VOL. 27 NO. 3

STITCHING TOGETHER A TAPESTRY OF CONSERVATION

Keweenaw LAND TRUST

A community partner protecting land, water, and quality of life through conservation, stewardship, and nature connections

Newsletter
December, 2024

NEW NATURE AREA: BOSTON CREEK

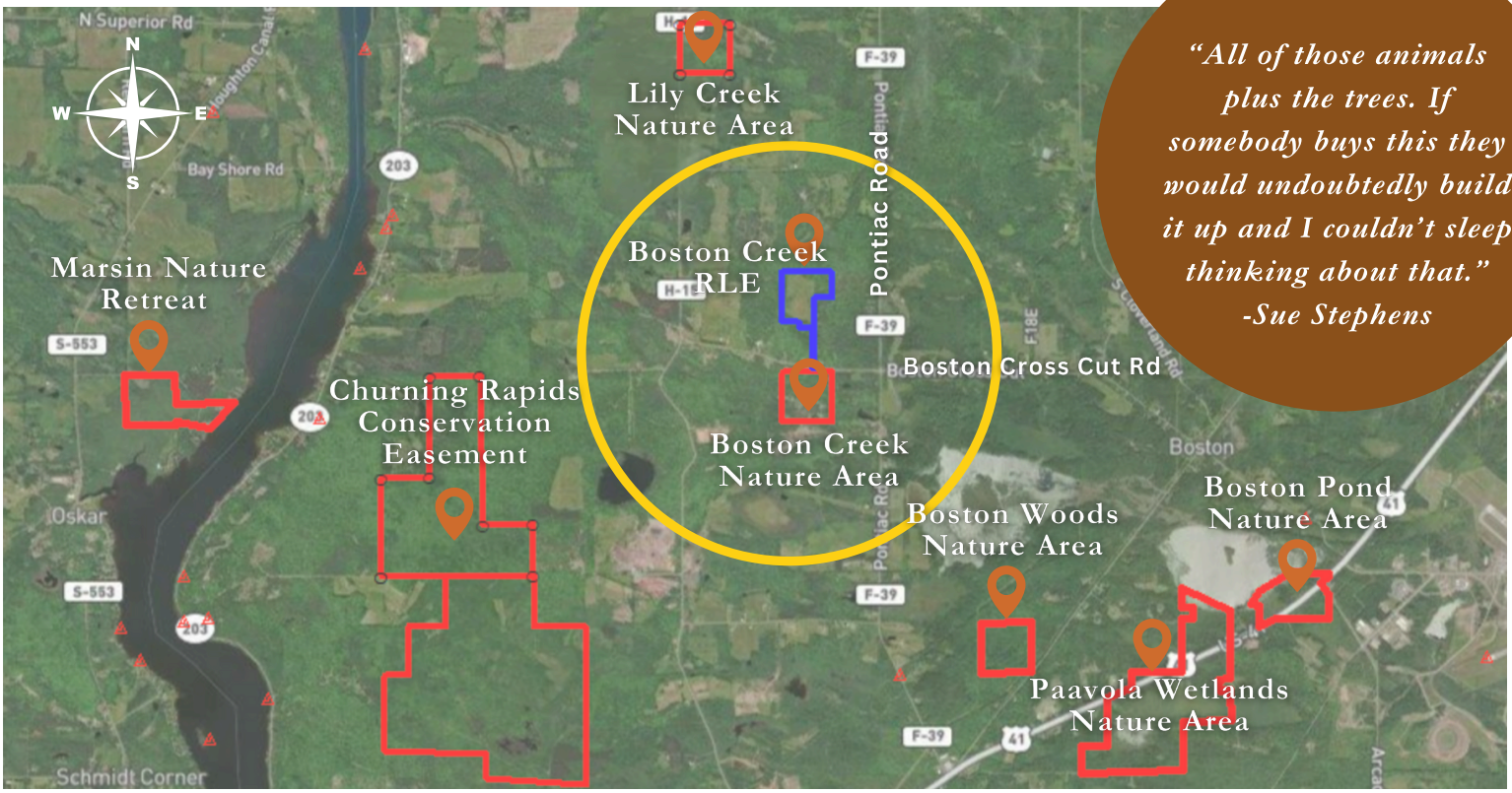
Thanks to the generosity of Sue Stephens and her daughters, KLT is thrilled to announce the establishment of a new protected area: Boston Creek Nature Area.



In 1994, Sue purchased a wooded parcel near her home to safeguard its ecosystems and wildlife. Her understanding was that someone would buy the wooded parcel to log it, to which she responded, "No they will not!" Wanting to ensure its protection for future generations, she recently approached KLT to learn about donating the land for conservation. "There was no question that we wanted it to go to the Land Trust," said Sue. Inspired by the process, Sue also donated an additional parcel of undeveloped land (the north plot) through a Reserved Life Estate. Together, these donations greatly enhance the conservation and community value of each individual parcel. Eventually managed as one unified nature area, Boston Creek will offer visitors the chance to explore its beauty.



The south plot, slated to open to the public in 2025, spans 40 acres and includes over a quarter mile of Boston Creek. The creek meanders through rolling hills, showcasing hardwoods, paper birch, and striking shale outcroppings, complete with small waterfalls and sections of rapids. Sue often enjoyed walking, skiing, or snowshoeing along the creek. Visitors can also enjoy serene pockets of white pine, balsam fir, and hemlock on the southern edge of the property.



"All of those animals plus the trees. If somebody buys this they would undoubtedly build it up and I couldn't sleep thinking about that."
-Sue Stephens

Sue has long enjoyed recreating on the northern parcel. With the permission of the previous landowner, she and her late husband mowed a trail around the perimeter of the meadow and enjoyed hiking, skiing, and snowshoeing. She purchased the land to ensure its protection, both for her recreation and for the multitude of wildlife she has seen (bears, wolves, coyotes, a cougar, sandhill cranes, and eagles). She chose to donate this parcel through Reserved Life Estate because it is her "sacred path." This personal retreat will remain private during her lifetime, but the land's perpetual protection is guaranteed.

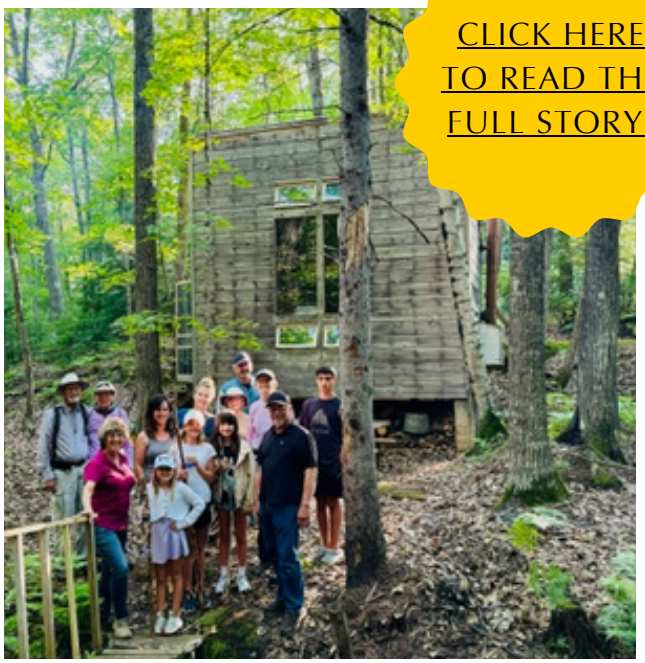
The location of this new nature area weaves into the patchwork of surrounding KLT-protected areas, helping build connectivity. This area, like many in Houghton County, has seen an increase in parcelization (splits) over recent years and could be a prime land for future development. As such, the protection of this land for ecological, wildlife, and public recreational benefits becomes all the more important.

RESERVED LIFE ESTATE

This approach allows you to deed land or your home to Keweenaw Land Trust now but retain the rights to use and control the property during your lifetime – the Reserved Life Estate. The deed names the Life Tenant(s) and their obligations such as paying property taxes, insurance, and keeping up the property to uphold its value for when it automatically passes to the KLT upon the death of the Life Tenant(s). If an irrevocable gift, there can be charitable tax benefits based on your age at the time of the donation. The revokable Lady Bird deed version does not provide charitable tax benefits, but allows you to change your mind, and if not, the property will pass to KLT upon your death. Lands with conservation values will become KLT nature areas while homes can be sold with proceeds used to support KLT's work as directed by the donor.

DISCOVERING MAGIC IN THE KEWEENAW by Nancy Langston

How Jim and Anne Kalen Fell in Love with the Land and Joined KLT's Mission



CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL STORY!

The Kalens first encountered KLT by accident.

They came to the Keweenaw on summer vacation from their home in California. While exploring back roads, hunting for berry patches and swimming spots, they noticed small KLT signs marking protected areas.

Curiosity turned into admiration as they realized how many of their favorite spots—like the Keweenaw Sand Hills and Paavola Wetlands—were KLT properties. "We thought these places were just little treasures we'd stumbled upon," Anne said. "But then we started seeing a pattern: the KLT logo. That's when we knew we had to get involved."

Jim and Anne joined KLT as members and donors, drawn to its personal touch. "It's rare to find an organization where you feel so welcomed," Jim said. "From the monthly KLTea Time gatherings to the handwritten thank-you notes, it's clear that KLT values its community."

The Kalens didn't stop at membership. They became site stewards for Din Egen Woods, a small KLT property near their home. The trails were in rough shape, with fallen trees and overgrown paths. After getting lost on a snowshoeing expedition, Jim decided it was time to act.

"Rather than restacking my woodpile for the hundredth time, I thought, 'Let's do something productive,'" Jim joked. He and Anne have since spent countless hours clearing trails, making the property more accessible for visitors of all ages.

For Anne, Din Egen Woods is a microcosm of the Keweenaw's magic. "In just half a mile. You go from hemlock forest to aspen, and then you come to a picturesque cabin by a beautiful creek. Then you can continue on to the sandy shoreline, with an amazing view of the lake. It's small but so diverse. And that's what makes it special—and that sense of intimacy is shared for many KLT sites, which are tiny but critical for our community."

The Kalens see KLT as a vital force in conserving the Keweenaw's unique character. With increasing development threatening access to beloved sites, they believe KLT's mission is more important than ever. "When I was growing up, we didn't worry about property boundaries," Jim said. "The land felt open and free. But that's changing. Even the tiniest pieces of land are becoming precious, and KLT is stepping in to protect them."

Anne agreed, adding that KLT's work isn't just about conservation—it's about connection. "KLT brings people together, whether it's through trail maintenance, educational events, or just providing places where families can hike, swim, and explore."

For the Kalens, supporting KLT isn't just about protecting land—it's about sharing the joy of discovery. They've watched their children and grandchildren fall in love with the same wild places they hold dear, from the creek in Din Egen Woods to the swimming hole at Point Mills. "We're thrilled to be part of something that will outlast us," Anne said. "KLT is creating a legacy, and we're proud to help other people discover it."

THE MANY HATS OF PAT



At a small nonprofit, roles aren't defined by job titles—they're defined by needs, and no one embodies this more than Pat. For the past year, she's balanced the dual responsibilities of Interim Executive Director and Project Specialist, with a rare mix of grace and grit. But Pat's job description doesn't stop at the office door. Whether it's negotiating land deals or grabbing a shovel, Pat's can-do spirit turns challenges into action. Her dedication isn't just about doing her job—it's about ensuring the organization thrives, no matter what it takes.

To showcase just how many hats Pat wears, let's take a closer look at a day in the life of Pat at KLT. With new opportunities and challenges constantly arising, no two days are ever the same for KLT staff, and Pat's schedule is a perfect example of the variety and adaptability required in her roles. Here's a glimpse into the dynamic and unpredictable rhythm of Pat's day.

After a weekend of heavy snowstorms, Pat was the first to arrive at the office. Without hesitation, she grabbed the snow scoop and cleared the snow berm blocking the driveway, ensuring her colleagues could access the office and the mailbox was ready for deliveries. That same day, Pat turned her focus to protecting a parcel of land threatened by development. After a productive brainstorming session with staff, she launched into a flurry of phone calls and emails, all while fielding questions and providing updates to her teammates. By late afternoon, Pat was on the phone scheduling the closing for another property donation to KLT, seamlessly transitioning to coordinating who would bake what for an end-of-week holiday celebration. To wrap up her day, she worked on reports for the upcoming Finance Committee and Board meetings.

Pat is most comfortable behind the scenes, where she can shine a light on you and everyone who make this work possible. Pat's ability to juggle so many roles with energy and determination is a testament to the dedication of the people behind KLT. Staff like Pat are the backbone of our mission, ensuring that every challenge is met with action and every worthy opportunity is seized. We are incredibly grateful to have her on our team, reminding us daily that it's the people who make this work possible.

2024 ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS



Haley Goodreau



Buddy Wiley



On a rainy evening, 79 members gathered with staff and board directors at the Orpheum Theater in Hancock to reflect on the past year and look ahead to the future, joined by 18 additional members on Zoom. Together they reelected Lou Vencato and Calvin Koski to second three-year terms and welcomed Haley Goodreau and Buddy Wiley to their first terms on the KLT Board of Directors. President Nancy Langston provided an update regarding fundraising efforts and Treasurer Bill Leder covered the financial year in review. Interim Executive Director Pat Toczydlowski received a standing ovation for her dedicated leadership during a pivotal year, as she passed the figurative baton to incoming Executive Director B Lauer.



CHAMPION OF TROUT AND TREES

For the past six years, Bill Leder has been a dedicated member of the KLT Board of Directors, serving two three-year terms that exemplified his passion for protecting natural resources. His journey with KLT began through his work as president of the Copper Country Chapter of Trout Unlimited, where he spearheaded the Pilgrim River Watershed Project—a mission close to his heart. This project, a collaborative effort involving KLT, the Hovel family, and other conservation partners, safeguarded one of the Upper Peninsula's most treasured trout streams, ensuring its protection for generations to come. Bill's commitment to conservation extends beyond titles, as he's also worked tirelessly as KLT's Treasurer to increase financial literacy among board members, making complex financial topics accessible and engaging.

Reflecting on his time with KLT, Bill describes his service as "gratifying," marked by collaboration and meaningful relationships. His personal connection to the natural world traces back to summers spent at his grandparents' lakeside cottage in southeastern Michigan—a place he credits for fostering his lifelong appreciation for nature. Today, Bill sees his conservation efforts as a continuation of his grandparents' legacy. As he looks to the future, he hopes for KLT's growth in both capacity and community impact, encouraging others to join this "worthy endeavor" and help safeguard the Keweenaw's beauty.

Thank you, Bill, for your many years of service to KLT! Your dedication and gifts of time and talent have transformed our organization for the better! We hope you enjoy the lands you've helped us protect in your newly found free time.

KLT Staff

- Pat Toczydlowski, Interim Executive Director; Project Specialist
- Jill Fisher, Botanist & Stewardship Manager
- Carolyn Meingast, Office Manager
- B Lauer, Communications & Program Specialist
- Curtis Perala, Marsin Property Manager

KLT Board of Directors

- Nancy Langston, President (Chassell)
- Lou Vencato, Vice President (Hancock)
- Stan Vitton, Treasurer (Hancock)
- Alex Hirzel, Secretary (Hancock)
- Mike Abbott (Atlantic Mine)
- Haley Goodreau* (Hancock)
- Mare Grohowski (Hancock)
- Calvin Koski (L'Anse)
- Evan Lanese (Hancock)
- Jim Northey (Atlantic Mine)
- Jamie Robertson (Allouez)
- Buddy Wiley* (Eagle River)

* New Board Directors (Nov. 2024)



KLT Staff (Curtis Perala not pictured)

Dear friend of KLT,

"Can I help?" 10-year-old Jane asked as she started down the steep trail to the base of Hungarian Falls on a hot August day.

"Sure!" Alex replied, smiling as he moved rocks and sticks to block shortcuts along the trail.

Jane's family was out for a hike when they spotted Alex hard at work. Over the past few summers, he explained, hikers had been creating "goat trails" to the base of the falls. These shortcuts tore through the soil, exposed tree roots, and caused erosion that muddied the creek, making it tough for fish to thrive.

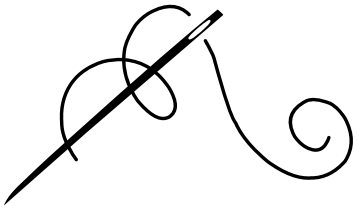
Alex compared the healthy soil and forest to a beautiful quilt. "When people take shortcuts, it's like tearing the quilt apart," he said.

Jane's face fell at the thought, but Alex reassured her: "We can all help patch it up. Little things, like sticking to the main trail, can protect the forest, the water, and the fish."

By the time Alex finished, Jane wasn't the only one eager to help. Her brother wanted in, too, and soon, the whole family was pitching in to restore the trail. Jill, KLT's Stewardship Manager, stopped by to hand out tools and tips. Pat, KLT's Project Specialist, and Carolyn, KLT's Support Staff, were busy back at the office making sure KLT had the resources to protect even more cherished places in the Keweenaw. And B, KLT's Incoming Executive Director, was coordinating it all!

This is what the Keweenaw Land Trust is about—people coming together to protect the places we love. Like a patchwork quilt, each person contributes their own piece:

- Volunteers like Alex, who give their time to care for the land.
- Board directors, who work hard to ensure KLT fulfills your vision.
- Staff like Jill, Carolyn, Pat, and B, who turn your support into action.
- Members like you, whose generosity stitches it all together.



Together, we create something beautiful: A community rooted in care and a future where forests, waters, and wildlife thrive. Every dollar you give strengthens this shared fabric.

Will you help us keep the Keweenaw's quilt strong? Your gift of $100—or whatever amount feels right to you—makes a real difference. With your support, we can continue to protect places like Hungarian Falls and ensure they remain vibrant and healthy for generations to come.

Thank you for being such an important part of this community. If you have any questions or want to learn more about our work, please reach out to us at 906-482-0820 or info@keweenawlandtrust.org.

With gratitude,

Nancy Langston

Nancy Langston
Board President
Keweenaw Land Trust


Hungarian Falls

P.S. No gift is too small, and every stitch counts. Thank you for helping us protect the quilt of the Keweenaw!

Become a KLT Member!

Memberships apply to a household!

Donate to become an annual member!

Money

Suggested donation of $50 ($20 for students) per year

Or

Time

10 hours suggested per year

Member benefits

- Support meaningful conservation work
- Special member events
- Elect directors
- Printed newsletters
- Connect with the KLT community

DONATE TO BECOME A MEMBER OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Your membership is valid for one year from the date your contribution is made.

Name _____ Phone _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Email Address _____

CHOOSE YOUR MEMBERSHIP GIVING LEVEL (JOIN OR RENEW)

- ☐ $20 Student Membership
- ☐ $50 Supporter
- ☐ $100 Guardian
- ☐ $250 Steward
- ☐ $500 Champion
- ☐ $1000 Giving Circle

☐ I am interested in receiving information about planned giving

☐ Other $_____

Donations are tax deductible. Please mail this form and payment to our office:

49902 Limerick Street
Hancock, MI 49930

Donate online
https://keweenawlandtrust.org/donate

KLT respects your privacy and confidentiality. We do not sell your data and respect requests for anonymity.

49902 Limerick Street
Hancock, MI 49930

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info@KeweenawLandTrust.org

KeweenawLandTrust.org

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@KeweenawLandTrust

Upcoming Events

Winter Solstice at Lily Creek*
Saturday, December 21st | 4-8pm
Lily Creek Nature Area

KLTea Time
Friday, January 3rd | 11am-1pm
KLT Office

To learn more...
Visit the "Upcoming Events" page on our website for detailed descriptions of all events and registration forms.

https://keweenawlandtrust.org/upcoming-events

*KLT members-only event; registration required