

FALL/WINTER 2023

# CONNECTIONS



## DRCF & STEWARDSHIP NEWS

We have been hard at work to bring the vision of the Dead River Community Forest to life. We knew that in order to see the trails take shape at the Bayous parcel, we would need to begin with the first step... the one at the trailhead! By improving the road and parking area, we aimed to create a more inclusive environment- one that accommodates visitors of varying abilities while also minimizing disturbances to the surrounding land and neighbors. Thanks to the incredible dedication of our partners, local contractors, volunteers, and funders we were able to successfully complete phase one of our 'DRCF: Access for All' project by improving the existing road and creating a gravel parking lot at the adjacent Vielmetti-Peters Reserve. This was no easy feat and included permitting, culvert installations to protect waterways, manual tree removal, hired machinery, and fence installation to guide access! The road will be seasonal, and we will reassess its readiness for use after the spring runoff next year.

Trail maintenance also comes with its challenges - during the process, a closer inspection of the Midway Creek bridge revealed critical damage. In order to ensure the protection of the Dead River watershed and the safety of visitors on the trail, the bridge required immediate removal. Since September, our team has been diligently working on developing a comprehensive solution, one that not only restores access but also reflects sustainable and environmentally responsible practices.

In the face of a missing bridge, we find more than just a need to span the physical gap; the bridge offers a tangible symbol of our collective commitment to bridging connections and fostering community through the DRCF project. Just as the trail network envisions linking two remarkable preserves, we too must envision how linking forces with others can build this keystone bridge that will bring the trails to life. In light of this challenge, we have called upon the help of local partners to develop a work plan to engineer and build a new bridge over Midway Creek. We hope to begin this project come next field season. In the meantime, the trails beyond the Midway Creek crossing remain closed to protect the waters and hikers' safety.

We would like to extend our gratitude to everyone who has dedicated their expertise, voice, financial resources, and hearts to making this Community Forest possible. *Thank you for your unyielding support and passion for this endeavor.* Let us stay focused, adaptable, and true to our mission as we take next steps in this and other stewardship projects to come.

- Clare Fastiggi, Interim Director



## PASSIONATE ABOUT CONSERVATION?

### JOIN OUR BOARD!

UPLC is on the lookout for dedicated individuals to join our Board of Directors. Working with us is not just any board experience; it's a unique journey that allows you to roll up your sleeves, get your hands dirty, and combine your professional expertise with your love for the environment. In particular, we are seeking individuals with background in—

- non-profit accounting
- grant writing/fundraising
- real estate law
- conservation & community connections

Get in touch with us to learn more!

# What's New in Our Neck of the Woods...

## Accreditation Renewal

Every five years, accredited land trusts must apply for reaccreditation with the Land Trust Alliance Commission.

While it seems like just yesterday, UP Land Conservancy was first awarded accreditation in 2018. In preparation for our 2023 renewal application, staff and board members have been evaluating and updating policies, organizing documentation for projects, and meticulously inspecting properties. After over a year of planning and assembling our application, we officially submitted for accreditation renewal on October 31st (before promptly changing into our Halloween costumes). We estimated that in total, we spent about 700 hours on the application alone! Thank you to all of our staff, Board, and volunteers who helped us throughout this process!



## Dempsey Dedication Ceremony

On a sunny, September day, UPLC staff and Board members gathered with the Dempsey family in Rockland, MI to officially dedicate this scenic, 40-acres of forestland to be perpetually protected in honor of Michael. We celebrated together in true Yooper fashion with a picnic spread of brats, whitefish, pasties, blueberry pie, and thimbleberry jam!

A dedication sign installed on the preserve shares the story of Mike Dempsey and how his legacy lives on in the forest protected in the Dempsey Preserve.

This meaningful project was made possible in 2021 by the support of the Michael Cameron Dempsey Fund, North Country Trail Association, Lyme Great Lakes, UPPCO, and numerous individuals like you- thank you!

## Executive Director Search

The search for our new Executive Director at UPLC continues—we received a number of applications and have interviewed several candidates.

We are continuing to look for a leader who can take us to the next level of growth at UPLC.

We have a dynamic staff and resources that are continuing to keep us focused on our mission as we look for the right fit.

Stay tuned for more announcements regarding our Executive Director search!





# Woodland Wisdom

This summer, we welcomed recent NMU graduate Casey Stevens as our summer Stewardship Intern. Casey spent her summer visiting various UPLC properties and writing our annual monitoring reports for each property she visited.

*"I have always found nature to be an excellent teacher - with this summer being no exception. I have become a better observer, and I have learned to look more critically at what is happening in front of me. I have had to think about how the conditions of various properties might have been affected by past land use, current human impacts, or adjacent land activities.*

*Furthermore, I've had to think about what kind of repercussions these factors may have on both the people and wildlife that depend on these parcels of land. I am walking away from this internship with a deeper sense of how every component of a natural system relies on one another, and the role that humans play in those systems. Just as we depend on nature for resources, solace, or recreation, nature relies on us to practice good stewardship."*

Casey completed her internship in August of this year, but we are excited to welcome her back this October in the position of Land and Community Steward!



*"Let us seek not to subdue the Earth, but rather to cherish it. This includes serious bonding with the natural features of our area: the watersheds, wild flowers, forest cover, bird migration, the seasonal fragrances. Let the land bury itself deep in your heart"*  
- Lon Emerick

# Help Us Branch Out



# DOUBLE YOUR DONATION

*with the Carls Foundation*

Thanks to the extraordinary commitment of our generous challenge grant donor, The Carls Foundation, **donations made to UPLC will be matched on a 1:1 basis if we reach our goal of \$120,000 by the end of 2023.**

This campaign will equip UPLC with the staff and resources to bridge the gap between local conservation challenges and opportunities. We must meet this challenge together so that your donation, big or small, will have double the impact on our conservation efforts across the UP. By branching out at UPLC, we aim to extend our reach by protecting more land, supporting community conservation initiatives, nurturing our beloved natural resources through education, and cultivating partnerships that advance these efforts. We're over half way to our goal, and we need your help to meet the match!



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## WINTER EVENTS & HAPPENINGS

**NOV**

### **Giving Tuesday/#Give906 day**

Tuesday, November 28th, all day  
Virtual - Let's hit our challenge goal!

### **Wellness in the Woods**

Wednesday, November 29th, 2-4pm  
Chocolay Bayou Nature Preserve

**JAN**

### **Snowshoe Hike**

Date & Location-*To Be Determined*

**FEB**

### **UP 200 Parties**

Friday, February 15 2024- 4-9pm  
2 locations - UPLC office or Chocolay Bayou NP

