



DRIFTLESS

AREA LAND CONSERVANCY

2022 Annual Report



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The mission of Driftless Area Land Conservancy is to maintain and enhance the health, diversity and beauty of Southwest Wisconsin's natural and agricultural landscape through permanent land protection and restoration; and to improve people's lives by connecting them to the land and each other.

Dear friend of the Driftless,

An annual report offers the opportunity for reflection, for stepping back and taking a good look at an entire year. In 2022, Driftless Area Land Conservancy engaged in strategic planning that led to countless conversations about what we're good at, where we're headed, and what we value most. We found that, although we have a pretty great mission statement, our overall goals can really be boiled down to just three words:

Conservation. Connection. Care.

Here's why those three words jumped out to us:

CONSERVATION

Protecting important places in the Driftless is why we were founded, and remains our bread and butter. We've now permanently protected over 8,000 acres across the Driftless, and we've set an ambitious goal to double that number by 2027!

CONNECTION

We believe everyone benefits from spending time in nature and feeling connected to the land, and should have ample opportunities to enjoy getting outside. Our outreach projects strive to bring people together to experience the wonders of the Driftless and fall in love with this special region.

CARE

We can protect land from development with conservation easements, but it's equally important to protect land from neglect. With the help an ever-growing group of volunteers, we are devoting more resources to stewarding the properties we own and teaching others the skills they need to care for their own land.

In this annual report, you'll find highlights from a year of conservation, connection, and care. But none of it would be possible without **community** - without YOU, and all the amazing folks who make this work happen! Thank you, thank you, thank you. You are making a real difference to our wonderful Driftless.

Sincerely,

The DALC team

CONSERVATION



"I've been a lot of places - I've been to mountaintops, I've been to oceans, I've been all over the world - but some of the most beautiful things I've ever seen are on that 90-acre Driftless ridgetop."

- Christine Rundblad, landowner and conservation easement donor

You protected a treasured Driftless landscape, forever

When landowner Christine Rundblad donated a conservation easement on her Richland County property in 2022, she protected an important piece of the ecological mosaic of the Driftless. But to her, the land is so much more.

Affectionately nicknamed "Shiftless Driftless," this diverse property features remnant oak openings, southern dry mesic forest, and grassland habitat for birds, all located in the headwaters of Willow Creek. To Christine, it's also a "little ridgetop piece of paradise." It was a favorite retreat of her late husband, a farm kid who had moved to Milwaukee and just wanted the chance to drive a tractor around again. Its neighbors are "the nicest people," whose own conservation projects inspired Christine. Throughout the process of creating her easement, Christine was surprised and delighted by the plant diversity and restoration potential found on the property. Now, prairies are being planted and prescribed fire is returning. This land has even had impacts far beyond the Driftless Area. A desire to learn more about how good farming practices benefit the soil and water has led Christine to volunteer with the Hunger Task Force Farm in Milwaukee.

"This land has just been such a joy," Christine says. And thanks to your support for the work of Driftless Area Land Conservancy, it always will be.

Executive Director Jen, Board President Dale, and landowner Christine at the closing of her conservation easement.



CONNECTION

The view from the trailhead of the Weaver Road segment of the Driftless Trail (Barb Barzen).



“Having hiked many miles on trails with sections across private land, I welcomed the opportunity to make a small portion of the Driftless Trail available to the public on my family’s land and look forward to watching the overall vision realized in the years to come.”

- Nan Fey, Driftless Trail host

You built a brighter future for the Driftless Trail

It's a bold vision: a 50-mile hiking path through the heart of the southern Driftless Area. In 2022, your support brought more pieces of the puzzle together.

During Giving Tuesday, you raised more than \$5,000 in a single day to meet a \$5,000 match donated by friends, neighbors, and hosts of the trail. This funding went a long ways towards trail work that will enable us to welcome hikers to the incredible natural and cultural resource that is the Driftless Trail.

And then, not long after this incredible day of generosity, we opened the Weaver Road Trail! This mile-long path is a great sampler of Driftless Area features. It starts with a stunning vista, borders a contoured farm field, drops through a valley of open woods, and gives you a unique bottom-up view of a pine relict. As 2022 wound down, it offered gorgeous snowy hikes to visitors from near and far.

Thank you so much for believing in the Driftless Trail and the importance of connecting people to the land. We hope you're excited to watch the trail grow!



Clockwise: Hikers on the Weaver Road Trail (Emilee Martell); the trail's Leopold-style benches (Barb Barzen); and putting finishing touches on trail markers (Bill Menke).

CARE



**"People should take advantage of these places....
There's always more to do out there."**

- Brad Argall, DALC volunteer

Photo: A volunteer admiring the sandstone rock formations at Sardeson Forest Preserve (Zach Pacana).

You enabled more stewards to care for the land

"Sustain the ones who sustain you and the earth will last forever," says Robin Wall Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, her iconic book on conservation. In 2022, DALC was honored to have nearly 100 volunteers join us in the constant but rewarding work of sustaining the natural resources of the Driftless. Collectively, they contributed well over 1,000 hours of work – everything from pulling barbed wire to building trails to helping with prescribed burns.

Brad Argall began volunteering at Sardeson Forest Preserve in 2022. He wanted to enjoy getting outside, and to carry on the legacy of his father, who was always involved in helping the community. Clearing brush and invasive species to create a more pleasant, accessible hiking experience is high on Brad's priorities.

"I enjoy going out there, keeping busy, and enjoying the scenery," Brad says. "I'm not sure many people know about the area. [They] should feel free to come out and take a hike around the property."

Caring for the land begins with appreciating it. Whether as a volunteer or a visitor, we hope you can go exploring soon and give some love to the Driftless!

"And," Brad notes, "it's good exercise going up and down the hills."



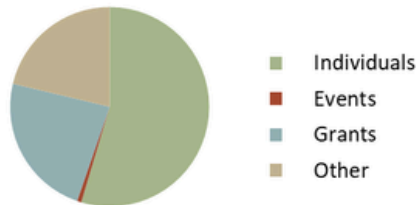
Left: Volunteers work on a 32-foot A-truss bridge across a stream on the Driftless Trail (Barb Barzen). Right: Volunteers at Wild Oaks Preserve (formerly Spring Valley Tract) celebrate connecting two brush-clearing units (Zach Pacana).

2022 Financial Report

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit conservation organization, Driftless Area Land Conservancy depends on the generosity of our supporters to enhance the health, diversity, and beauty of Southwest Wisconsin's Driftless Area, and connect people to the land and to each other.

2022 OPERATING REVENUE

Individuals:	\$463,678
Events:	\$5,924
Grants:	\$198,703
Other:	\$180,697
Total Operating Revenue:	\$849,002



2022 EXPENSES

Land Protection & Management:	\$377,844
Community Programs:	\$53,589
Advocacy:	\$51,590
Administration:	\$164,967
Fundraising:	\$77,817
Total Expenses:	\$725,807



Note: DALC received \$307,500 in donated legal services that benefited our advocacy work in 2022. This amount is not included in the operating revenue and expenses shown above. Our audited financial statements and form 990 are available upon request.

FINANCIALS AS OF 12/31/22

Stewardship Endowment Fund ¹ :	\$254,913
Legal Defense Fund ² :	\$100,000
Driftless Conservation Impact Fund ³ :	\$2,128,055
Conservation land:	\$2,769,419
Operations:	\$1,036,098
Total assets:	\$6,288,485
Liabilities:	(\$394,160)

DALC also purchases annual TerraFirma Insurance, which provides up to \$500,000 in additional legal defense support. To learn more, visit www.terrafirma.org.

BROKERAGE ACCOUNT

Monitoring & Legal Defense Contributions:	\$30,000
Investment Loss, Net of Fees:	\$222,362

LAND ACQUISITION CONTRIBUTIONS & GRANTS

Landowner:	\$11,445
Grants:	\$249,494
Total acquisition contributions and grants:	\$260,939



STEWARDSHIP AND ENDOWMENT FUNDS

1,2: Our **Stewardship Endowment Fund** and **Legal Defense Fund** consist of donor contributions restricted by the donor, or restricted by the Board of Directors. They are managed by Lake Ridge Bank and the Madison Community Foundation.

The Stewardship Endowment Fund provides annual revenue to care for DALC lands and steward DALC conservation easements.

The Legal Defense Fund provides funding as needed to enforce conservation easement agreements and in resolving issues such as encroachment or vandalism.

3: Our **Driftless Conservation Impact Fund** (DCIF) was established in 2022 from a generous donation of land from Helen Boley. Her land is protected forever by a conservation easement. DALC created this fund, restricted by the Board of Directors and managed by Buttonwood Financial Partners, with the proceeds of the sale to a private landowner. The goal of the DCIF is to make catalytic investments in conservation in the Driftless Region, while also providing long term and sustaining support for DALC conservation activities. The DCIF as a whole is intended to be an investment fund with investment earnings used to help accomplish DALC's mission.



2022 Supporters

This year, our list of 2022 donors, volunteers, and other supporters has moved entirely online. Please visit www.driftlessconservancy.org/2022-annual-report to view this information.

THANK YOU

for being a part of Driftless Area Land Conservancy!

