



Conservation is in our nature.

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 17, 2024

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- **Jill A. Lewis**, Executive Director, Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, (734) 484-6565, jlewis@smlcland.org

SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN LAND CONSERVANCY'S 2024 AWARD RECIPIENTS

Presented at the SMLC Picnic at the Farm and Accreditation Celebration

Superior Township, MI – *Conservation is in our Nature* is the theme of this year's Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy (SMLC) awards. SMLC honored organizational partners; its current long-time Executive Director, Jill Lewis; and a number of key volunteers at its biennial Picnic at the Farm and Accreditation Celebration held on September 8, 2024.

"The SMLC Awards are a way for the organization to honor our project partners and special volunteers who, through their generous efforts, have greatly contributed to SMLC's success and achievement of our mission", says Jill A. Lewis, SMLC's Executive Director. "The awards are given out biennially at our Picnic at the Farm event - the purpose of which is to thank our members and volunteers for their ongoing support of SMLC."

This year's *Community Organization Awards* were presented to **Ducks Unlimited** – Great Lakes/Atlantic Regional Office and the **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**. The two project partners obtained federal funding through the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act (GLFWRA) and the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) and facilitated prairie and wetland restorations at SMLC's Conservancy Farm and Lost Lake Nature Preserve during the past 10 years. These projects are improving local wildlife habitat and ecosystem health in both locations.

SMLC's Board of Directors gave the organization's *Executive Director Legacy Award* to **Jill Lewis**, who has been in her position for the past 16 ½ years. During her tenure, she led the efforts that resulted in 1,025 acres of SMLC-protected lands and a 45% increase overall. Ms. Lewis also was responsible for leading SMLC's effort to obtain national Accreditation that was awarded earlier this year from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. Finally, she was instrumental in helping SMLC achieve many public access and land restoration projects during her tenure including the ones noted above.

"SMLC's Board of Directors is very pleased to celebrate this milestone with Jill and we appreciate the dedication and commitment she has demonstrated during her

tenure. We look forward to many more years of continued success, both for Jill and for SMLC as we continue under her leadership,” says Jim McIntyre, SMLC Board President.

Additional awards presented included:

- *Volunteer Legacy Awards:* to members of SMLC’s Event Planning Committee: **Misty Callies, Heidi Gunther, Allison LaPlatt-Weaver, Michelle McIntyre,** and **Maria Vicini** for their assistance putting on SMLC’s Red Barn Bash and Picnic at the Farm events during the past 10 years.
- *2024 Volunteer of the Year Award:* to **George Kasdorf** for countless hours of help with trails maintenance, preserve mowing, equipment repair, and many other things.
- *2023 Volunteer of the Year Award:* to **Joel Geffen**, for his contributions of event and landscape photography during the past 10 years including SMLC’s 2023 Red Barn Bash.

This year’s Picnic at the Farm was sponsored by a number of local businesses and individuals including: **Domino’s, Capstone Tax & Financial, ITC,** and **Zingerman’s**. The complete list of Sponsors can be viewed at smlcland.org.



Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy is an accredited 501(c)3 nonprofit and qualified conservation organization that frequently partners with Federal, State, and local governments to achieve shared conservation goals. During the past 36 years, SMLC has protected nearly 3,500 acres across southeast Michigan through the conservation of natural lands and open space to provide wildlife habitat and to enrich the lives of people. www.smlcland.org

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