



NEWS

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*A community partner protecting land, water, and quality of life
through conservation, stewardship, and education*

A River Runs Through a Legacy Forest *By Evan McDonald*

Every land project has a story behind it but the Pilgrim River Forest has many stories. From concept to accomplishment took about a dozen years, a tiny fraction of the time for melting glaciers that fed the Pilgrim River in its youth to carve a beautiful valley. The story could start with the last ice age or even further back with ancient geology and the Keweenaw Fault that elevated resistant basalts that would later force the Pilgrim River to flow and meander across the soft Jacobsville Sandstones to the south. More recent stories describe the Ojibwe trapping beaver along the river for pelts to trade with the French and having seasonal encampments to garden in the valley's rich soils. The river was eventually named after John Pilgrim, an early European settler and farmer who owned much of the valley prior to the peak of the region's copper mining boom. *All are very interesting stories.*

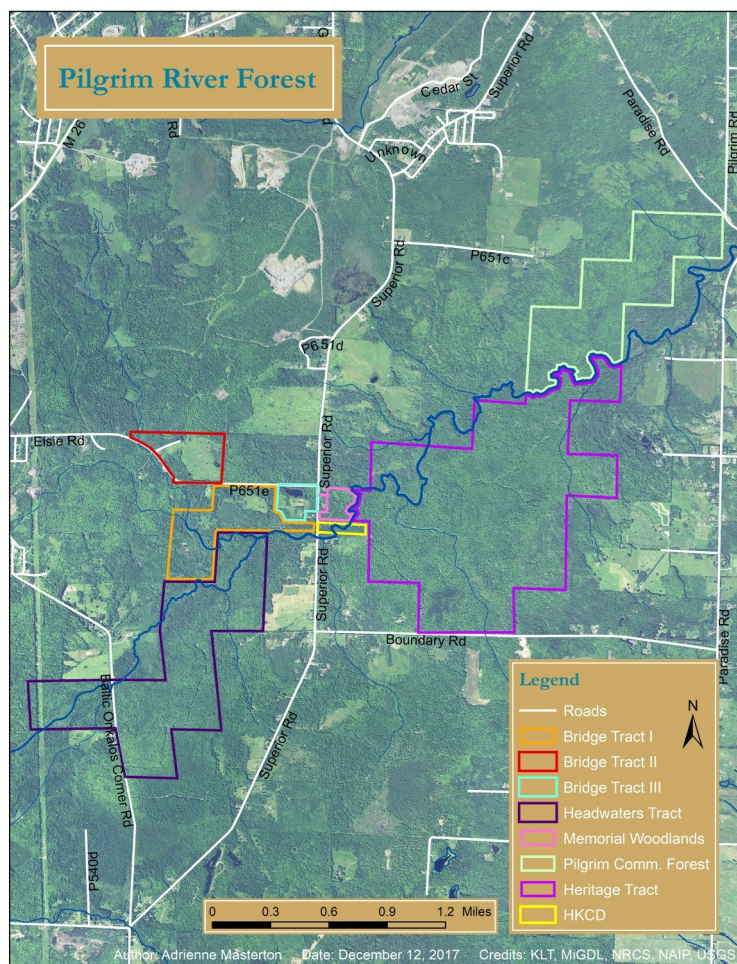
But this is a more recent story about the persistence and patience of some anglers, hikers, birders, paper pushers, and many others, as well as a family whose livelihood comes from the trees but also wanting a future for these forests to benefit the Pilgrim River and its community. Let's start with Copper Country Chapter of Trout Unlimited (CCCTU) that prizes the Pilgrim River for its excellent trout fishing just minutes from Houghton. The watershed has faced challenges over the years and CCCTU volunteers looked out for the river's health, making stream habitat improvements to benefit its fisheries. Deep springs feed the river with year-round cold water flow essential to support native brook trout. Keeping a river cold and clean requires keeping a healthy

forest along its banks to shade the river and its feeder streams, keep the water cool, and hold soil in place to prevent erosion that otherwise harms the river and its inhabitants. Those anglers wanted the river protected forever and wanted to make sure the public would always have access to enjoy it – but how to do that? In 2004 CCCTU asked KLT for help, so KLT did. The first step was to help build a partnership that cared about the Pilgrim River and the forests in the valley surrounding it.

Early in the partnership, the large tract of quality forestland with extensive river and road frontage close to town – the property that inspired the project in the first place – was up for sale and threatened with fragmentation and conversion to development and non-forest uses. Enter the Hovel family on their way to the center of this story. The Hovels are committed land conservationists based in northern Wisconsin that use timber products in their family business, while advocating for sustainable forestry practices. In 2009 the Hovels acquired the critical 1,360 acres along the Pilgrim, including much of the headwaters, as part of their conservation story explained in Joe Hovel's article on page three in this newsletter.

The partnership, named the Pilgrim River Watershed Project (PRWP), brought in silent sports enthusiasts, wildlife lovers, natural resource managers, neighbors and more people who love the Pilgrim area, all pulling together to make the case

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for permanent protection. Community fundraising efforts were led by CCCTU, with KLT exploring land conservation approaches and handling those details. The Houghton Keweenaw Conservation District convened a watershed advisory council and brought scientists and resource managers together to produce a Pilgrim River Watershed Management Plan in 2012. The process considered broad stakeholder concerns and current conditions in the watershed resulting in a plan that documented the high quality of the Pilgrim River watershed, the community desire for recreational access, and the opportunities for conservation. The PRWP identified a contiguous corridor surrounding the main channel of the Pilgrim River, with the Hovel's property and others strategic for permanent protection and public access. The partners recognized that the project's scope could not happen all at once so the strategy became completing the effort in phases, each successful piece building momentum to accomplish the whole.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) became interested in PRWP's objectives for watershed protection,

Bill Leder – President, Copper Country Chapter of Trout Unlimited

"Establishing the Pilgrim River Forest has been a long, twelve year journey of collaboration, patience, and perseverance, punctuated with twists and turns, setbacks, and leaps forward. The local conservation partnership that was forged early in the process, a well-conceived and diligently executed fundraising effort, generous community support, KLT's expertise, active participation by the property owners including early trail construction, and professional assistance from the U.S. Forest Service and Michigan DNR staffs were instrumental in a successful outcome. Everyone stayed focused on shared values and goals. Our dedication to this project has paid off --- for us and future generations."

sustainable resource management and public access, joining the effort to enable PRWP partners to explore and pursue federal grant programs. The MDNR endorsed KLT's application to the United States Forest Service's (USFS) Community Forest Program and grant funding was awarded to purchase 276 acres from the Hovel family. With matching funds from the J.A. Woollam Foundation, that acquisition created the Pilgrim Community Forest in 2014. Building on that success, KLT nominated the Hovel's Heritage and Headwaters Tracts, as they came to be known, for consideration under the USFS Forest Legacy Program (FLP). The entire Upper Peninsula of Michigan is designated a Forest Legacy Area and the PRWP goals align with MDNR priorities described in the Michigan Forest Legacy Assessment of Need. On this basis and with the compelling PRWP story, the MDNR applied to FLP and was awarded a grant in 2016 to permanently conserve the priority lands of the watershed corridor. The PRWP had raised local funds to support the project as required match to the FLP program. As additional match, John Ollila donated property in 2016 that established the Sally M. Ollila Memorial Woodland and will complete conservation easement donations to KLT soon, connecting the Heritage and Headwaters Tracts and extending permanent public access with walking paths and viewing areas.

On December 5, 2017, with administrative and match requirements met, the Hovels and the MDNR completed their transaction. The Heritage tract of 760 acres and the Headwaters Tract of 360 acres are finally protected with permanent Forest Legacy conservation easements. These land protection agreements will help maintain the health of the Pilgrim River watershed, while providing for sustainable forest management and year-round public access for non-motorized recreation, hunting, and fishing. The Pilgrim River Forest will permanently protect nearly 1600 acres, about 10% of the watershed, and about 3.5 miles of the Pilgrim River main channel. The generosity and patience of the Hovel family and John Ollila should inspire others to build on these conservation successes. The Pilgrim River Watershed will remain a conservation priority area for KLT and the PRWP partners in pursuit of new opportunities, hopefully adding more chapters to this extraordinary story.

Kerry Wieber – Forest Land Administrator, Forest Resources Division, Michigan Department of Natural Resources

"The Pilgrim River Watershed Project is an excellent example of passion and persistence! As the Michigan Department of Natural Resources became involved in this project, I was immediately struck by the level of commitment to this project exhibited by everyone involved from the landowners to CCCTU to KLT and everyone in between. After visiting the property for the first time, it was easy to see why the protection of the Pilgrim River Forest was so important to so many people. To walk this property is to experience what feels like one of the UP's hidden treasures. The vibrant forest, feeder streams, and the picturesque Pilgrim River filled with brook trout are unparalleled. So the desire to protect such a beautiful natural resource was inherent. Add to that the well-managed, sustainable forest and the formula was complete for a competitive Forest Legacy Program project. After successfully competing at the national level and being awarded funding, all of the partners worked together to handle unexpected complications and maneuver through a bureaucratic maze and the end result is well worth all of the effort that it took to achieve!"



Doing Good Across State Lines... Again and Again!

By Joe Hovel

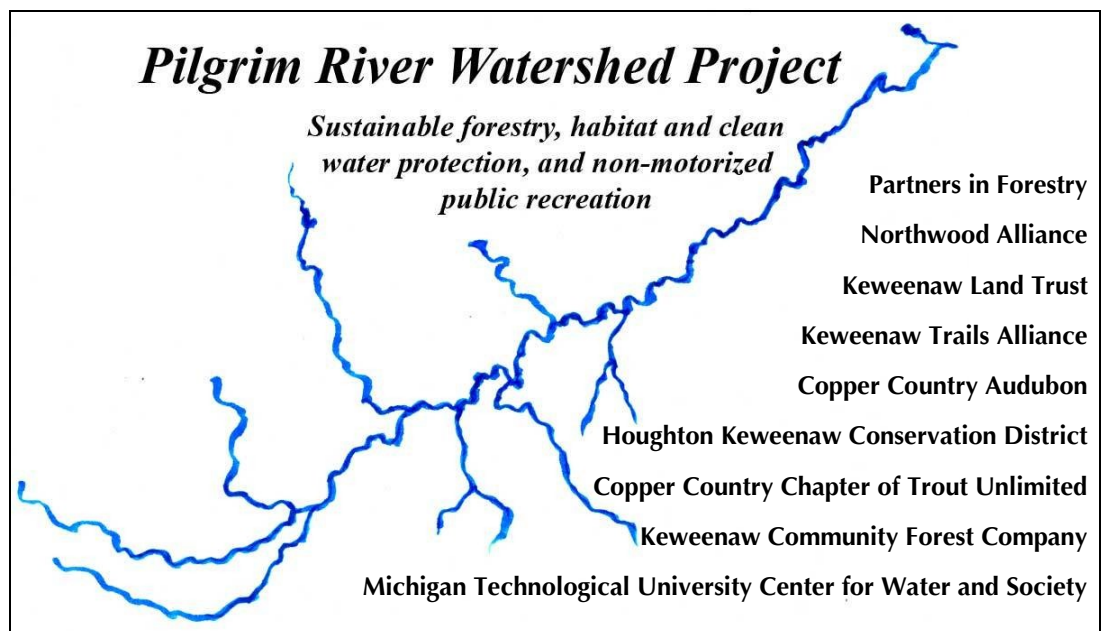
By 1990 the effects of forest fragmentation had negatively impacted our part of northern Wisconsin and were very apparent to me. A nice size parcel of former industry timberland, incredibly diverse and well-stocked, had come on the market in Vilas County. The seller was the Trust for Public Land who had offered the parcel to the State of Wisconsin to expand the Northern Highland State Forest. The north forest boundary was then the south property line of this tract, so the State could not pursue this opportunity.

To save this parcel from a speculators frenzy creating over 2 dozen 'hunting forties' or the like, I put aside my conservative nature and borrowed funds to make the purchase. My wife Mary and I appreciated this incredible opportunity and pledged to do only good with this investment, barring financial emergency. We managed the property with sustainable forestry practices for the next nineteen years.

In 2002 Wisconsin adopted the Forest Legacy Program (FLP) and we applied hoping to protect this property. Narrowly missing FLP funding for three consecutive cycles, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) interest was solid. In 2005 Wisconsin expanded the forest boundary northward. By 2006 the WDNR was prepared to proceed in helping us protect this parcel, asking us to consider selling our land to add to the State Forest. Our answer was positive, if we could find a similar property to carry on our conservation mission. About that time, a charming young Keren Tischler and I had become acquainted. By late 2007 we visited the Pilgrim valley together and sensed the excitement in the air over the possibility of a Pilgrim River Watershed conservation project. My strategy hinged on the section 1031 Like Kind Exchange (LKE) process in the IRS code. After months working out details with the WDNR and the WI Stewardship Fund, as well as my negotiations to purchase 1,360 acres in the Pilgrim valley, in late summer 2009 it all came together. With the LKE process, a 1990 investment just below the U.P. border, with some additional family investment, was now relocated in Houghton County, MI.

With our 2014 sale of a parcel to KLT that created the Pilgrim Community Forest, we conducted a second LKE with those proceeds to purchase part of a larger property just below the UP border and near the headwaters of the Wisconsin River. That seller wanted the whole parcel to be protected, even though he needed to sell. So I worked with WDNR again and by the end of 2015 the 1,042 acre Upper Wisconsin River Legacy Forest was created on both ownerships under the FLP. With yet another LKE, we used our proceeds to buy the other portion and make the property whole once again.

The gratification of completing this recent Pilgrim River Forest Legacy transaction with MDNR gives us the opportunity for yet more LKE investments in conservation forest land, and those are in the works. Hopefully part of this will expand the Pilgrim Forest, and also create yet another important conservation project in the UP! We must collectively and continually be grateful for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Forest Legacy and Community Forest Programs, as well as the WI Stewardship Program. Without these we would not have all of this incredible success to celebrate!



Nature-Friendly Gardening at the Marsin Nature Retreat

By Maria Janowiak

On the hottest day of the summer, eight gardeners stood under the shade of a large spruce tree and assessed the situation. The task at hand was to envision how to turn a neglected and weedy garden bed into a bright and vibrant patchwork of vegetation that will provide food and shelter for insects, toads, and birds.

The Marsin Nature Retreat is getting quite a facelift with the help of local gardeners. New efforts began this summer to improve the landscaping at the Retreat, with a major emphasis on showcasing gardening techniques that are beneficial to nature. Nature-friendly landscaping has long been part of the vision for the Retreat, and a team of Master Gardener volunteers engaged community members in turning these ideas into reality.

The first step was to remove the large non-native cedar shrubs that were planted around the main building and had turned into unsightly overgrown trees that cast too much shade on the garden beds, not to mention blocking the view of the lake from inside the Retreat. Removing just a few trees made a *tree-mendous* visual impact. The trees were chipped on-site, providing high-quality mulch for walking trails and garden beds.



A new look for the Marsin Nature Retreat - no giant cedars!

Because big garden projects can be daunting, a series of workshops was used to break the project into bite-sized pieces. Significant progress was made over the summer with the help of workshop attendees and volunteers from Camp Luther. The garden beds at the front of the Marsin Nature Retreat were weeded, and topsoil and nutrients were added to ensure that new plants will have prime growing conditions.

Gardening is on pause for the winter while the Keweenaw receives a few hundred inches of snow, but plans are underway to plant the new beds in the spring. If you would like to help beautify the Marsin gardens, KLT will be accepting plant donations in early spring. If you have plants or seeds that are native, beneficial for wildlife, or have a local heritage value that you are willing to share - or if you just want to help with gardening - please email Maria Janowiak for more information: maria.janowiak@gmail.com.



Above: volunteers tackle the overgrown front garden at Marsin and discuss how to utilize the concrete planters out back.

Build it Up, Tear it Down

While Maria and her Master Gardening crews tackled the long-neglected gardens at the Marsin Nature Retreat, Nathan went after a few other meaty projects to improve the site for visitors. First up: tear down an old garage that had out-lived its useful life and had become a danger to visitors. A group of volunteers from the Beta Sigma Theta fraternity at Michigan Tech stepped up to the challenge and took ownership of this exciting (by frat guy standards!) service project. After stripping the roof and walls, the shell of the structure came down with a satisfying crash. Success! The ground troops quickly cleaned up the mess and neatly organized it onto trailers for disposal or reuse. A lengthy section of old steel rail was saved to use in the frat's upcoming extreme skiing snow statue. Some call it scavenging, others call it repurposing!



With winter fast approaching and the field season drawing to a close, Nathan organized one last workday on Make a Difference Day. The project? A much-needed addition to the Marsin lakeshore campus: a fire ring! A dozen volunteers from the Delta Upsilon fraternity at Michigan Tech braved snow, wind, and rain to level the rocky ground and haul several tons of gravel to the new fire ring location. It wouldn't be Make a Difference Day without a chance of hypothermia! Thankfully our volunteers were working hard and were more than able to stay warm.

The fire ring is on the lakeshore campus, just over the bridge next to the open lawn. Many groups have requested this feature and we are excited to finally have one for evening marshmallow roasts and summer stargazing parties. KLT will stock firewood for groups to use during their stay. We appreciate the hard work and dedication of our volunteers in making Marsin an attractive place for community groups to gather and enjoy nature's splendor. Keep up the great work, teams!



Rain and snow couldn't stop these tough volunteers from hauling tons of gravel through the muck!

Community Members Leave No Trace at Hungarian Falls

Hungarian Falls felt the love this past August when the Subaru Leave No Trace Traveling Trainers visited the Keweenaw to help the community care for this special place. KLT hosted Traveling Trainers Amanda Jameson and Junaid Dawud for a week of stewardship and education during the Hungarian Falls Hot Spot initiative. The team kept busy, with several trainings and workdays focused on how to ensure this scenic asset remains in good condition for future generations.



Hungarian Falls trash picking champions!

The week started out with a special cleanup day with student volunteers from Michigan Tech. Nathan took a team of volunteers through the Hungarian Falls gorge, while smaller “trash squads” roamed the ORV trails leading in and out of the Hubbell area. All told, these dedicated volunteers managed to remove over 1,400 pounds of trash and debris from the gorge and trails, as well as 20 tires! Wow!

Following our trash-picking success, Clay Hixson and Erika Vye led hikes at Hungarian Falls throughout the week, with the Traveling Trainers sharing Leave No Trace tips and tricks to help community members understand how to lighten their impact on the landscape. The team also hosted a number of workshops for project partners, local educators, and regional conservation groups, as well as a meet ‘n’ greet at Downwind Sports and musical gathering at the Orpheum Theater. Sharing resources with others is essential if we are to help spread the Leave No Trace message to as many visitors to the outdoors as we can!



*Before and after photos of the trail masking efforts
At KLT's Hungarian Falls Nature Area.*

Towards the end of the week, volunteers got to put their training into practice with another workday, this time focused on how to address the tangle of social trails that has emerged across KLT's 10-acre Hungarian Falls Nature Area. With guidance from Amanda, Junaid, and Nathan, crews masked a number of trails with downed trees, branches, and leaves while trimming vegetation around the most durable preferred path. By consolidating use along a few designated trails, the rest of the landscape can recover more quickly and help limit erosion.



Looking for more Leave No Trace knowledge? KLT is hosting a two-day Trainer Course at the Marsin Retreat from March 17-18, 2018. This course is designed for individuals who will be teaching Leave No Trace, and those who want to deepen their understanding of the science behind the Leave No Trace Seven Principles. Through lectures, discussion, interactive activities, and an optional overnight campout, this course will give participants tools and techniques to further define their outdoor ethic, while learning Leave No Trace skills to pass along to others. Cost is \$85 per person. Space is limited to 12 participants.

Contact nathan@keweenawlandtrust.org for more information about this exciting opportunity!

Join the KLT as a new or renewing member!

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A New Face at KISMA

Hello, I am Jill Fisher, the new Botanist and Educator for the Keweenaw Invasive Species Management Area (KISMA). I will be working with KLT and Sigrid Resh, the KISMA coordinator. In this new role, I will bring my education in botany and forest ecology together with my interests in education and gardening to help local organizations and citizens of Baraga, Houghton and Keweenaw counties to better understand the impact of invasive species, how to combat them, and how to restore impacted areas. I plan to focus on working with gardening groups, park and trail managers, and the public in several outreach events to help people feel knowledgeable and empowered to do something positive. Understanding the importance of the contribution of natural elements of our systems is just as important as understanding the deleterious effects of the non-native invasive species. I hope to help people understand not only what we have to lose if we do nothing in the face of invasive species but also teach them something about how special our natural areas are.



Upcoming 2018 KLT Outings

January 7, 1 PM: Join Terry Kinzel for a snowshoe hike on the Churning Rapids trails, followed by cider and a sauna. Meet at the Christensen Road trailhead.

January 20, 6 PM: Join us for a celebration of land as we raise funds for stewardship in Baraga County. The evening will feature the music of Whitewater, a local quartet whose exceptional folk and traditional music is a crowd favorite at the Aura Jamboree. American Legion Post 144 in L'Anse.

January 21, 1 PM: Keren Tischler will lead a backcountry ski through the 'Heritage Tract' of the Pilgrim River Watershed Project. Come prepared for exploration! Meet at the Boundary Road trailhead.

February 10, 1 PM: Winter Wander at Lightfoot Bay with Maria Janowiak. Snowshoe the frozen wetlands and warm up with a hot beverage around the fire in KLT's rustic cabin. Meet at the Skanee Cemetery.

March 11, 1 PM: Snowshoe to the frozen Hungarian Falls! Meet up with Clay Hixson at the northern plowed area on Golf Course Road.

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A Grand Paddle to Din Egen Woods

A bit of a headwind couldn't stop the dozen paddlers who helped KLT unveil its Din Egen Woods cabin earlier this summer! Gathering at the Sandy Bottom Park outside of Dollar Bay, the group took to the water and explored Torch Bay of Portage Lake before arriving at the narrow Din Egen Woods shoreline. After beaching their kayaks and canoes on the shore, the group hiked inland on the new trail that winds its way through shaded hemlock stands and mature aspen. The paddle may have been fun, but the beautiful forest and cabin nestled along the creek were the real showstoppers! The paddle back to Sandy Bottom Park was considerably calmer and a perfect capstone to a wonderful day exploring the Keweenaw Water Trail.

If you'd like to stay at the Din Egen Woods cabin in 2018, give KLT a ring!

Email nathan@keweenawlandtrust.org
or call (906) 482-0820 for more info.



A Super Community Ambassador!

Christmas came early for KLT this summer when super volunteer Adrienne Masterton stopped by a KLT info booth ready to help on whatever she could lend a hand with. Adrienne was a returning Peace Core Masters student at Michigan Tech and was the one of two students in a new Community Ambassadors program through the Pavlis

Honors College. The program is designed to match community organizations with grad students eager to build on their Peace Core experiences. Adrienne teamed up with Nathan to construct a half-mile trail at Din Egen Woods before moving on to clear and blaze a trail at the Steve Farm Nature Area leading to the far beaver pond. With snow putting a stop to on-the-ground stewardship, Adrienne finished her 50-hour stint with some quality GIS maps for KLT's Pilgrim River Watershed projects - including the map on the front page! We appreciate her help on these projects and look forward to working with more Community Ambassadors in the future!