

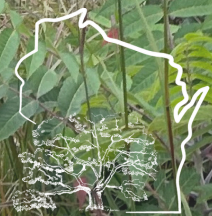


# THE DRIFTLESS TRAIL

A LANDSCAPE-SCALE CONSERVATION CORRIDOR  
IN THE DRIFTLESS REGION

The Driftless Trail reflects a growing regional effort to secure ecological continuity while inviting deeper relationships between people and the land.

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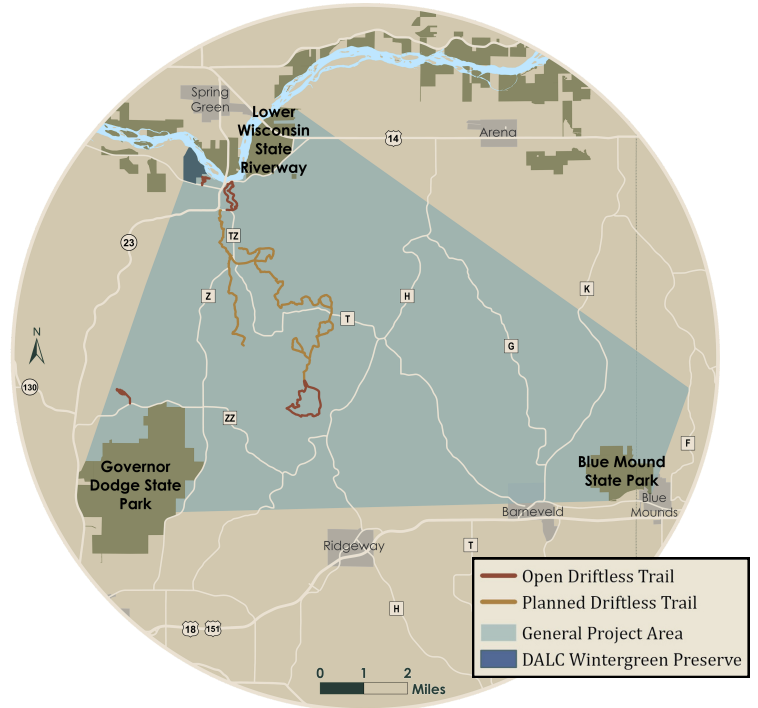


**DRIFTLESS**  
AREA LAND CONSERVANCY

# THE VISION

## A CONNECTED DRIFTLESS LANDSCAPE

Complexity and resilience define the Driftless landscape, where geology, biodiversity, working lands, and community heritage converge to create one of the Midwest’s most distinctive regions. The Driftless Trail advances a shared regional vision: a connected conservation corridor spanning approximately 100 miles that strengthens ecological continuity, deepens stewardship, and invites people into meaningful relationships with the Driftless landscape and their neighbors.



*Driftless Trail Regional Conservation Corridor - Illustrating landscape-scale connectivity across protected lands and partner landscapes*

## WHAT THIS CORRIDOR MAKES POSSIBLE

- Secures ecological connectivity across one of the Midwest’s most resilient landscapes
- Expands responsible access grounded in conservation and stewardship
- Connects communities through shared identity and place-based learning
- Demonstrates a conservation-first model for recreation

**In late 2025, Driftless Area Land Conservancy (DALC) purchased the Wintergreen property,** an iconic site on the Lower Wisconsin River adjoining the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation’s Taliesin estate. DALC envisions Wintergreen as **the future gateway to the Driftless Trail corridor,** anchoring our vision of regional connectivity. At Wintergreen, DALC has initiated planning to determine how learning, stewardship, and community connection will take form.

# WHY THE TRAIL MATTERS

## MORE THAN A TRAIL

Without landscape-scale connectivity, conservation gains remain fragmented. Protecting the trail corridor not only provides access to nature and new hiking opportunities but also leads to Climate Resilience and Rural Economic Vitality.

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### CONSERVATION CONNECTIVITY

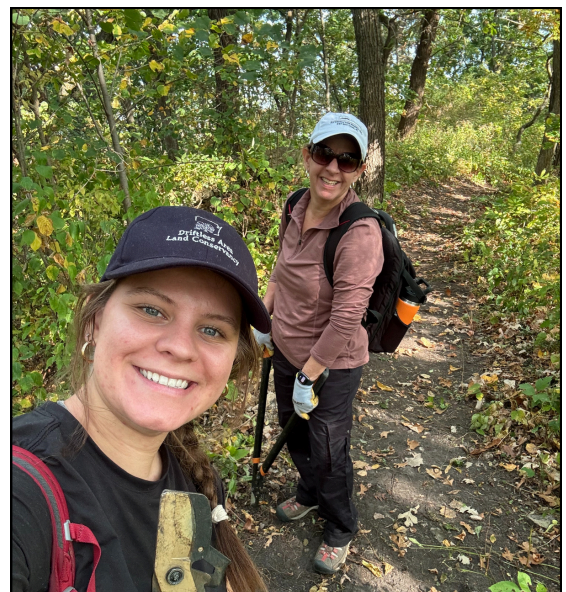
The Driftless Trail protects a corridor of private land from development that connects the Lower Wisconsin Riverway – a conservation area of global significance – to the grasslands of the southern Driftless region – one of the last strongholds for grassland birds in the entire upper Midwest.

### CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Globally recognized for its ecological resilience, the Driftless landscape allows species to move north and south, and higher and lower in elevation, as the climate changes.

### ACCESS TO NATURE

Experiences in nature inspire stewardship and improve well-being. The Driftless Trail provides access to nature in an area where over 95% of the land is in private ownership.



### REGIONAL ECONOMIC VITALITY

The Trail will be a new economic resource for seven rural gateway communities, enticing people to exercise, spend quality time with others, and learn about the nature, history, and agriculture they are walking through.

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# GUIDING FRAMEWORK

## OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Driftless Trail is being developed through this conservation-first framework, ensuring responsible growth and lasting impact:



### **LANDOWNER PARTNERSHIP**

These partnerships ensure the corridor grows in ways that respect working landscapes while protecting ecological integrity.



### **PROTECT FIRST, BUILD SUSTAINABLY**

Trail alignment prioritizes habitat health, water quality, and landscape resilience so access enhances, rather than compromises, the ecosystems that make the Driftless unique.



### **ADAPTIVE STEWARDSHIP**

Management decisions are guided by data, science, and on-the-ground expertise, allowing the trail and surrounding landscapes to respond to changing environmental conditions.



### **COMMUNITY COLLABORATION**

Collaboration strengthens stewardship, fosters shared ownership, and ensures the corridor reflects the communities it connects.



### **PHASED IMPLEMENTATION**

Each phase builds on lessons learned, allowing growth that is adaptive, strategic, and rooted in real-world experience.

# A CORRIDOR IN MOTION

2016-2019

## VISION & RELATIONSHIPS

- Early project vision
- Concept Plan completed
- Public Input

2019-2023

## ALIGNMENT & PARTNERSHIPS

- Landowner and partner network grows
- Two segments completed

2023-Present

## VISIBLE PROGRESS

- Four trail segments open
- Volunteer program established
- Wintergreen acquired, and planning underway
- Interperative planning underway

Looking Ahead

## CONTINUING CONNECTION

- Trail use and audience grows
- Educational value of trail expands
- Trail is a community resource

The Driftless Trail has grown through years of partnership, stewardship, and shared vision, strengthening connectivity across the landscape over time.

# WHAT'S ALREADY IN PLACE



- Seven miles of open trail
- 17 landowners have stepped forward to host trail segments
- 10 miles of confirmed corridor protecting over 1000 acres from development
- Volunteer-led trail construction and restoration are underway
- Integration with existing preserves and protected lands
- Active partnerships with local communities - Spring Green, Dodgeville, Ridgeway, Barneveld, Blue Mounds, and Arena

# SHARED STEWARDSHIP

## BUILDING AND CARING FOR A CORRIDOR

Each mile of trail reflects trust, partnership, and a shared commitment to stewarding the Driftless landscape for generations to come. Financial investment ensures that this shared vision can be built thoughtfully and cared for responsibly over time.

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## WHAT IT TAKES TO BUILD & CARE FOR THE TRAIL

- Volunteer-built trail segments: **\$20,000-\$30,000 per mile**
- Professionally constructed trail segments: up to **\$75,000-\$85,000 per mile**

*Costs vary based on many factors, such as remoteness, terrain steepness, soil type, and the need for stonework, bridges or boardwalks.*



*Driftless Trail volunteers clearing a downed tree after a storm*

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## THE TRAIL FUND

Established in 2024 through Judy Lovaas' extraordinary bequest, the Driftless Trail Fund supports the long-term building and stewardship of the corridor. Invested with Buttonwood Partners, the fund provides a dedicated and sustainable financial foundation for trail construction, maintenance, and volunteer-led stewardship activities.

## LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP

Annual maintenance: about **\$2,000 per mile**

- storm recovery
- erosion repair and restoration
- volunteer coordination and training
- ecological stewardship.

***This is not a one-time build,  
it is a permanently  
stewarded landscape.***



## THE NEXT CHAPTER FOR THE DRIFTLESS TRAIL

The Driftless Trail is already reshaping how conservation happens in this region. The next phase depends on partners willing to help advance what has already begun.



### Partnership Opportunities

Collaborate on programming, land stewardship, and regional initiatives.



### Landowner Participation

Explore opportunities to host future trail segments.



### Experience the Trail

Visit existing segments, share feedback, and follow progress as the corridor grows.



### Philanthropic Partnership

Support conservation, trail development, and long-term stewardship.

*Grounded in more than 25 years of trusted conservation leadership, the Driftless Trail reflects a shared commitment to protecting and connecting the Driftless landscape for generations to come.*

Explore action and giving opportunities at  
**[driftlessconservancy.org](https://driftlessconservancy.org)**