while monitoring, but may take longer than usual with some of these updates. As always, you are welcome to accompany staff during the monitoring visit.

Little Traverse Conservancy will notify conservation easement landowners whose property will be getting a Current Conditions Report and a copy of the completed report will be sent to them for review and verification.

Current Conditions Reports are an important tool to aid in the long term monitoring and documentation of conservation easement properties to ensure the continued protection of the conservation values LTC is obligated to uphold.

Conservation Easement Signs are Available for you!

Landowners have posted them at driveway entrances, gates, trailheads at boundaries, or other key visible locations. Signs denote private conservation property. Up to two signs are available at no charge, with additional signs available at \$7.50 each. Just call our office at 231.347.0991.

2020 CE TOTALS BY COUNTY

| County | Acres | # of Easements |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| Charlevoix | 4,180 | 81 |
| Cheboygan | 9,929 | 66 |
| Chippewa | 4,558 | 22 |
| Emmet | 5,358 | 123 |
| Mackinac | 990 | 18 |
| TOTAL | 25,015 | 310 |

Selling your conservation easement land?

There is a lot to think about and do when selling your property and when you have a conservation easement on it, there are some additional steps to the process. They are not difficult, but they are important! Please remember to pass on the baseline documentation report to a new landowner. Also, to make things easier for everyone involved, please call the Conservancy when your land changes ownership. The earlier we can communicate with the new owners to prevent misunderstandings, answer any questions, and inform them of the stewardship process, the better.

Do you have plans to exercise reserved rights on your easement property this year?

If so, and those reserved rights requires pre-approval or notification, please contact LTC prior to carrying out plans. This provides an opportunity for review and discussion, preventing unnecessary problems from arising and ensuring both parties have the same understanding about what is supposed to occur.

For any easement related questions, please contact Melissa Hansen, Director of Conservation Easements at 231.344.1004 or melissa@landtrust.org.



Little Traverse Conservancy
3264 Powell Road
Harbor Springs, MI 49740
www.landtrust.org
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