

Thumb Land Conservancy NEWS

June 4, 2016

Intern and Volunteer Meeting

Two Sundays ago on May 22, I met with our two new SC4 interns, Olivia Kelley and Brianna McGrath, and two new volunteers, Kate Shaffer and Pam Dore at Fort Gratiot County Park at Lake Huron. Hard to believe now that we were sitting on a picnic table under a pavilion freezing and had to move behind a building and sit in the sun to get warmed up. Thanks to Olivia's laptop, I gave a presentation of significant natural areas of the Thumb, too long as usual. Then we discussed the work of the TLC, each person's interests in nature, and then specific projects we hope to work on. After our meeting, three had to leave, but Pam Dore and I went over to our Peltier Beach Ridge Sanctuary about a half-mile west and installed some fencing around a Yellow Lady-slipper orchid and several Red Trillium to prevent deer grazing. Ray Peltier showed up and helped to look for more Yellow Lady-slipper orchids, but they aren't easy to find. As usual, I should have gotten more photos, but here's the one Yellow Lady-slipper orchid we found and fenced. Hopefully safe now to flower and set seed without getting munched as I have seen many times.



We have a lot of potential projects that anyone can work on. Brianna McGrath will take the lead on coordinating with the Port Huron Museum on a permanent exhibit. The first will probably be about Port Huron botanist Charles K. Dodge. Other ideas include Painted Trillium, Bertha Daubendiek / MNA, northern and southern flora, Port Huron area plant communities / species, interpretive nature trails, and a guide to Port Huron area / Blue Water Area natural areas. Olivia Kelley will work on improving our Thumb natural areas guide. Pam Dore will try to monitor the MDEQ web site for new wetland permit applications that may require mitigation. This is how the TLC has gotten two preserves. Kate Shaffer will try to help with our Super Kmart preserve stewardship effort. All will assist us in distributing TLC brochures and outreach to prospective landowners that might be interested in placing conservation easements on their land. I will be scheduling potential field trips and coordinating with other groups. There was some interest in the interns and volunteers leading these trips. All of the volunteers were also interested in creating a guide to both rare species and invasive species in the Thumb so people know better what to look for.

Super Kmart Wetland Clean-up

Back on May 7 I worked with a crew of about 10 young people doing community service by picking up litter at the Super Kmart wetlands and forest preserves in Port Huron Township. This was organized by Port Huron Township Fire Chief Craig Miller. They were a nice bunch of people and did good work. The preserve areas around the store look much better now. Before the clean-up started, Sheriff Deputies asked the homeless people living on the preserve to leave for the day. A few returned later while we were working. They are a real challenge. There are now about 10 guys living out there in at least 4 groups of tents or shelters. Our new volunteer, Kate Shaffer, is going to see what she can do to help with this because she has experience with these people. While working out there I met a guy who is very interested in participating with the TLC. He has been looking for natural areas to take his kids and is quite knowledgeable about forest wildflowers.

As I mentioned, back in March and early April I mostly completed a draft management plan for the Super Kmart / Sam's Club preserves that hopefully will allow us to do much needed management work out there. I submitted it to Port Huron Township for their review and am still awaiting response. If nothing soon, I'll forward to the MDEQ for their input. But so far, Fire Chief Craig Miller and I seem to be able to work together unofficially.

Peltier Beach Ridge Addition

I'm still waiting for final word from Saint Clair County about the small parcel up for tax sale on the southeast corner of our Peltier Beach Ridge Sanctuary. I was calling once a week and assured they will let me know as soon as they make a decision. So, until then, those of you that generously made pledges toward the purchase, hang on to your money. Hopefully we will have good news within the next month.

Science Shows Being In Nature Is Good

I recently read a few articles that suggest being out in nature is a good thing. Well, sometimes science confirms the obvious. Some of us in the preservation community have been saying this for years. The focus of the first article is on mothers, but the same applies for fathers, other adult relatives, and friends. Many of us remember the best times of our lives exploring the

woods, walking the fields, on the beach, at summer camp, camp-outs, and family vacations and outings. This is a big part of what the TLC is all about.

"... the data suggested that being outside was a great place for families to laugh, bond, and create memories -- these social health benefits influenced their family relationships"

"You might live ... surrounded by cornfields, all of which are privately owned. You could walk down a county road or a highway, but unless there was community investment in a park or a playground, a walking trail, or some kind of a facility at a local school, moms didn't have access to nature, even though they were surrounded by it."

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/06/160520120624.htm>

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/06/160602103949.htm#.V1ESpWhftIU.facebook>

Saginaw Basin Field Guide

As part of my private wetland consulting work, I've been working on a restoration plan for a site north of Bay City along the Saginaw Bay and Kawkawlin River. I was looking for lakeplain prairie where seeds can be harvested for planting the restoration site with local genotypes. I noticed that the Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy recently made available on their web site, a guide to publicly accessible natural areas around Saginaw Bay and in the watershed basin. This is what I have tried to do for the whole Thumb and have many of these sites mapped, but our TLC guide is not perfect and will be a work in-progress. Anyway, for those interested, here's a link to the guide. Have a look at this Olivia Kelley. This is why I am looking for someone with GIS experience. The SBLC received grant money to produce this, along with some advertising money apparently, and there's no reason why we can't do the same.

<http://www.sblc-mi.org/saginaw-basin-field-guide.html>

Dead End Woods Sanctuary Garlic Mustard Pull

I haven't been able to get back out to the Dead End Woods to pick any more Garlic Mustard, but hope to soon. This weekend is dedicated to getting the garden in. But Garlic Mustard seeds will soon be popping, so if anyone has spare time, feel free to pick and just leave the plants in a pile in the woods. If you let me know, I will take care of the pile.

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