Giving to
Michigan
2021
The Nature Conservancy

IN **GRATITUDE**

Jeremy Wittrock
Director of Development

As Michigan's trees shed their fall colors and prepare for the clean slate of winter, I feel such gratitude for the natural world that has helped many of us find renewal and reconnection in difficult times. And I am grateful for The Nature Conservancy's (TNC's) community of supporters, who made our recent campaign for conservation so successful.

Just as TNC strives to ensure a better future for people and nature, it is people like you who enable our success and provide the foundation and inspiration that has launched us into the "decade of delivery." This is the decade in which TNC's 2030 goals (shared in our fall newsletter) must become a reality in Michigan and around the world.

We are up against enormous challenges, from the loss of biodiversity, to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, to the climate crisis. But I see supporters like you being resilient, and I see that you believe in the role that nature can play in solving these challenges, and I see you taking action. TNC is glad to be able to feature a few of your stories in this 2021 edition of Giving to Michigan.

I am so grateful for all of you. Your dedication to conservation and the well-being of people and nature is not just the foundation of TNC's success; it is also the foundation of our hope for the future.

Thank you for your support and your commitment.

See you out there,

Jeremy J. Wittrock
Director of Development

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COVER PHOTO: Hikers at TNC's Echo Lake Nature Preserve near Marquette. © Ellie Scholtz/TNC; **LEFT:** Fall colors from an overlook at TNC's Helmut and Candis Stern Preserve at Mt. Baldy. © Jason Whalen/Big Foot Media

MICHIGAN'S FORESTS: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Fifteen years ago, the "Big U.P. Deal" launched a new era for The Nature Conservancy's work to conserve Michigan's Upper Peninsula (U.P.) forests. Building on previous conservation efforts—including TNC's protection of 15 miles of coastline along the tip of the Keweenaw Peninsula—this momentous land protection deal spanned 423 square miles in the heart of the U.P. It also established the 23,000-acre Two Hearted River Forest Reserve in Luce County: TNC's first working forest reserve in Michigan, where we continue to demonstrate sustainable forest management practices.

And that was just the beginning. Protecting these lands isn't just about protecting the forest itself—it's about protecting a whole host of values for people and nature.

That's why, when we talk about forests, we talk about sustainable jobs. We talk about climate benefits. We talk about deep-rooted and tall-standing trees that are healthy, resilient and diverse. We talk about wildlife thriving among and beneath their branches. We talk about finding solace and rejuvenation in the outdoors. We talk about clean air and water. These values are all interconnected.

Over time, TNC's strategies have grown to better encompass those values, thanks to our dedicated supporters. For example, the establishment of the Wilderness Lakes Reserve in 2017, and its expansion to over 11,000 acres this year, were bold steps forward for a "conservation corridor" in the Michigamme Highlands. By reuniting fragmented forests and habitats with protected lands, we are restoring the connections that many species rely on to thrive in a changing climate—connections people benefit from as well.

Of course, we couldn't accomplish this alone. This conservation corridor does not just include TNC-owned lands; it includes the lands of partners such as the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Forest Service, regional land trusts and private conservation actors. In fact, TNC is collaborating with local landowners, tribes, agencies, nonprofit organizations and more to conserve forests across the entire Great Lakes Northwoods region—an area spanning roughly 64 million miles of Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The next stage of TNC's work will rely on our community of partners more than ever before, as we engage our neighbors in meaningful forest protection and carbon sequestration and storage efforts through TNC's American Forest Carbon Initiative, contribute to climate-smart forest management with the National Institute of Applied Climate Science, and much more.

The future of our forests depends on all of us: together.

THANK YOU

Many wonderful TNC supporters turned the protection of Wilderness Lakes Reserve—and its expansion in 2021—from a dream into a reality. TNC is deeply grateful to the following donors:

Robert & Catherine Anthony
Randall G. Baidas & William Reeves
The Carls Foundation
The Dole Family Foundation
Michael L. & Rhea Dow
J.A. Woollam Foundation
Joseph L. & Jean W. Hudson
John Leonard & Rita Jain
Olivia P. Maynard & Olof Karlstrom
William & Celeste McKinley
Robert & Joyce Mims
Robert & Elizabeth Oneal
In Memory of Dean & Barbara Richardson
The Sally Mead Hands Foundation
Donald & Karen Stearns
Carol & Peter Walters
John L. Weidt
...and many more.

ABOVE: Healthy forests sequester and store more carbon, providing an important natural climate solution that helps reduce carbon levels in the atmosphere. TNC is working in the Upper Peninsula at places like Wilderness Lakes Reserve, to protect and restore these valuable forests. © Robert Anthony

TNC member **Gregg Maze** grew up in a family that enjoyed the great outdoors; together, they established a conservation easement on their forestlands in the U.P.

Easements such as this are just one of many ways to give back to nature. This legally binding agreement, overseen by TNC, commits the property to conservation in perpetuity.

"We need to re-instill the excitement of discovery back to all those around us when interacting with the natural wild. It's the satisfaction of introducing and sharing experiences in nature while visiting, preserving and providing education into the next generation that makes one whole.

"Visiting and experiencing nature is not just a goal but a way to embrace what's around the corner." —Gregg Maze

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Find out how you can put your land to work for conservation—even after your lifetime—by contacting TNC's Director of Development, Jeremy Wittrock, at **jeremy.wittrock@tnc.org** or **(517) 230-3663**.

MARK & SANDY EHLERT

Surrounded by Beauty

Living in the U.P., TNC members Mark and Sandy Ehlert don't have to go far to 'get away from it all.' "We live on the rocky coast of Lake Superior and have a spot where we like to sit in the evening," Sandy says. "You can leave your life, go out your front door and down the stairs, and walk through the sheltered, mossy woods. It's a kind of progression to a place where you can sit and be quiet."

For them, as for many of us, nature brings a kind of clarity. "We both grew up in Michigan," says Mark, "But I'd never been to the U.P. The first time Sandy took me across the bridge, it opened up a whole perspective for me. There's such beauty up here. We've got to work to protect it. We've got to save our wild places."

Mark and Sandy's commitment to the wild places of Michigan, and their belief in TNC's work, is clear. Long-time donors to TNC, they have made consistent annual contributions over the past three decades. Their intuitive understanding of nature's importance is something many of us share.

"People need the outdoors more than they realize, especially this last year and a half," Sandy says. "We are so aware of people finding respite out in nature."

It's not just solace people find, either—nature inspires. As grandparents of four, Mark and Sandy note there's always something to learn, even just by walking outside. Sandy says, "If we don't educate our children about the wild and help them experience it, there won't be a next generation that wants to conserve in the same way."

ABOVE: Spiderweb on a young tamarack tree at a TNC preserve. © Jason Whalen/Big Foot Media; **INSET:** Photo courtesy of Mark and Sandy Ehlert.

CLIMATE ACTION IN A CHANGING WORLD

The effects of climate change are happening now, in real time—from record-breaking heat waves and devastating floods to catastrophic wildfires.

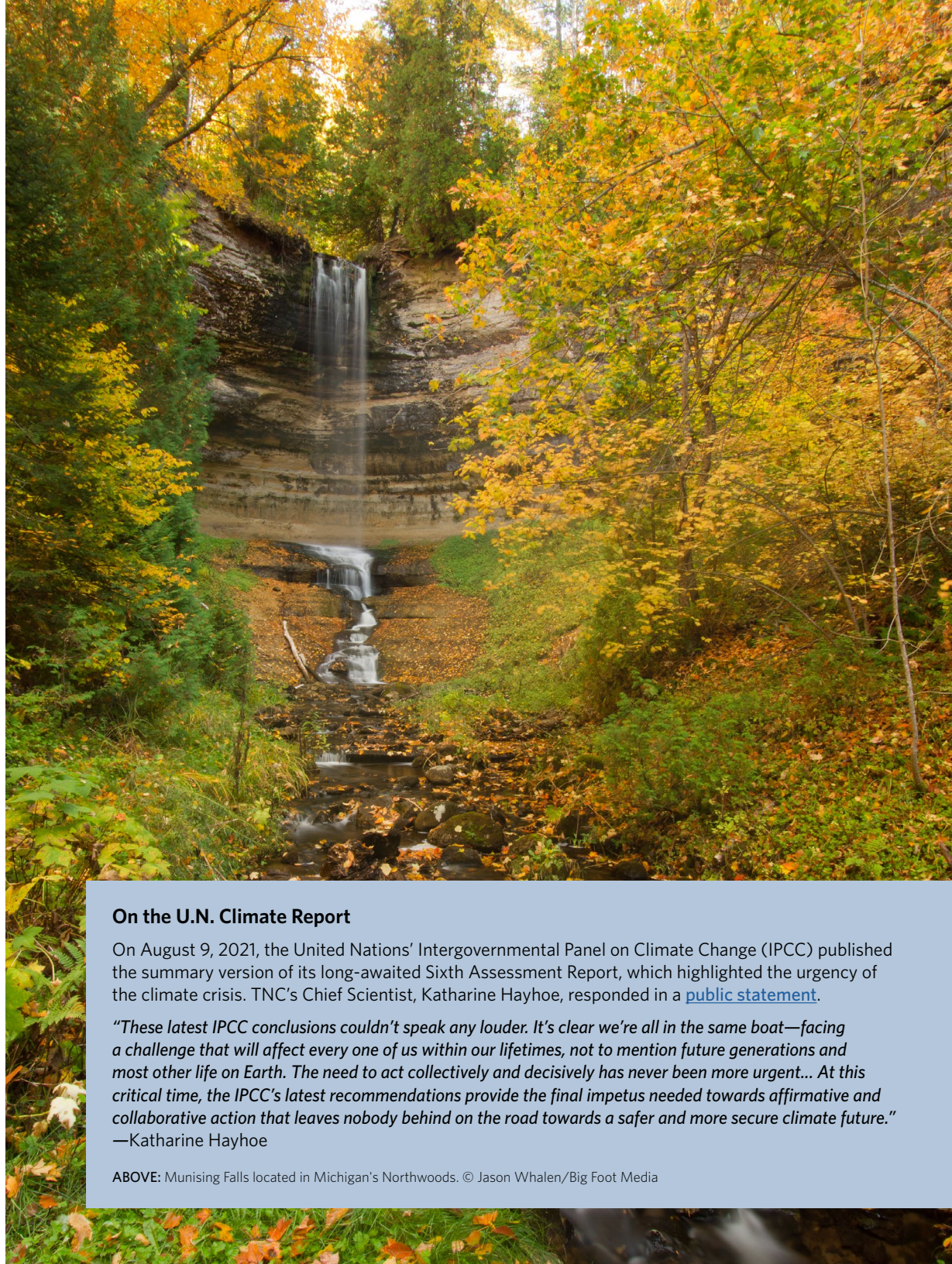
Here in Michigan, these are our headlines, too. No place on Earth will be left untouched by the impacts of climate change. The only way we can turn the tide on climate change is to mobilize our collective ingenuity and resourcefulness.

The Nature Conservancy aims to reduce global carbon emissions by 3 gigatons by 2030 to help the world get on the path to carbon neutrality, or "net-zero" carbon emissions, by mid-century. Here in Michigan, TNC is hard at work to advance that goal at state and national levels, leveraging our reputation as a science-based, nonpartisan organization to encourage climate action that drives innovation and market-based solutions that reduce harm to people and nature.

This includes engaging leaders in government and business. For example, we are playing an active role in Michigan's climate initiative, with TNC trustees Mary Draves and Linda Apsey serving as advisors to the Michigan Climate Solutions Council and Governor Whitmer, respectively, and staff members Patrick Doran and Madhu Anderson participating in two Council workgroups—those for Natural and Working Lands and for Energy Intensive Industries. We are also collaborating with the Michigan Manufacturers Association, the Michigan Farm Bureau and the Michigan Agri-Business Association to engage their membership on climate action.

Supporters like Tony and Sarah Earley (page 7) are critical to helping us make a meaningful and lasting contribution to global climate stability. Thanks to TNC members and donors, we are planting trees and growing relationships. Building healthy soils that store more carbon and an agricultural economy that supports soil health practices. Reaching new audiences, to pursue new solutions.

It's time to reframe how we think about the energy and resource systems that sustain us, and embrace practices that incorporate and replenish the power of nature. We need to come together behind a vision of a future where people and nature don't just survive—we thrive.

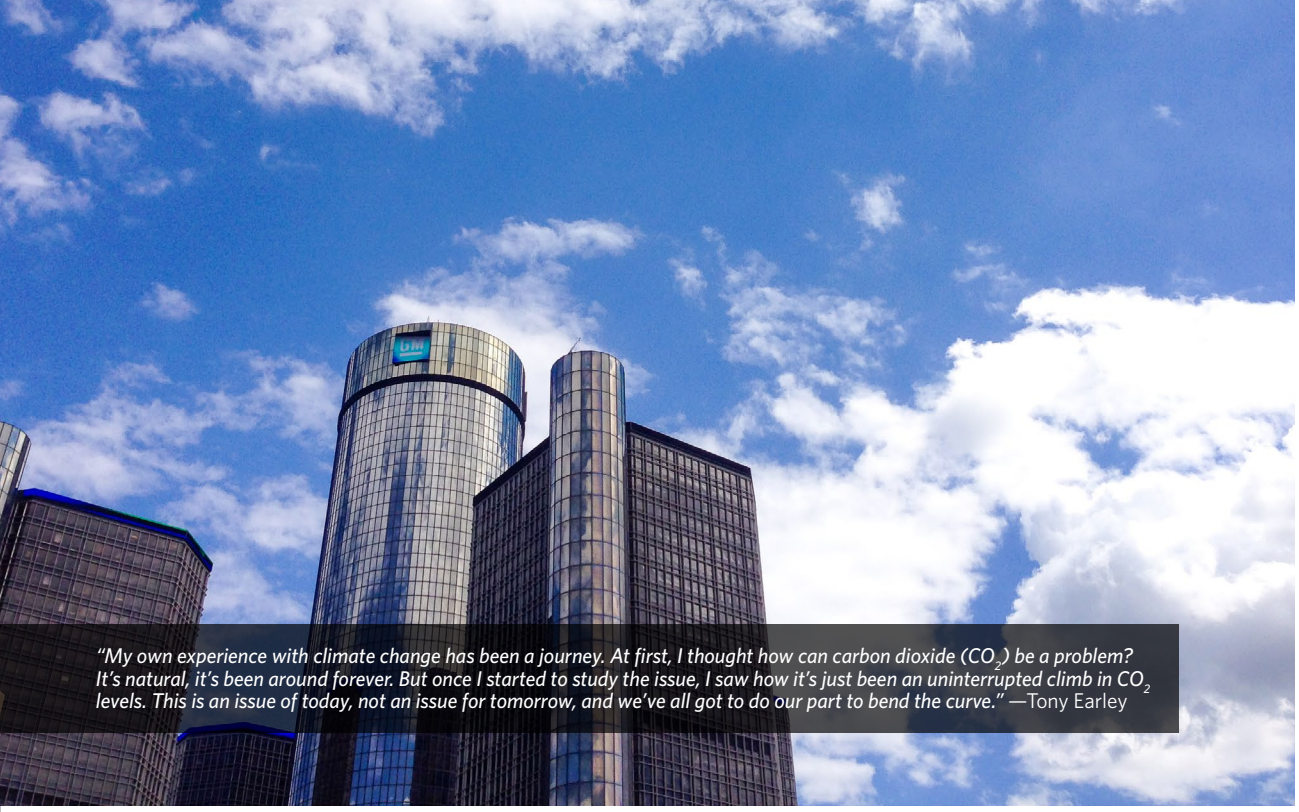


On the U.N. Climate Report

On August 9, 2021, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published the summary version of its long-awaited Sixth Assessment Report, which highlighted the urgency of the climate crisis. TNC's Chief Scientist, Katharine Hayhoe, responded in a public statement.

"These latest IPCC conclusions couldn't speak any louder. It's clear we're all in the same boat—facing a challenge that will affect every one of us within our lifetimes, not to mention future generations and most other life on Earth. The need to act collectively and decisively has never been more urgent... At this critical time, the IPCC's latest recommendations provide the final impetus needed towards affirmative and collaborative action that leaves nobody behind on the road towards a safer and more secure climate future."
—Katharine Hayhoe

ABOVE: Munising Falls located in Michigan's Northwoods. © Jason Whalen/Big Foot Media



"My own experience with climate change has been a journey. At first, I thought how can carbon dioxide (CO_2) be a problem? It's natural, it's been around forever. But once I started to study the issue, I saw how it's just been an uninterrupted climb in CO_2 levels. This is an issue of today, not an issue for tomorrow, and we've all got to do our part to bend the curve." —Tony Earley

TONY & SARAH EARLEY

A Journey Together

When TNC needed to expand the Michigan chapter's climate work, Tony and Sarah Earley helped lead the way. "Climate change is the leading environmental issue we face," says Tony. "What we're seeing in terms of water levels, weird weather events, the heat in the Northwest—says climate change is here, right now."

Tony and Sarah have been supporters of TNC over many years, beginning with gifts to support our research on aquatic invasive species. "For those of us in the business community, zebra mussels weren't just a disaster for the environment, they had huge economic costs as well," says Tony, who has worked in the energy industry for many years. "We were forever having to get mussels out of cooling systems, pipes and shipping vessels."

TNC's work in this area has underscored how economic and environmental benefits can go hand in hand. "We believe TNC has found the right balance between preserving the natural environment and being mindful of the economic impacts and the needs of people," Tony says. The Earleys feel connected to TNC's work for sustainable farms and fisheries as well as healthy cities—a topic close to Sarah's heart, as she has spent many years working to support greenspace in Detroit and the protection of Detroit's Belle Isle Park.

"What I like about TNC is that it's not a 'we/they,' 'good guys/bad guys' thing," says Tony. "It's simply an issue about the Earth that we all live on, and we need to get together and focus on solutions that balance the needs of today with the needs of tomorrow."

ABOVE: Climate change touches every part of our state, from our quiet northern forests to bustling cities. © Drew Goldsman/TNC; **INSET:** Photo courtesy of Tony and Sarah Earley.

Giving Challenge

Tony and Sarah Earley gave to TNC's climate work to help drive awareness of the steps that society needs to take to stop climate change, while challenging other TNC supporters to step up as well.

Help us unlock the Earleys' climate action gift by donating today! Each gift will be matched dollar for dollar up to $150,000. To learn more or to contribute, contact TNC's Director of Development, Jeremy Wittrock, at **jeremy.wittrock@tnc.org** or **(517) 230-3663**.

ABOVE: TNC's climate work will help protect beautiful and resilient lands like those in the Upper Peninsula's Two Hearted Watershed, and the wildlife that rely on these ecosystems. © Loren Merrill/TNC Photo Contest 2019

THE ROOTS OF **REGENERATION**

Food connects us. Whether it is the meals we share with friends and family, or the livelihoods it supports along the journey from farm to fork, we are bound together by our shared need for sustenance.

Food also connects us with nature. Every ear of corn, every sugar beet depends on a whole world of soil-enriching microbes, pollinating insects, water-filtering plants and more.

These connections are at risk—common row crop farming practices have degraded lands and waters and made farms, fields and fisheries less productive over time, even as demand for food grows with the population. Fortunately, the solutions are in our reach, and many food producers are already putting them into practice.

In Michigan and around the globe, The Nature Conservancy is working with farmers and ranchers to help the world shift to a regenerative food system, producing food in ways that actively restore the health of the planet and support thriving communities. This includes building a robust network of information and resources for farmers across Michigan's Saginaw Bay watershed and working with them to demonstrate the impacts of regenerative practices.

This year saw an important transition for TNC's work in Michigan, as we completed several multi-year projects that connected farmers with incentives to help them implement practices, such as cover crops and reduced tillage, that protect both soil health and water quality. Thanks to supporters like the Cook Family Foundation, C.S. Mott Foundation and many others, these projects impacted over 86,000 acres across more than 150 farms and will help TNC inform lasting change within Michigan's food system.

One of the most exciting parts of this work is how many partners throughout the agriculture supply chain have connected with TNC on these important issues. Star of the West Milling Company and Michigan Sugar Company, for example, are helping us locally test and demonstrate soil health practices and incentive programs. And initiatives like our partnership with Kellogg Company (page 9) are helping us share ideas and scale up impact across the Midwest.

By developing smart strategies in partnership with food producers, we can turn one of today's biggest challenges into our greatest opportunity—a food system that not only has a sustainable future, but also creates positive growth for communities, economies and the planet.

ABOVE: Kellogg also supports TNC's work in Michigan through a long-standing involvement with the **Midwest Row Crop Collaborative**, a consortium of food companies, nonprofit organizations and other partners working to improve the sustainability of farms across the Midwest. © Jason Whalen/Fauna Creative

William (Bill) Zehnder a current TNC trustee, also served on the board in the 1990s, and he has always maintained his commitment to our work. As co-owner of the Bavarian Inn in Frankenmuth, he was excited about the potential of TNC's expanding work in his "home turf," the Saginaw Bay watershed. Bill is a member of the boards of both the Michigan Sugar Company and Star of the West Milling Company—two partners who are helping TNC lead this work—and he always looks for ways to unite his passion for conservation with his passion for agriculture.

"Water here is crucial to the livelihoods of so many people, and I'd like to know that the rivers and lakes I swim in are good for me, and others. If we get things on the right path now, we won't have to go through the painful process of restoration that Western Lake Erie is going through.

"I'd encourage us all to be aware of what you can personally do to enhance the environment. Maybe it's as simple as picking up trash or thinking twice about what you pour down the drain—it's the little things we do day in and day out that all add up. Let's make the world a better place than we found it." —Bill Zehnder

INSET: Photo courtesy of Bill Zehnder.

KELLOGG COMPANY

Investing in Michigan's Farmers

Kellogg Company is one of the world's largest consumer food and beverage companies, and it's based right here in Michigan, in the city of Battle Creek. For Kellogg, a sustainable business starts at home—with sustainable practices on Midwest farms.

"The fact of the matter is that it all starts with farmers; they are the people who grow our food and steward our lands and waters. At Kellogg, we believe strongly in partnering with farmers—in the Midwest and across the world—to help them implement conservation practices that not only help improve resiliency, enhance biodiversity and safeguard soil and water, but also, ultimately, increase yields," says Mary Gallagher, senior manager of responsible sourcing for Kellogg North America.

Through Kellogg's Better Days commitment to drive positive change for 3 billion people by the end of 2030, the company aims to help American farmers meet the growing demand for food while supporting the well-being of people and the planet. Kellogg found a natural connection with TNC's work to advance soil health and water quality outcomes through on-farm conservation practices.

In 2019, TNC and Kellogg continued a decade-long partnership with the "Supporting U.S. Farmers" effort across the Midwest and Great Lakes regions, where Kellogg sources corn, wheat and rice to make breakfast-table favorites like Frosted Mini-Wheats and Raisin Bran. Here in the Saginaw Bay watershed, Kellogg is supporting TNC's work to help farmers reduce the amount of soil sediment lost in runoff—a project that has impacted 6,200 acres of farmland and kept over 600 tons of sediment out of waterways in its first two years.

In addition, the partnership will provide greater insight into the economic value of soil health practices, and how that value can be incorporated into the supply chain—from the farm field to your breakfast table.

"Informing and fostering a sustainable supply chain for crops like wheat has potential for transformative, continental-scale impact. We're glad to be able to partner with TNC to achieve targeted, meaningful benefits for Michigan farms and freshwater," says Mary.

Soils Revealed

Healthy soils aren't just the foundation for rich biodiversity, clean rivers and productive farms and ranches—they have huge potential for carbon storage. TNC and partners developed the Soils Revealed information platform to provide a dynamic way to visualize how past and future management impacts soil carbon storage. Here's the big takeaway: **More carbon exists in soils on a global scale than in all vegetation and the atmosphere combined.** This means that increasing organic carbon in soil by a relatively small amount can make a large contribution to carbon reduction—especially in high-potential regions like the Midwest.

LEFT: TNC's sediment erosion reduction project, supported by Kellogg, is based within the 908-square-mile Cass River watershed, part of the Saginaw Bay watershed. Kellogg almost exclusively sources their soft winter wheat from this region of the world. © Jason Whalen/Fauna Creative; **ABOVE:** Michigan farmer, Mike Milligan, showing cover crops to Kellogg's Mary Gallagher and The Nature Conservancy's Mary Fales. © Jason Whalen/Fauna Creative

RECONNECTING WITH THE WILD

Connecting people with nature lies at the heart of The Nature Conservancy's mission—a mission that is more important now than ever. One of the many things that the past two years have taught us is how vital nature is to our personal well-being and quality of life. In fact, the outdoor industry has shown incredible growth[1] as people seek out ways to stay active and healthy while socially distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As more people look to nature for rejuvenation, many of them have found it on TNC's Michigan preserves, causing a dramatic increase in visitor numbers. In recognizing the importance of supporting this connection while also protecting these special places, TNC is undergoing a multi-year preserve infrastructure improvement project that includes new signage, trails, audio tours and more.

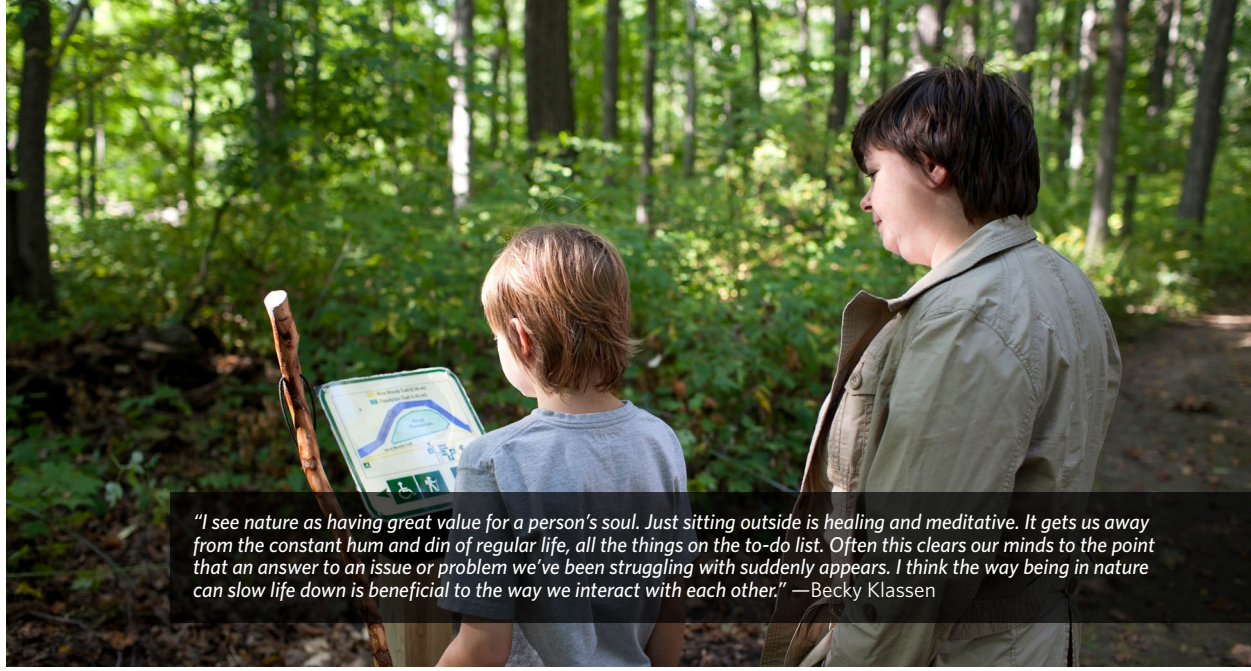
This year's efforts have included:

- Expanding trails at the popular Nan Weston Preserve at Sharon Hollow, which will soon be connected with the nearby Washtenaw County Parks trail system.
- Building a new trail at the McMahon Lake Preserve—with incredible views—thanks to the support of the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation and in recognition of Jeffrey and Cynthia Littmann (page 11).
- Installing an ADA-accessible parking lot at the Carl A. Gerstacker Preserve, thanks to the support of the Gerstacker Foundation, the Les Cheneaux Community Foundation and many others. This makes access to the preserve safer and offers new opportunities to explore.

The Gerstacker, McMahon Lake, and Nan Weston preserves all share something else in common—they are featured in audio tours that are available or coming soon on our website at **www.nature.org/miexplore**. These tours can be accessed on personal devices—on location or from home—and provide an immersive experience of the natural and cultural history of some of TNC's most iconic protected places.

TNC's preserves are just the tip of the iceberg—tangible examples of the expansive conservation work TNC has undertaken in Michigan. Whether you're just starting to get to know our work, or you've come back time and again, we invite you to continue your conservation journey at a TNC preserve trailhead!

[1]The NPD Group, August 23, 2020.



"I see nature as having great value for a person's soul. Just sitting outside is healing and meditative. It gets us away from the constant hum and din of regular life, all the things on the to-do list. Often this clears our minds to the point that an answer to an issue or problem we've been struggling with suddenly appears. I think the way being in nature can slow life down is beneficial to the way we interact with each other." —Becky Klassen

BUCK DREW & BECKY KLASSEN

Everything Starts Small

Buck Drew and Becky Klassen didn't set out to establish a nature preserve. "Our thoughts started small and they just snowballed," Buck says.

It began with 11 acres owned by Buck's family near Onekama, just a stone's throw from Lake Michigan. After securing his family's support, Buck approached TNC about donating a conservation easement on the property. "We saw this as a way to ease the financial burden on future generations when the land is handed down to them, by decreasing property taxes," he says. "Then we started speaking to TNC and realized that we could donate land as well as the conservation easement."

Buck's enthusiasm was contagious. At his encouragement, his neighbors also donated an easement on their 11 acres, and then they started working together to create a preserve. They acquired and donated 40 acres in 2013, and then another 80 acres in 2015, helping TNC establish the Portage Point Woods Preserve.

"Part of our motivation was all the development and logging we were seeing in the surrounding areas," says Buck's partner, Becky. "We didn't want to see this area developed, too. The big picture emerged as time went on—maybe we can actually do something greater here that benefits the whole community."

As Buck and Becky met with TNC Michigan staff throughout this process, they learned of TNC's broader reach, which they have also supported through their unrestricted giving. Buck says, "I'm a dreamer and I'm an optimist, but it's all gained momentum from speaking with staff at TNC and learning how much I don't know. It prompts me to think, how can I jump on board, how can I help?"

Buck stresses that there is no one path to conservation. "We're just ordinary people. If we are doing anything special, it is collaborating with family and neighbors to achieve goals that are difficult to obtain on our own. What we've created is unique, but anyone can give—maybe in ways we can't imagine."

ABOVE: Access to green spaces can reduce stress and improve mental performance and happiness. © Michael DL Jordan/dlp; **INSET:** Photo courtesy of Buck Drew and Becky Klassen.

Jeffrey and Cynthia Littmann

David Egner

In 2019, the **Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation** invited TNC to help celebrate **Jeffrey and Cynthia Littmann** and their many contributions to conservation and philanthropy, including through our two organizations. TNC built the new trail at the McMahon Lake Preserve to honor both the Littmanns' generosity and their love of the Upper Peninsula, which is now shared with every hiker who explores this trail through the preserve's lush wetlands and fragrant pine forests.

"The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation wanted to recognize Jeff and Cindy in a way that would be meaningful to them. What better way than through the conservation work they have supported themselves for so many years? We've worked closely with The Nature Conservancy on other projects and share the same commitment to protecting Michigan's resources for future generations. We saw this as an opportunity to accomplish something meaningful on behalf of the Littmanns, for conservation and for Michiganders all in one." —David Egner, President and CEO, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

ABOVE: The new Jeffrey and Cynthia Littmann trail at McMahon Lake Preserve leads to a stunning overlook where you can view the preserve's infamous patterned fen. © Evelyn Magner/TNC; **INSET (top):** Photo courtesy of the Littmanns. **INSET (bottom)**: David Egner. © Joed Viera

The Edward Lowe Foundation has generously provided TNC's restoration staff with housing that they live and work out of as they tend to TNC's protected lands across the state—in particular, the fens and grasslands in southern Michigan where our Grand River Fen and Ives Road Fen preserves are located.

"The Edward Lowe Foundation supports TNC because of our shared conservation initiatives and understanding that grassland conservation, in particular, is needed today. About 200 acres of prairie land have been restored on Foundation property, with about 100 different species of grasses and flowering plants. Our mission of environmental stewardship reflects Ed Lowe's great love and respect for the land; it also aligns with TNC's mission. In providing housing for TNC while working in the southwestern part of Michigan, the Foundation is hopeful that TNC will be able to carry out its environmental initiatives with greater ease."
—Michele Kline, Property Manager, Edward Lowe Foundation

ABOVE: Restored foundation property, photo courtesy of the Edward Lowe Foundation.

SUSTAINING CONSERVATION

Threats like climate change and species loss are more urgent than ever, and the clock is ticking to create a future where people and nature thrive. The ongoing support of our members helps ensure The Nature Conservancy is always ready to defend nature, when and where it's needed most.

Tackling our planet's biggest challenges takes ongoing action—which cannot happen without steady, long-term support from dedicated champions like those featured in the pages of this Giving to Michigan publication, and many more. **Conservation has to start somewhere. It starts with you.**

LESLIE DEVEREAUX

Leslie Devereaux, a long-time donor to TNC, has deep roots in the natural world of Michigan, her home state. She shared with TNC how she sees nature as a gift. It is a gift she has returned in kind, with 25 consecutive years of personal giving to TNC.

"Nature and natural habitat have always been special to me. The peacefulness, beauty and surprises of nature are a great gift. I recall with special fondness my time as a young person at our family retreat on the Au Sable River near Grayling. I especially relished the trips to the mailbox at the end of the road—drinking in the sights, smells and sounds of the beautiful and unspoiled natural habitat. I want others to have the opportunity to be close to nature.

"As our population has grown and, in some cases, our world has been overtaken by commerce, we have lost the beauty and strength of our natural habitat. We must conserve. We must retain the natural habitat where possible and reverse the trends in our state and communities. We must save our beautiful habitat for future generations. The beauty that I have experienced for these 70+ years must not be a perishable asset.

"I believe in the work of TNC. I believe that TNC brings effective strategies and vision to the work of conservation. There is no greater gift to our country, our state and civilization than nature unspoiled."

ABOVE: Grassy shoreline along Big Trout Lake at TNC's Carl A. Gerstacker Nature Preserve. © Chris Cantway/TNC

Legacy Club

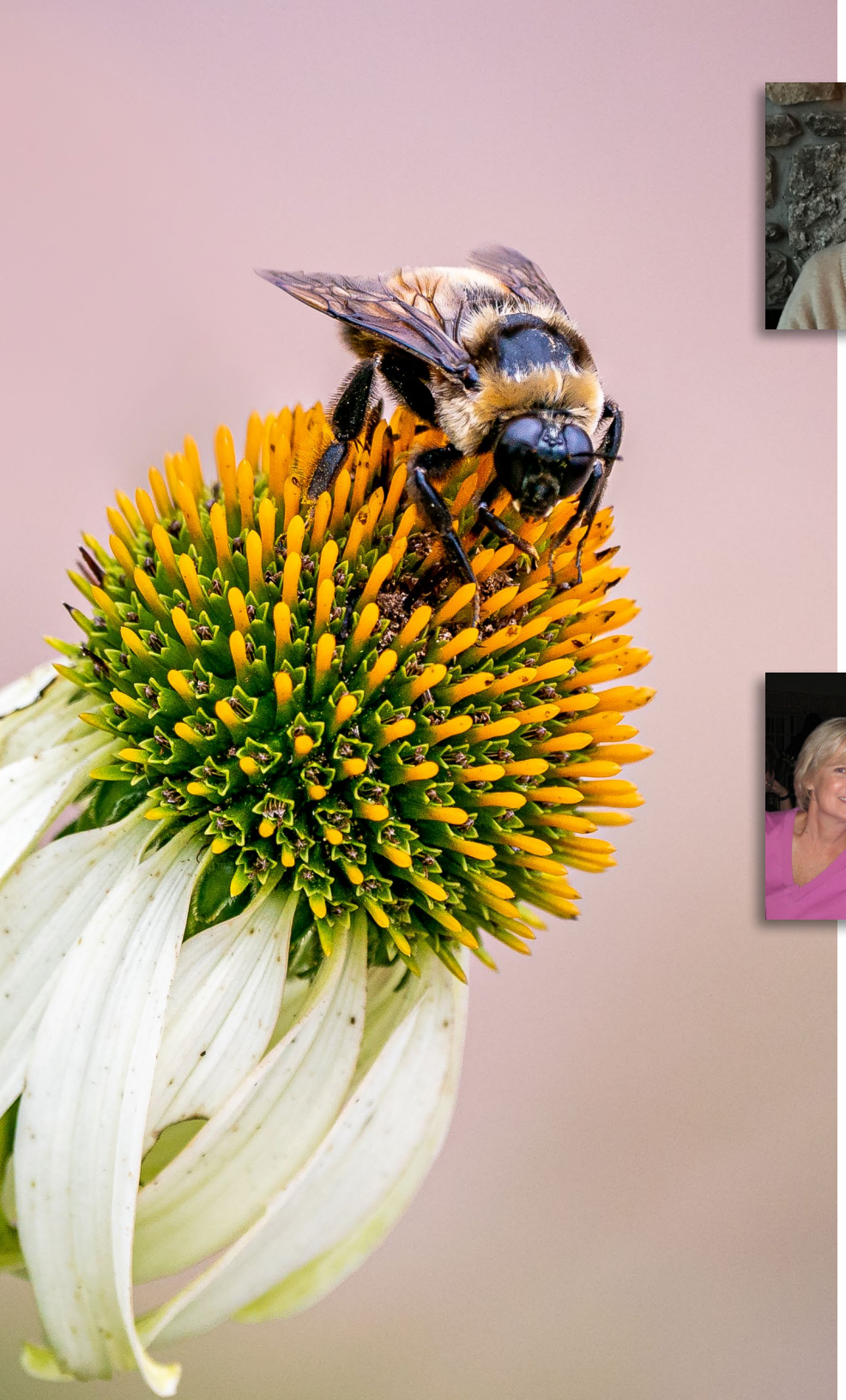
Among our supporters are extraordinary individuals who make the most lasting gifts of all—a gift out of their life's work. This is TNC's Legacy Club: people of all means, from all walks of life, who have included TNC in their will or estate plan or established a life-income gift with TNC.

The Legacy Club was founded in 1993. Since then, over 700 Michigan residents have chosen to make legacy gifts to support TNC's work. This kind of support is extremely important to TNC's development and growth, lending additional stability and resilience to our efforts to protect nature, transform how we use natural resources and inspire action for our state and for our planet.

"There is no greater honor and more humbling support than the trust of someone who chooses to put The Nature Conservancy in their will and allows us to be caretakers of their conservation legacy." —Helen Taylor, State Director, The Nature Conservancy

Membership in The Legacy Club is voluntary and without obligation. To learn more about the Legacy Club, reach out to Paul Beczkiewicz, associate director of development, at pbeczkiewicz@tnc.org or (517) 316-2269.

ABOVE: Avid hiker and long-time Michigan Legacy Club member and trustee, Tom Cook (right), walks with his father Bruce Cook. © Michael DL Jordan/dlp



KAREN WILSON

Karen Wilson and her late husband, John Wilson, were active conservationists for several decades in Door County, Wisconsin, where they lived, as well as the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, where they established a conservation easement on their land with TNC. Karen continues that work today, striving to protect the natural world that was so important to them both.

"As members of the Door County Environmental Council, we were fighting these many decades to prevent overdevelopment and preserve the water and air we all need, which also means preserving forests and open spaces. We saw early on that TNC was doing important work in this area. I remain impressed with the way TNC operates and the staff I have contact with. It's an institution that continues to earn my trust and support.

"My late husband, John, believed deeply in conserving the natural world, and his mark is on everything I do. I want to see us keep as much wild land as we can. Our lives and our welfare depend on it. But it's the beauty and wonder of it that I most grieve when it disappears.

"I prefer to be outside—it's just a place I really like to be. I'm in the woods almost every day. My dog is getting old just like I am, but he still likes a walk. I'll remove invasive species like forget-me-nots or hound's tongue, which allows me to be in the forest for long periods of time with something to do. It's something I've done for many years. We all need to feel part of something bigger than ourselves."

TOM ARNOLD

In Memoriam

As the landlord of TNC's Lansing office, Tom Arnold had a special relationship with our organization and staff. His passing in March 2021 was a sad loss for us—we will sincerely miss his huge smile and gregarious personality. As an active developer, builder and landlord throughout Lansing for many years, he will be remembered for his generosity, both personal and professional. In addition to giving to TNC, he ensured a wonderful working environment for TNC staff. Mary Farr, his partner of 36 years, shared a few words about Tom's legacy.

"Tom's love of TNC grew, initially, because of his wonderful relationship with Helen (TNC's Michigan state director) and her staff. TNC's Lansing office is in the first building he rehabilitated. He counted himself very lucky to have such nice people working in his building.

"Another reason for his support came from our travels. One winter visit to the Bahamas, we snorkeled a beautiful reef. The colors were breathtaking. We visited the reef again a few years later only to find that our beautiful reef, that we were so looking forward to snorkeling again, had been bleached. It was heartbreaking. He was happy to know that he met the right people who could hopefully help stop such things from happening.

"I learned many lessons from him, one of which was to not be wasteful: Turn off the lights behind you, conserve water, don't waste food. He didn't like overconsumption and thoughtlessness. I think Tom felt that he and TNC had similar philosophies. He liked the idea of conservation with common sense."

LEFT: Bee pollinating a coneflower (*Echinacea*). © Jill Bauer/TNC Photo Contest 2021; **INSET (top):** Photo courtesy of Karen Wilson. **INSET (bottom):** Photo courtesy of Mary Farr.

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To each and every one of you: **THANK YOU.**

"Anyone with a conservation ethic can realize a worthwhile legacy with the tools TNC has to offer, at any level. I challenge others to get involved, be proud of your conservation ethic and do something. If everyone contributes in their own way, however large or small, this world will be a better place for us and those that follow." —Buck Drew

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LEFT: Aerial view of TNC's McMahon Lake Preserve in the Upper Peninsula. © Jason Whalen/Fauna Creative

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