



Superior Township Chapter

Update

Preserving the rural character and natural habitats of Superior Township

Summer 2019

Looking Ahead

By Brenda Baker—Co-Chair

I turned 60 last fall. I felt the same that day as I had the day before, when I was 59, but my thinking has started to change. I think about the future more. Or maybe I just think about it differently.

I always thought I'd keep working until I physically couldn't do it anymore. I enjoy my work, and it pays the bills while I spend (or save) whatever is left over. No need to retire.

But now I find that work is getting in the way of staying home! For the first time in my life, I'm thinking seriously about retirement, so I can spend more time at home enjoying Superior Township and the natural world around me. That sounds like a fine retirement!

The cool thing is it's not exclusive to me. You don't have to know me, nor do you have to retire to share in this pleasure. Anyone who comes to the Township can partake.

Now I see that as I've been working toward the future financially with my paid employment, I've been working toward the future emotionally with my volunteer work with SMLC's Superior Township Chapter. SMLC conserves "assets" from the past to benefit all of us in the future—we can look both forward and back with pride and happiness.

Superior Neighbors

By Bill Secrest—Co-Chair

Your local chapter of the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy began as what we could call a "kitchen table" operation. When Jack Smiley launched the SMLC back in 1988, my wife and I had just moved to Cherry Hill Road. We brought news of SMLC with us, and then-Township Trustee, Colleen O'Neal, helped gather a couple of dozen locals for a meeting at the Township Hall. Our local chapter was born. That collection of neighbors has since grown exponentially, and our Superior Greenway now includes over 2,500 acres of preserved countryside.

We soon met Colleen's uncle, Stan Caroen. He moved here in 1929 at the age of six. As likely the oldest resident on Gotfredson Road, I decided to chat with him about growing up in the neighborhood.



A beautiful sky overlooking our Springhill Nature Preserve.
Photo by Charles Scott

Stan went to the Free Church School, the first school established by pioneers here in 1827. Initially a log cabin, it was supplanted in 1871 by the one-room brick building that Stan attended. It became known as the Free Church School after the Free Church was built in 1855 a half

mile to the north. Stan and his nine siblings all passed their first eight grades there while also worshipping at the Free Church. His schoolteacher, Amy Ackley, taught all eight grades in that one room for over thirty years.

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Update

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of the
Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy

8383 Vreeland Road
Superior Township, MI 48198

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...Preserving the rural character
and natural habitats of
Superior Township

Our Steering Committee

Brenda Baker, *Co-Chair*
Bill Secrest, *Co-Chair*
Cathy Bach
Carla Bisaro
Jim McIntyre
Michelle McIntyre
Special Advisor: Jack R. Smiley

SMLC Staff

Jill A. Lewis, Executive Director
Julie McLaughlin, Stewardship &
Outreach Manager
Jennifer Goewey, Office Specialist

Oak Wilt—Protecting our Trees

By Donna Reincke—Washtenaw Community College Landscape Planner

Sunshine
Up north vacations
Muggy weather
Mosquitos
Eating at barbeques
Relaxing by the pool...

It is summer and many of us think of these things this time of year. But there is something else to keep in mind. With that sunshine and muggy weather, we seek to find shade trees to cool off. Those up north vacations provide breathtaking forested scenery. The barbeques we attend are oftentimes enjoyed outdoors amongst trees. And that relaxing day at the pool is even more relaxing while listening to the tree leaves blowing in the breeze. Trees are all around us, and taking proper measures to care for trees can help to stop the spread of devastating diseases such as Oak Wilt.

What is Oak Wilt? Oak Wilt can be a very rapid, deadly disease to both white oak and especially red oak trees. The disease is caused by the fungus *Bretziella fagacearum*, which enters the tree through an open wound that may be caused from pruning, broken branches, nailing, or even storm damage. As the fungus grows in the tree vessels, the vessels become blocked and result in the tree being unable to move water and nutrients to stay alive. Symptoms pop up like wilting or browning leaves that drop suddenly. In red oak trees, these symptoms often mean it is too late to save the tree, and it can be dead within weeks. In addition, insect beetles are attracted to the fungus as a food source and can spread the infection to healthy oak

trees. Clusters and groupings of oaks can all suffer from Oak Wilt even if only one tree gets infected, because the fungus can spread 100 feet or more per season through underground root grafts. In a woodland situation, this can be devastating.

The best thing you can do to protect trees from Oak Wilt is through preventative practices. Do not prune, cut branches, or remove oak trees during spring and warm summer months from April through July as this is when oak trees are at highest risk to the disease. The best time to prune or remove oak trees is during the dormant season, when temperatures are consistently under 50 degrees Fahrenheit. If pruning is unavoidable during the summer months, or you suspect Oak Wilt is present on your property, please consult a certified arborist. Whatever your S-U-M-M-E-R acrostic may be, educating others and practicing preventive maintenance is one small thing we can do to keep our yards shaded and forests healthy. More information about Oak Wilt can be found at <http://www.michiganoakwilt.org>.



An affected trunk like this can be devastating.
Photo by Arboriculture Society of Michigan



2019 Rouge Rescue in Superior Township

By Carla Bisaro—STC Steering Committee

Local Washtenaw County residents may not be aware of the Rouge River in Superior Township, identifying instead with the Huron River so prominent in the area. Many do not realize that the Jack R. Smiley Nature Preserve and the Kosch-Headwaters Preserve, both prominent in the Superior Greenway, fall within the headwaters of the Rouge River. For more than ten years, the Superior Township Chapter of Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy has observed the annual Rouge Rescue event with volunteer work efforts at those two preserves.

This year, on May 18th, we turned our volunteer efforts to improvements at the Jack R. Smiley Preserve. While we had installed a Native Plant and Insect Garden there in 2018, the garden needed attention and maintenance. Work was also required in the small planting that had been installed at the preserve's 2015 dedication. Our largest task, however, was the installation of a decorative native planting at the base of the viewing site platform.

To effect this most recent planting, the site was initially tilled, and then re-tilled with the addition of compost to enrich the heavy clay soil. A variety of native Michigan plants and wildflowers, donated by Superior Township resident Ellen Kurath, was installed by 16 eager, hard-working volunteers, representing Friends of the Rouge, Superior Township, and



The Native Plant Garden after our Rouge Rescue event.
Photo by Cathy Bach

the SMLC local chapter. The volunteers planted compass plant, Indian grass, Culver's root, wild geranium, and black cohosh (*cimicifuga*), as well as a redbud and two alternate-leaf dogwood saplings.

The volunteers also applied their efforts to weeding both our Native Plant and Insect Garden and the preserve's small circular garden, as well as refreshing the compost and mulch in those areas. As if that was not enough, they also attacked a stand of teasel near the trail head. The success of the day makes us determined to come back again in 2020 to observe Rouge Rescue Day in our Superior Township headwaters preserves.

EARTHSHARE: Another Way You Can Support SMLC

Does your workplace have an Employee Charitable Giving Program?

Look for **EarthShare**, a coalition of hundreds of national and local environmental charities, and then find SMLC!

SMLC is a participating member of EarthShare and you can designate your annual charitable gift to SMLC as part of EarthShare.

This makes it easy to give as generously as you'd like since the funds are seamlessly deducted from your paycheck and then processed to end up with SMLC.

SMLC's designation information:

For the Combined Federal Campaign: CFC# 37458

For the State Employees Charitable Campaign: SECC# TT22 4089

For workplaces not included above, check with your charitable campaign contact regarding how to give.

A George of All Trades

By Julie McLaughlin—SMLC Stewardship and Outreach Manager

You might not notice George Kasdorf while you're hiking in the Superior Greenway, or picking strawberries at the Community Organic Garden, but his impact can usually be seen. Often working behind the scenes, George is a linchpin in SMLC's day-to-day stewardship operations, which include maintaining the Conservancy Farm and nature preserves.

George spent 24 years working as a Corporate Quality Systems Manager, in addition to a variety of hands-on and problem-solving positions. "I have been a draftsman, electrician, supervisor with General Electric, even a Tool and Die apprentice. When I was in the U.S. Navy, I was a member of a highly specialized and very small group of Horologists—I fixed the clocks on board ships to keep everyone eating on time."

George found out about SMLC in 2017 through his wife, who was also looking for volunteer opportunities. After visiting the Conservancy Farm, she said it "reminded her of their home, barn, land and neighbors back in Indiana, and that she thought [George] might like to volunteer here." Since then, George has shown up at the Farm almost daily to work on projects large and small, even being named *SMLC's 2017 Volunteer of the Year*. He's responsible for cleaning and organizing the inside of the pole barn ("a fun challenge") and installing visitor kiosks at West Prairie and Conservancy Farm. Recognizing that none of these can be accomplished alone, George is always appreciative of fellow volunteers, like Doug Boyce, who pitch in for the larger or longer-term projects.

During the transition between Stewardship staff, having George as a key volunteer during my first year has been priceless. He enjoys taking apart, fixing, and beefing up the equipment needed for SMLC's stewardship tasks. Through experience he has devised the best methods for getting our work accomplished, and his creative problem solving helps us do a lot with limited resources.

He has gone above and beyond any volunteer I've ever worked with. We often celebrate our volunteers as a group, and we do value all of them immensely, but George has raised the bar with his blood, (literal) sweat, and tears. He is truly an indispensable part of the SMLC team. Thank you, George!



Getting the trails ready for hiking season.
Photo by Julie McLaughlin

Upcoming Superior Township Events

August 24 Saturday 10:00am - 12:00pm	Bird House Building Event Hosted by the Superior Township Chapter Conservancy Farm (8383 Vreeland Rd, Superior Twp.)
September 8 Sunday 1:00pm - 4:30pm	SMLC Picnic at the Farm Conservancy Farm (8383 Vreeland Rd, Superior Twp.)
September 14 Saturday 7:00pm - 10:00pm	SMLC Hunter's Moon Campfire LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve (2252 N. Prospect Rd., Superior Twp.) Hosted by the Superior Township Chapter
October 20 Sunday 1:15pm - 4:00pm	Autumn Spectacular (nature walk) LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve (2252 N. Prospect Rd., Superior Twp.) Hosted by the Superior Township Chapter
February 8, 2020 Saturday Time TBD	SMLC Winter Walkabout (hike) LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve (meet at Superior Township Hall)



Giving Back

By Jacob Yesh-Brochstein—SMLC Stewardship Committee

I've been on the SMLC Stewardship Committee for some time now, and recently I have gotten to thinking about why I do it. This April, I graduated from the University of Michigan Dearborn with a degree in Environmental Studies and a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Certificate. I have gotten a full time desk job (as a data analyst for a social enterprise in Detroit) that I absolutely love. However, my heart is as much in the city as it is in the seclusion and tranquility found on SMLC land, less than an hour away. Nothing is quite as centering as a quiet walk through the woods.

Few things have the thrill of photographing birds as they pass through during migration. Recently, I was thinking about these things when it occurred to me: my stewardship (work on the committee, volunteering GIS skills) is merely a reciprocal action to stewardship I was already receiving from the land.

Stewardship of the land is not just a call to give. In my view, it is a moral duty to give back. Yes, we know of all the environmental services, like water filtration, that land gives us. But these can often be hard to see and feel. So next time you find yourself on a preserve, think about your relationship with the land around you. Think about how you felt before, during, and after your experience. What has the land given you, and what can you give back?

Giving the Gift of Your Time

By Jim McIntyre—STC Steering Committee

As Margaret Mead famously said: *Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.*

For each of us, our world includes an increasing number of priorities that all compete for our time and our resources, making it difficult to feel like what we're doing is truly making a difference. Knowing this, how we choose to spend our time becomes even more important.

Neighbors

Continued from pg. 1

She was, Stan said, a wonderful person. Later the Caroen kids attended high school in Ypsilanti.

Despite growing up in the Great Depression when lots of neighbors were losing their homes, Stan was a very happy kid. He knew every curve in the stream that passed behind his home and served as his daily path to school. He roamed throughout the landscape hunting pheasants and rabbits. Nobody, he noted, paid much attention to property lines back then. The large swampy pond that Gotfredson curves around was, in those days, known as the "Indian Swamp." Not nearly as extensive as it once had been, the area was where the last of the local Native Americans resided. A favorite story was when his Aunt Blanch offered buttered homemade bread to a hungry Indian who came to her home. He enjoyed the bread, but wiped off the butter.

I asked Stan about Cherry Hill Village. He was surprised I called it a village. They used to just call it the "Hill." Now Napier Road, the edge of our township, marks the western edge of Wayne County's explosive development boom. This is the world threatening our gates. Stan says that the eastern side of Napier is like another country now.

I asked Stan if he had any advice to pass along to his younger neighbors. "**HANG IN THERE,**" he said with a big laugh.

...And so we are ...

Over the years, I've come to realize that changing the world can never happen until we change what's in our own back yard. That's why I've chosen to spend my free time doing volunteer work with SMLC. Throughout this newsletter are stories of people who take time out of their schedules to make their world better, starting with what's closest to them.

This year, we've logged hundreds of hours at volunteer workdays in the area: removing

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Giving

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invasive plants, reintroducing native species, managing trails, and doing all of the little things required to keep our Superior Township preserves in great shape. With all that we do, we still only cover a fraction of what needs to be done. How can we do more? By encouraging more people to give a little of their time to one of our many local volunteer opportunities, we can create an enormous work force to make a lasting impact on our world.

Every year, SMLC hosts numerous volunteer events, many of which are right here in Superior Township. These events give us all the opportunity to do something that can change our community for the better, creating a world that's just a little better for ourselves, our families, and our neighbors. Giving your time to make these events happen is a great way to give back to your community and to ensure that your efforts truly change your world for the better. Please join in!

Message from SMLC

At the Board's recent retreat, we discussed SMLC's Mission:

"The Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy conserves natural land and open space—including forests, wetlands, meadows, agricultural lands, and places of scenic beauty—to provide habitat for wildlife and to enrich the lives of people."

For insight on what this means, we looked to SMLC's Overarching Goals:

"SMLC will achieve our vision and mission by accomplishing the following long-term goals:

- Conserve natural land and open space across southeast Michigan.**
- Improve conservation values of already protected lands.**
- Increase the biodiversity and ecological integrity of the region including air and water quality.**
- Build awareness and connections with people and nature in southeast Michigan.**
- Increase and sustain our capacity to deliver SMLC's mission and long-term goals."**

These goals reveal that our Mission includes conserving land, improving that land, improving the region, connecting people with nature and, of necessity, increasing and sustaining our capacity to accomplish all the above.

"Capacity" includes:

- (a) staff and infrastructure needed for typical operations;
- (b) ability to take on special projects, like property acquisition or nature preserve improvements; and
- (c) volunteers—including STC's Steering Committee, other Committees and the Board—who give their time in support of our Staff and Organization.

But "capacity" most importantly includes our members/donors—i.e., **You**. Through your donations, you make it possible for all of our other capacities (without (a) and (b), we'd have little use for (c)). **Thank You** for your continued support of SMLC's Mission!

—Mary Ericson, SMLC President

Giants of the Superior Greenway

By Michelle McIntyre—STC Steering Committee

As long-time residents of the area, my family and I have been exploring the Superior Greenway for years. Numerous wildlife encounters have led us to ask questions and seek answers; often pulling out our cell phones to “google” a new (to us) insect, fungus, wildflower, or bird. We have learned a lot over the years and have been equally enamored with each new plant or animal, no matter how big or how small. Just a few years ago, however, we saw something grazing in a field. Dinosaurs! Not necessarily the kind of dinosaur you might be thinking of, but this ancient species is pretty close. Sandhill Cranes were in the Superior Greenway!

My family and I knew of these birds from a recent trip to Jackson, MI for a visit to the Haehnle Sanctuary where pair-bonded cranes gather to begin their migration south for the winter. Here is what we learned about this ancient species on our visit:

- They are giants! Standing up to 5 feet tall with a wingspan reaching 6 to 7 feet and weighing between 7 and 12 pounds, the Greater Sandhill Crane is Michigan’s largest bird species.
- Fossils of Sandhill Cranes have been dated as far back as 2.5 million years, while other crane fossils are dated 9 million years ago. The fossil record along with the Sandhill Crane’s mating call, lead some to call this species a modern-day dinosaur.
- Care to dance? Sandhill Cranes love dancing. They are known for having some of the best moves of the avian

species and it’s not just for mating season. Cranes dance all year long. Their repertoire includes stretching their wings, bowing, leaping, and pumping their heads. If you haven’t seen this before, I highly recommend pulling up a video on YouTube.

- Sandhill Cranes are monogamous, staying with their mate for life (up to 20 years or more). They do not typically reproduce until age 4, and though they may lay two eggs, it is rare for more than one offspring to fledge.
- Sandhill Cranes were in danger of extinction by the early 1900’s due to over-hunting. Given the slow reproductive rates, rebounding from near extinction was not an easy task. Most populations are stable or increasing now but are still vulnerable due to loss of habitat.



Sandhill Cranes taking to the skies in Superior Township
Photo by Charlers Scott

Areas like the Superior Greenway are an ideal habitat for these birds. With wetlands for nesting, harvested fields to forage, and development halted, we expect to be seeing more and more of these feathered friends in our neighborhood!

YES! I want to help preserve critical natural habitat in Superior Township by supporting Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy.

\$ _____ Total Gift

Check here to let SMLC use my gift where it is needed most

Or, direct my donation:

\$ _____ Land Protection Fund

\$ _____ Superior Greenway Expansion Project Phase II (SGEP-II)

\$ _____ Stewardship Endowment Fund

\$ _____ Superior Township Fund

Please make checks payable to Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy and mail to: **Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy
8383 Vreeland Rd
Superior Township, MI 48198**

Or, make a secure online credit card donation at www.smlcland.org

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All donations are tax deductible to the extent provided by law. The donor received no goods or services in exchange for this donation. E-mail used only for SMLC news/announcements. We will never give or sell your personal information to any other group.

“The man who follows nature and not vain opinions is independent in all things.”

—Epicurus

Breaking News for the Superior Greenway

As this newsletter goes to print, we're happy to report that SMLC has a signed contract to purchase 80 acres at the northeast corner of Ford and Berry Roads.

This will expand the amount of protected land in the Superior Greenway and will result in 278 acres of contiguous protected land at the site.

If you want to help fund this project, SMLC is raising \$129,500 for our share and we have less than \$3,500 left to reach our goal. Select the Superior Greenway Expansion Project Phase II (SGEP-II) on the coupon to the left.

It's hoped that closing will take place this year. Stay tuned!

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