

CONSERVATION EASEMENT *Landowner Newsletter*

Spring 2021



Barn Swallow/j van cise



The Impact of Conservation Easements

The conservation easement land protection tool was first put to use by Little Traverse Conservancy in the 1980s with the first conservation easement completed in 1987. It opened up a whole new world for people who want to protect land forever, but still want to own it, have the ability to sell it, or pass it onto heirs.

Whether you were the original donor of the conservation easement on the land that you own, or you purchased or inherited the land with the easement in place, your land is truly making a difference on the northern Michigan landscape.

Today, there are more acres protected through a conservation easement than as a nature preserve or working forest reserve throughout LTC's five-county service area. The graph to the right shows the number of conservation

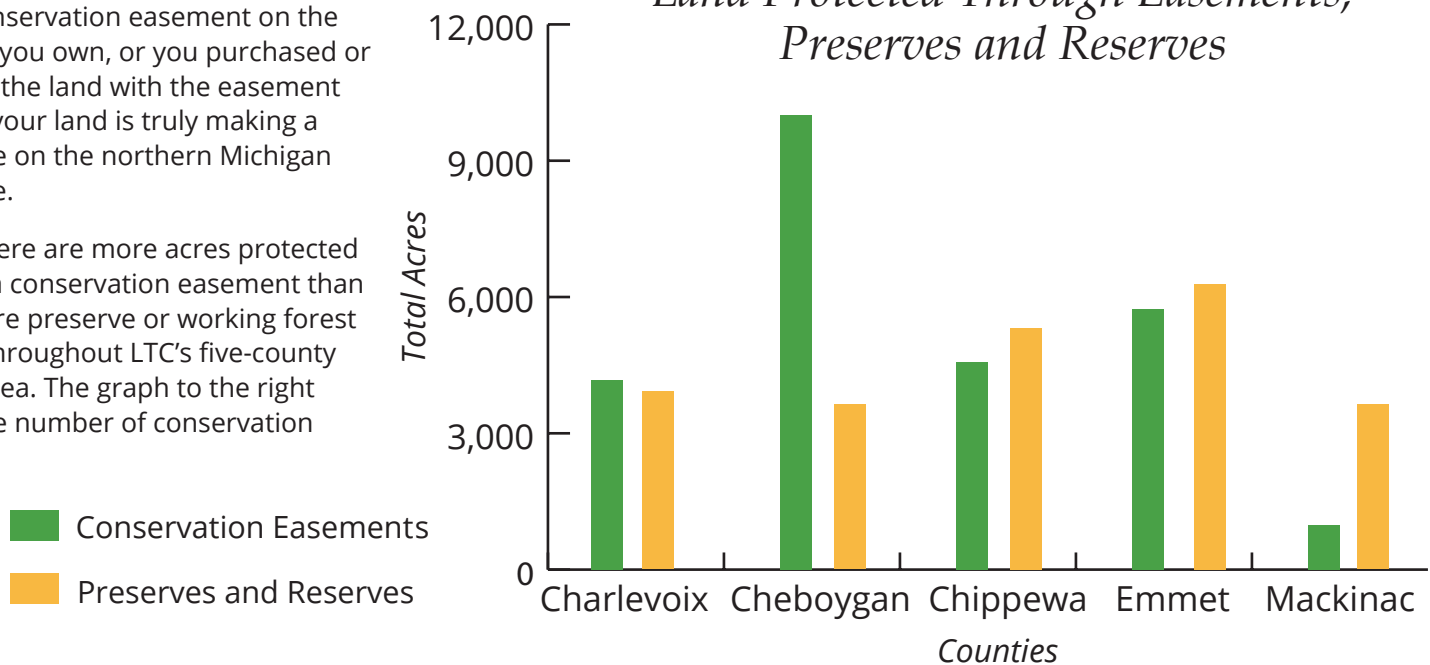
easements and LTC nature preserves and reserves.

The impact is real. It has been often said that we are as healthy and happy as those with whom we spend our time. If you think about it, the same can be readily applied to where we spend our lives. Many of us have intentionally

chosen to live or return to northern Michigan because the natural landscape is powerful. It contributes greatly to our physical, mental, and spiritual health, as LTC members so often attest. It is your land that is helping to do that for us all. Thank you for that.

As of March 2021, LTC has worked with landowners to create 313 conservation easements protecting 25,470 acres.

*Land Protected Through Easements,
Preserves and Reserves*



Preventing the Spread of Oak Wilt

Steeped in symbolism and folklore, and highly valued as a wildlife food source and for its timber, even the mighty oak is susceptible to disease. The culprit, the fungus *Bretziella fagacearum*, disables the tree's water-conducting system, and rapidly causes death of northern red oak, evidenced by brown, wilted leaves, or the loss of leaves during the summer months. The fungus is spread through trees' roots and can also be spread by sap beetles, moving fungal spores between healthy trees and infected trees, which may have been "wounded" by pruning or storm damage.

Oak Wilt is a quick death sentence for red oaks of any age or size, while white oaks may survive or die more slowly, not being as susceptible to it. Treatment to surrounding trees may help prevent spread. Oak Wilt can be mistaken for a variety of other issues that may cause leaf loss, crown thinning, or death in oaks. Familiarity with oak wilt and how to identify it compared to other issues will help in proper management. The negative impacts of losing red oaks in our northern Michigan forests warrants good stewardship practices and prevention of spread.

What Can Property Owners Do?

- Learn about Oak Wilt and help prevent its spread.
- Monitor your trees for Oak Wilt.
- Prune at Low Risk Times.

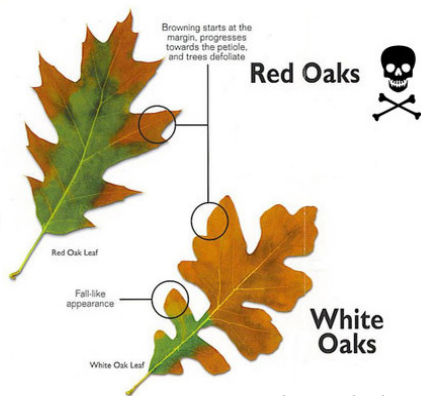
Red oaks are most vulnerable during the warmer months of the year, when the beetles are active, so the very best time to prune oaks (or conduct forest harvests in a forest with oaks) is from late October until March. March 15 - April 14 and July 16 - October 31 are times of lower risk. From April 15 - July 15, risk is greatest. Pruning should be avoided during that time.

- Ask tree workers not to use climbing spurs on trees unless they're removing the entire tree or if they're needed for safety reasons.
- Report any Oak Wilt findings by emailing DNR-FRD-Forest-Health@michigan.gov or calling 517-284-5895 or at Midwest Invasive Species Information Network: www.misin.msu.edu. Taking photos and noting the location, date, and time of photos will help verify your information.
- Do not move firewood! Moving infected firewood can cause new infections.

- Pointed v. Rounded Lobes

Oak Wilt is:

- **DEADLY** for Red Oak Family
 - Northern Red
 - Northern Pin
 - Black
 - Scarlet, etc.
- **Slow Kill** for White Oak Family
 - White
 - Swamp White
 - Bur
 - Chinquapin
 - English, etc.



www.michiganoakwilt.org

Want to know more?

- www.michiganoakwilt.org
- www.canr.msu.edu/news/worried_about_oak_wilt



2021 Easement Owner Updates

Monitoring Schedule 2021

This year's monitoring window is April 5 - November 12. We're happy to have you join us during monitoring! To schedule a site visit with us, please contact Melissa at 231.347.0991 or melissa@landtrust.org. We will only meet landowners outside and will follow Covid-19 safety guidelines.

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.

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

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, the original baseline may not reflect those changes.

To bring these baselines up to date, Little Traverse Conservancy plans to prepare Current Condition Reports for properties on which we hold a conservation easement. 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 the documentation update process may take longer than usual. 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.

Current Easements by County

County	Acres	# of Easements
Charlevoix	4,180	81
Cheboygan	10,003	67
Chippewa	4,558	22
Emmet	5,739	125
Mackinac	990	18
TOTAL	25,470	313

A POWERFUL GIFT

that anyone can make

Do you want to ensure your legacy of land protection for years to come? Where there's a will, there's a way. It is simple to arrange and you can do it today – with a legacy gift through your will and estate planning. Advanced, thoughtful planning offers you the opportunity to support the Conservancy knowing your gift will further the organization's mission for years to come. For more information or to share that you have included the Conservancy in your estate planning, please contact Ty Ratliff, Associate Director, at 231.344.1005 or tyratliff@landtrust.org.

Did you know....

Little Traverse Conservancy has acquired 19,671 acres of nature preserves and reserves, protecting wildlife habitat, wetlands, forests, fields, shoreline, and scenic views in northern Michigan? These are open to the public and many have trails with a variety of low-impact activities permitted, waiting for you to enjoy. You may have one or more near your property. Visit www.landtrust.org/preserves-and-reserves/ to learn more.

Nana B. Agyei



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Take the next step...join us!

You are doing so much by protecting your northern Michigan land.
As a member, you can help protect even more.

By becoming a member, you ensure the work of protecting what makes northern Michigan a special place continues. Other benefits include: a copy of the Featured Nature Preserve Guide, free unlimited summer education program attendance, first notification of field trips, free access to Thorne Swift Nature Center, quarterly newsletters, and LTC's annual report.

Visit www.landtrust.org/membership or call our office at 231.347.0991.

PROTECTING THE NORTH COUNTRY WE ALL LOVE