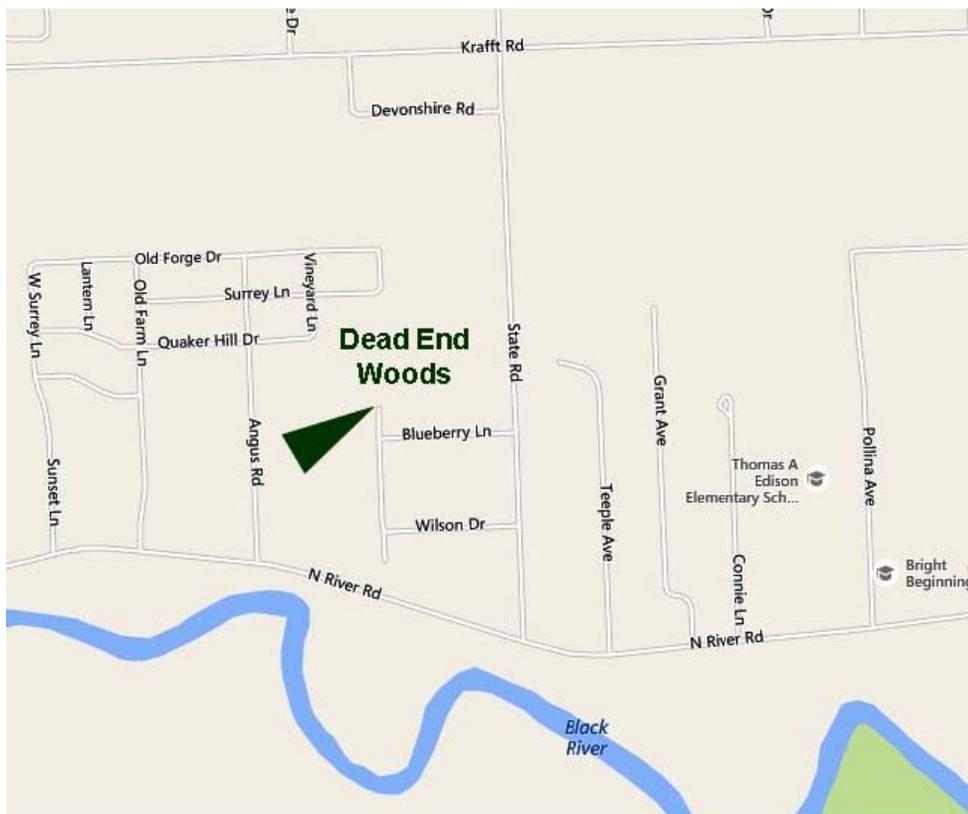


# Thumb Land Conservancy NEWS

January 28, 2017

## TLC February Gathering and Executive Board Meeting Sunday, February 19, 1:00 - 6:00 PM

We are having another gathering and meeting on Sunday February 19 from 1:00 to 6:00 PM at the home of TLC executive board member Dorothy Craig at 3685 Wilson Drive in Fort Gratiot. She is at the end of Wilson Drive next to our Dead End Woods Sanctuary.



3685 Wilson Drive, Fort Gratiot, at the dead end of Wilson Drive

Just like our December gathering, this will be very informal. In addition to our first quarter board meeting, I hope to have a presentation ready. We will be discussing the North Street property, the Bob Putze conservation easement, our 2017 Saint Clair County Earth Fair exhibit, our annual May Garlic Mustard pull in the Dead End Woods, the 2017 stewardship initiative for the Port Huron State Game Area, stewardship of the Algonquin Power preserve in Huron County, and other topics.

All are welcome. A dish to pass, snacks, or beverages are appreciated. Most of all, just show up and bring your thoughts about nature preservation in the Thumb. Please RSVP if possible.

**Bob Putze Abbottsford Road Property  
7.8-Acre Conservation Easement  
Clyde Township, Saint Clair County**

Bob Putze and I have drafted a conservation easement for his nearly 8 acres of forest land along the west side of Abbottsford Road, near Ruby. I have also mostly completed the required baseline assessment report, which I can make available to anyone upon request. It's only 49 pages long so far. I hope to finalize the conservation easement with Bob at our February meeting, then get it signed, notarized, and recorded soon after.

Bob's land adjoins the Port Huron State Game Area and is a very nice northern forest community with lots of White Pine and planted Red Pine. The ground-level vegetation is diverse and of good native quality, with the usual species of cool sandy soils in the Port Huron area, including three species of lycopodium, Wintergreen, Low Blueberry, Canada Mayflower, and others. It is potential habitat for Michigan Endangered Painted Trillium which is known from sites less than a mile away.

Bob is a rarity himself, a very conscientious and reverent man who loves creation, cares for all of the animals, and wants to ensure that his land remains natural after he is gone. I always enjoy talking with Bob and we share many of the same perspectives on nature and life. Again, I want to thank Janet Kruger of the Clyde Historical Society for introducing me to Bob.

**Super Kmart / Sam's Club Preserve  
Port Huron Township, Saint Clair County**

I wasn't sure if I would ever get any good news on the Super Kmart and Sam's Club preserve in Port Huron Township after I spent about a month writing a detailed management plan for the property last spring. But thanks to the continued efforts of Port Huron Township Fire Chief, Craig Miller, the Township and County Sheriff deputies have recently moved all of the homeless guys off the property, an encampment of about 15 young men living in tents and other shelters in the woods where they produced the meth that they were all addicted to. Apparently, the County has seen that they were moved to adequate housing elsewhere. Their occupation of the approximately 18 acres of forest and wetland north and east of the stores has been a big problem for the past 10 to 15 years. Not only did they destroy a lot of the native vegetation, but some were a safety threat to store customers. I helped with a litter clean-up out there last spring, and even before the community service crew I was working with could go on the property, Sheriff deputies had to ask the homeless guys to leave for the day. I should clarify that I was not required to perform community service, but just helping. ☺

As some of you know, working as a wetland consultant in 1992 for the property developer, I got the wetland permit for these stores. I designed and supervised the construction of about 8 acres of wetland as mitigation. I also negotiated preservation of about 10 acres of natural forested wetland north of the stores containing a nice native forest community with uncommon species like Blue-bead Lily, Fringed Polygala, Michigan Holly, Black Chokeberry, and a Scarlet Oak x

Pin Oak hybrid particular to the Port Huron area. Bertha Daubendiek, long-time leader and co-founder of the Michigan Nature Association, even visited the site with me in 1992. In 1993, TLC board member, Dan Rhein, and I planted trees in the constructed wetland with a few Boy Scout troops, and I later assisted two scouts on their Eagle Scout projects there. Both Dan and I visit the preserve around the store once in a while to see how things are going. It was a mixed success, but I'll always be attached to the area.



Super Kmart and Sam's Club preserves (areas 1, 2, and 3), Port Huron Township, Saint Clair County

Because of the occupation of the site by the homeless guys, there was talk a few years ago in the Township about clear-cutting the preserve to increase public visibility, in hopes that the homeless guys would move out. The conservation easement on the preserve restricts cutting, but the State often provides little enforcement. I volunteered to write a management plan acceptable to both the Township and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, that would allow removal of invasive weeds, such as the tall Phragmites Reed that covers much of the open wetland, and limited thinning of the forest understory to increase visibility. I can make this plan available to anyone upon request, although it is officially still in draft form.



Native forested wetland north of the stores. Despite surrounding impact, still a nice natural area, for now.

Fire Chief Craig Miller has been a continued advocate for protecting the preserve while working for a compromise that will allow the Township better management of this area. A few weeks ago, a jail crew conducted another clean-up of the preserve, removing all of the materials brought onto the site by the homeless guys. Now, weather conditions permitting, Craig wants to conduct a controlled burn of the wetlands as soon as possible to remove the Phragmites Reed thatch to increase visibility of the woods behind. I've offered to help on the burn. If anyone is interested in helping, please contact me. I don't know when it will happen yet. As some of you know, we conducted controlled burns on the Michigan Road preserve with the Port Huron Township Fire Department in 2014. The following spring, in 2015, Fire Chief Craig Miller authorized the TLC to conduct the burn without their supervision and it went very well.

I will continue to update the TLC on this preserve as things progress. I hope to eventually assist designated stewards for the preserve and get more publicity through the newspapers and a sign or two at the preserve describing TLC's involvement. Craig Miller, the MDEQ, and I have also discussed development of a nature trail through the preserve as a means of increasing awareness and maintaining more of a public presence in the area.

### **2017 Port Huron State Game Area Initiative**

As I mentioned in the January 22 news, TLC member John Fody and I have been working on organizing a stewardship effort for the Port Huron State Game Area, and potentially for other public and private land throughout the Thumb. John is looking into a joint effort with the Stewardship Network to organize a Thumb stewardship "cluster" as they call them, a group of volunteers in the region. I have spoken with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources managers assigned to the PHSGA and they are very supportive. Our first activity will probably

be a Garlic Mustard pull near the end of Ford Road in late May. I hope to announce details soon.

As a means of promoting this stewardship initiative, I created this web site, still very much a work in-progress:

<https://sites.google.com/site/thumbstewardship/home>

Look for updates soon. A larger Thumb Stewardship Initiative is well beyond our capacity at this time. It will happen only with the involvement of many other people. Our hope is that we can encourage people to adopt an area near them. A little more Garlic Mustard pulled or buckthorn killed can only be a good thing.

## **2017 Saint Clair County Earth Fair**

We are still looking for an actor to play the part of Charles K. Dodge at the 2017 Saint Clair County Earth Fair, Dodge was a botanist from Port Huron in the early 1900's who advocated for protection of that part of the Black River valley that eventually became the Port Huron State Game Area. The actor would dress in period clothing, circa 1900, greet people at or near the TLC and Clyde Historical Society tables, and would speak some parts from a script. If you are interested or know anyone who might be, please contact us as soon as possible.

Here's a link to an article I wrote about Charles Dodge back in 2004 for The Lakeshore Guardian paper:

[http://www.huronecologic.com/thumb\\_habitats062004.htm](http://www.huronecologic.com/thumb_habitats062004.htm)

The 2017 Saint Clair County Earth Fair is on Friday, April 28 and Saturday, April 29, 9AM to 4PM at Goodells County Park. For more information, see the Earth Fair web site at:

<http://www.earthdayfair.com/>

## **TLC Needs Help**

The TLC still needs the help of an accountant to prepare an audited financial statement that we can submit with grant applications. I think it would take an accountant less than 30 minutes to do this as our finances are so small. We paid an accountant back in 2010 to do this and I think it cost over \$200. It would be nice to have this done at a lower cost or simply as a donation. Please contact me if you know of anyone that can help.

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