

Superior Land Conservancy and the Rouge Rescue

By Carla Bisaro

In cooperation with the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, the Superior Land Conservancy took an active role in this year's Rouge Rescue, the 25th anniversary of the Friends of the Rouge annual river clean-up activity. In future years, SLC plans to assume primary responsibility for Superior Township observances of the event.

A group of nearly a dozen Conservancy supporters gathered at Washtenaw County's Kosch-Headwaters Preserve on June 4 in observance of the river day

celebration. Although no actual river flows there, the Kosch Preserve was chosen in recognition of the Rouge River headwaters within its boundaries.

The assembled volunteers conducted a garlic mustard pull activity within the preserve, and found, happily, very little of the obnoxious invasive plant. The sparse "harvest" attests to the success of previous eradication activities within the Kosch-Headwaters area. Efforts over time are helping to keep the nuisance weed to a minimum in the preserve.

History of the Kosch-Headwaters Preserve

By Jack R. Smiley

We are truly lucky to have the 160-acre Kosch-Headwaters Preserve at the southeast corner of Ford and Prospect Roads. This wonderful expanse of rolling hills, fields and woodland was nearly lost to development.

In 2006, near the peak of the housing bubble, home builder Toll Brothers had an option to purchase the property with the intent of building a major housing subdivision. When they failed to exercise their option, however, the landowner – Donald Kosch of Dearborn – contacted the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy (SMLC) to see if SMLC was interested in purchasing the property. Of course, SMLC had long been interested in protecting this property since it adjoined the Springhill Nature Preserve and shared much of the woods on the hill known as "Springhill." Every year at our spring wildflower walks, we had admired the spectacular vistas that this land provided.

With little time to spare, SMLC began searching for ways to protect this multi-million dollar property.



Vista of Kosch-Headwaters Preserve

Photo by Charles Scott

SMLC was not in a position to do so on its own, but fortunately, Washtenaw County residents had been wise to pass a Natural Areas Preservation Program for the purpose of acquiring key natural areas in County. We enlisted the support of six other conservation groups to encourage the County Parks Commission to acquire this key property: Detroit Audubon Society, Washtenaw Audubon Society, Michigan Botanical Club, Sierra Club - Huron Valley Group, Friends of the

(see *History*, page 7)

Update

A newsletter published by:

Superior Land Conservancy
a local chapter of
Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy

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*...Preserving the rural character
and natural habitats of
Superior Township*

Our Steering Committee

Brenda Baker, Co-Chair
Bill Secrest, Co-Chair
Carla Bisaro
Sue Hughes
Special Advisor: Jack R. Smiley

SMLC Staff

Jill A. Lewis, Executive Director
Wendy Pellerito, Office Manager
Scott Tyrrell, Stewardship Coordinator

Lend a Hand

Land protection work never stops. Plant life (desirable and invasive) never stops growing, and human interaction with the land (desirable as well as destructive) never stops either. You can help! You can remove “bad” plants and nurture good ones. You can remove trash, maintain trails, or mow the Conservancy Farm grounds. Opportunities are available for groups or families, as well as individuals. Call 734-484-6565 to learn how you can help.

From the Co-Chairs

Bill Secrest

Greetings from the heart of darkness. As co-chair of the Superior Land Conservancy, a chapter of the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, I’ve elected to issue this report from the midst of our constituency, the Wild. I’m seated on my folding chair on the east shore of the big pond at the western edge of the great forest at LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve. I come here often on snowshoes with my wife Misty and leashed dogs in winter, but never before have I penetrated this deeply into the summer bush. I can barely hear the traffic. Dappled sunlight, the inevitable murmur of frogs amidst the water lilies, the thrum of bugs... Ah! Nature. I sit cocooned in my old protective safari outfit fumigated with insect repellent, keeping a keen eye on the poison ivy six inches from my right foot. It would be fun to spend a night here, but this isn’t a campground – it’s a nature preserve and I’m obviously interloping. Curious birds are eyeing me suspiciously from the surrounding bushes. Am I disturbing them?



Butterfly weed and butterfly
2008 SMLC Photo Contest Winner
Photo by Ann O'Hagan

I think not. We’re on the same team – Mother Nature’s team. All of you, friends and supporters are too. Out here in the bush our membership is growing by leaps and bounds. Our preserves are expanding and getting wilder and more diverse as two-legged volunteers continue to push back against the exotic invasive species that menace the rich biodiversity of our meadows, streams, and forests. I like to see our work as the community of all beings “doing business as” the Superior Land Conservancy.

I happen to be perched in a remarkable nature preserve of 608 contiguous acres that has been orchestrated by the SMLC, but many different groups have been working with us around here to create and foster what we now know as the Superior Greenway. Do the birds and the bees, the flowers, the trees, the skunks and snakes, turtles and frogs care what we call ourselves? I think not. We’re all on the same team, and now as we are coming to terms with the necessity of preserving our natural environment, we are invited to get back in touch with the wisdom of the elders. The “Old Ways” that have nourished sustainable human communities for untold millennia announce, “Keep the Balance.” The folks who support the work of the Superior Land Conservancy “get this.” You do. So do I. Let’s keep on pushing through these challenging days in pursuit of a balanced and sustainable community that acknowledges and includes the entire web of life.

Brenda Baker

I don't often wax poetic like my co-chair, but I, too, visit LeFurge Woods and other open places. My direct visits are only occasional, but I benefit from the open spaces and natural places all around us every day.

I pass by LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve (and Meyer Preserve, and the back of Conservancy Farm, and Kosch-Headwaters Preserve) as I drive to and from work, taking in the expansiveness and the changes of the seasons for a few moments out of my hurried day. Though it need not be from a moving vehicle, being immersed in open space seems to have a "cleansing" effect mentally – it clears away the clutter and helps one recharge.

I didn't realize it at first, but I think that's what drives me to work toward assuring that we can all have a bit of open and natural land in our midst. When I don't have that, I experience a sense of "incompleteness" that it's hard to put my finger on.

Apparently this is pretty common. Urban planning professionals seeking to create "livable cities" often cite access to open space as a significant factor in attracting young professionals and others likely to relocate.

Of course, Superior Township isn't a city, and open space is a resource we are incredibly fortunate to have in abundance. It is also a limited, largely non-renewable resource that we all share. If we "use" it wisely and don't "waste" it, we can assure years of pleasure for ourselves, our neighbors, and future generations.

Panorama one sees walking from Springhill Nature Preserve into the Kosch-Headwaters Preserve. Springhill was the Conservancy's first nature preserve, donated by the Perkins family in 1991. The Kosch preserve was purchased by Washtenaw County's Natural Areas Preservation Program in 2006 as a result of SMLC's efforts.

Photo by Charles Scott



Tax Sale of Stream Corridor Averted

Every year, properties are lost for back taxes and are put up for public auction. Superior Land Conservancy learned of an 8.8-acre parcel on Prospect Road, south of Geddes, which was scheduled to be auctioned by the Washtenaw County Treasurer. This beautiful parcel is entirely wooded with high bluffs overlooking the stream corridor that flows south from LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve. SLC alerted Superior Township officials since, under state law, local municipalities can purchase property before it goes to auction for the minimum bid price, which in this case was only \$6,100.

A meeting was scheduled with the Township to explore options. SLC representatives had a pleasant surprise, however, when they met with Township Supervisor Bill McFarlane and Clerk David Phillips. That morning, Township officials had already met with the County Treasurer and had worked out a creative plan to pull the property from the auction. The Township planned to pay the back taxes and place a 5-year special assessment on the former landowner's adjacent property. Since limited restrictions were already in place to protect the 8.8 acres, the Township would reduce the taxable value to zero and convey the property back to the landowner once the special assessment, plus interest, was paid off.

We are pleased with the outcome of this potential tax sale and it demonstrates why local involvement is so important.

Message from SMLC

By James T. Weiner, SMLC President

As President of Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, I appreciate the value of SMLC's local chapter, the Superior Land Conservancy. SLC is an integral part of SMLC that allows SMLC to promote and accomplish its mission of land protection at a local level. For example, approximately 40% of SMLC's fee holdings (by acreage) are located in Superior Township including the LeFurge Woods and Springhill Nature Preserves, and the Conservancy Farm. These preserves, along with properties owned by Superior Township, Washtenaw County and private landowners with conservation easements form a unique public asset: the Superior Greenway, which helps maintain the Township's rural character. However, the Greenway could not have come about without the cooperation of the Township and its residents. SLC maintains relations with the Township's residents and local authorities so that they share SMLC's vision of the Greenway. This unique shared vision has been

integral in the development of the Greenway, and will be for maintaining it in perpetuity. In this way, SMLC through its local chapter SLC is working hard to accomplish SMLC's mission - the protection of natural areas and open space in Superior Township and throughout southeast Michigan.

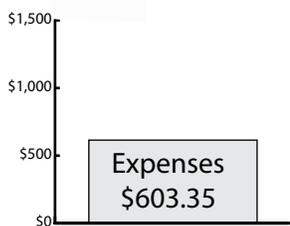
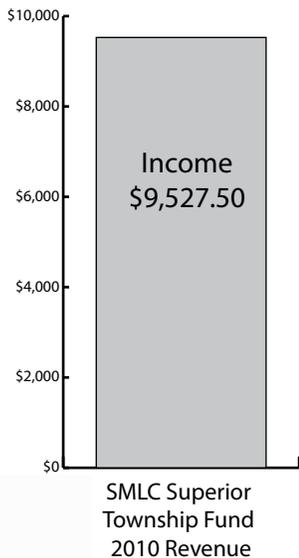
Kosch-Headwaters Pollinator Meadow Blooms with Help of SLC

By Carla Bisaro

For the second year, Superior Land Conservancy has continued its support of the Washtenaw County Kosch-Headwaters Preserve at the corner of Prospect and Ford roads. Through Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, SLC has assumed a yearly workday activity in support of the Pollinator Meadow. This small area around the dedicated parking space has been planted with native wildflowers, and strives to engage native pollinators such as bees and butterflies.

On Sunday, June 12, Washtenaw County Parks Naturalist Shawn Severance joined a group of six SLC volunteers at the preserve. She gave us an interesting presentation on the background of the Pollinator Meadow and a description of the plants involved. With her help and instruction, we pulled and removed great quantities of Canadian thistle, goldenrod and sweet clover, as well as other invasives, in an attempt to clear space for the native wildflowers. We hope our efforts here will eventually produce a pleasant flowering border for the parking area and a haven for native pollinators. We invite everyone to join us in next year's activity.

Superior Township Income & Expenses



* additional expenses were incurred in 2010 by SMLC for Superior Township work.

Exhibit Connects Community with Nature

By Carla Bisaro

Superior Land Conservancy recently took part in the third Superior Township Green Fair, held on June 18 at Fireman's Park. The Green Fair is the Township's effort to connect with the community and promote an interest in all aspects of recycling, responsible use of natural resources and regard for the ecology of our area. Supported in part by a grant from Republic Waste, the Township's waste hauler, the event is on its way to becoming an annual affair.

The SLC exhibit engaged passers-by with an artful display prepared by SMLC staff, as well as some natural specimens such as a bird's nest, shed snakeskin and deer antlers. Those items were used to prompt conversation about local land preserves and the kinds of natural activity to be experienced there. Trail maps of LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve, similar to the one on page 6, were available for those who wanted one. SLC also distributed free seedlings of white swamp oak, donated by Bill Secrest, to fairgoers interested in planting for the future.

A Summer Saunter to the Hilltop at LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve

By Bill Secrest

The Canadian thistles are going to seed. The lovely little purple blossoms grow soft and white, then - poof - into wispy orbits of fuzz before being borne away on the breeze. Off they go, floating skyward and to the east over the wetlands where the green frogs are still chanting just as they were last week when I last visited this little hilltop. A goldfinch chortles past, and here comes another! They zoom out swooping over the forest canopy and circle back down to tuck into more nutritious thistle seed. They munch with such enthusiasm that I am moved to try a few myself. But alas, they're so little. I'm more satisfied with one of my wife's sandwiches on a sunny midsummer afternoon such as this.

Butterflies are everywhere and all manner of bees are working the sweet clover flowers. Everything is in motion. The ducks are quacking down below and the red-winged blackbirds are patrolling the cattails around the ponds. Behind me, across Prospect Road to the west, the farmer is bringing in the sheaves, the hum of his big combine audible only during the interludes between traffic. I brought my trusty folding chair up here to try out for the first time the shade of this red oak that was planted when the wetlands were created back in 1998. The shade is working fine and together with the breezes and effulgent plenitude of the teeming wild countryside, I feel transported like one of these thistle seeds in the wind.

This natural world is our sacred birthright. I am so grateful to be surrounded by so many who share this understanding. Together for over 20 years we have carved out these precious preserves and we continue toiling to restore the natural environments in the fields, wetlands and forests even as we work with governments, funding agencies and individuals to expand them.

A green heron flies by. Sandhill cranes are now abundant. 130 species of birds have been counted here, 8 species of frogs, fox, coyote, mink, weasel, coons, deer, and of course all manner of small varmints flourish right here in the midst of the sprawling metroplex. Tomorrow night at the Big Sky Camp, the regular full moon campfire will be lit. Last Friday night, it was the annual bat count at the Conservancy Farm (138!). There are seasonal interpretive walks, sunrise serenades with

the birds, and lots of organic foods and flowers being raised at the farm's public garden plots.

Bringing people into this nature fills one with hope. This world is in our hands. We are being hurt very badly as we collectively flail out of balance with our natural environment, but, more and more we are seeing that it is true, whatever we do to our world, we do to ourselves. This Superior Greenway Initiative that now surrounds me is a big ole shout out to the people. Come on out here and feel this peace, see this awesome symmetry, take it home in your hearts and spread it around. Little by little we will relearn the simple joys of walking in beauty.

[A map of LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve can be found on page 6.]

Upcoming Events

August 6 Saturday 10:00 – 6:00	Dixboro Fair SLC has a booth (5221 Church St., Ann Arbor)
August 13 Saturday 7:00 – 11:00	SMLC Full Moon Campfire LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve (2252 N. Prospect Rd., Superior Twp.)
August 19, 20, 21 Fri., Sat., Sun. Noon – 8:00 Fri. 7:00 - 11:00 Sat. 11:00 - 6:00 Sun.	Ypsilanti Heritage Festival SLC has a booth Riverside Park, Ypsilanti
September 10 Saturday 7:00 – 11:00	SMLC Full Moon Campfire LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve (2252 N. Prospect Rd., Superior Twp.)
September 11 Sunday 1:00-5:00	SMLC Annual Summer Picnic Conservancy Farm (8383 Vreeland Rd., Superior Twp.)
October 8 Saturday 6:00 – 10:00	SMLC Full Moon Campfire LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve (2252 N. Prospect Rd., Superior Twp.)
October 16 Sunday 1:15 – 3:30	Autumn Spectacular (nature walk) Springhill Nature Preserve (3345 Berry Rd., Superior Twp.)
Feb. 2012 date T.B.D.	SMLC Winter Walkabout (hike) LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve (meet at Superior Township Hall)

Southeast Michigan
Land Conservancy's

LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve

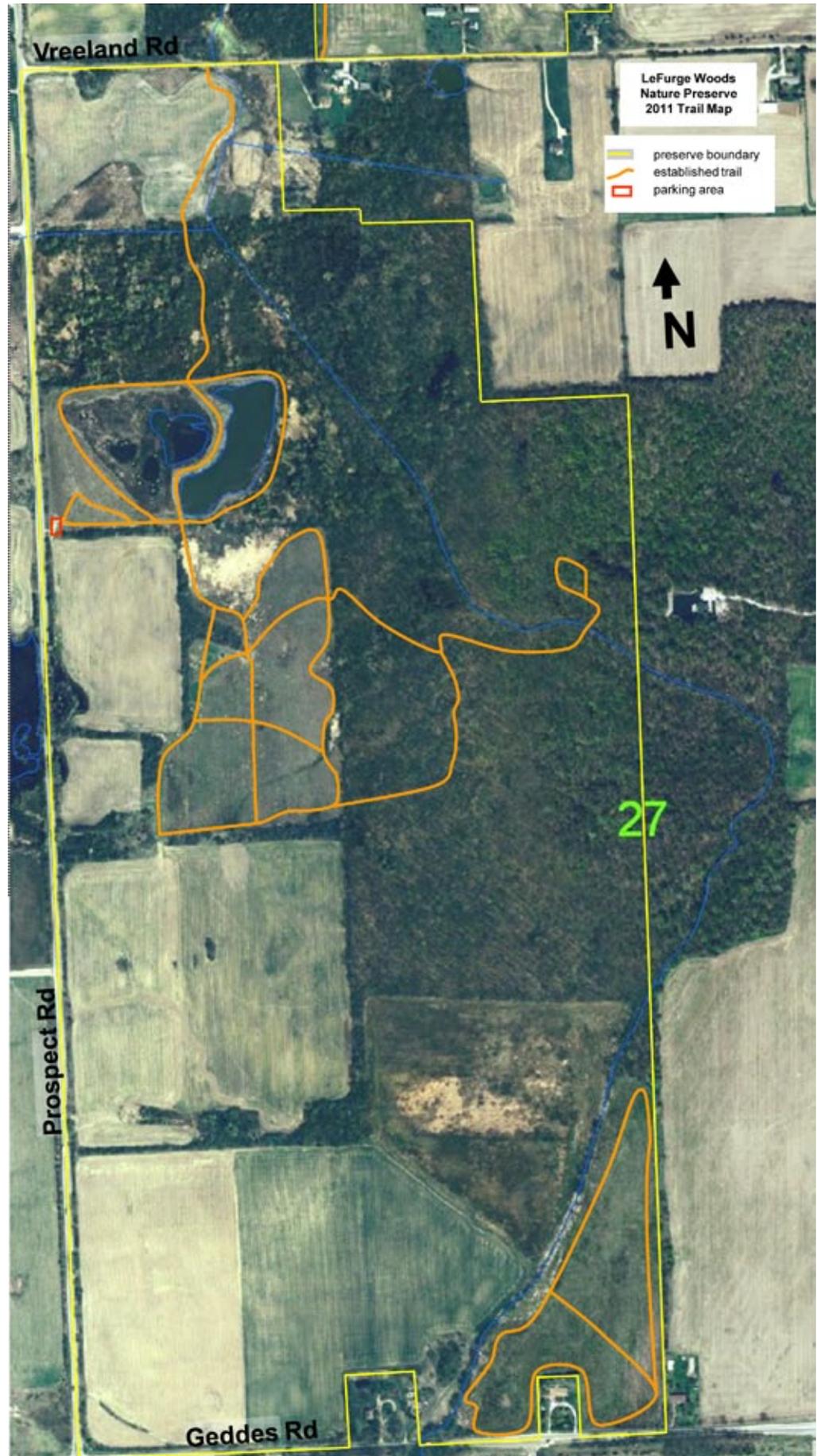
Trail Map

Please follow these rules:

- The preserve is open sunrise to sunset. No person(s) allowed after dark without permission.
- Dogs must be on leash – please clean up after them.
- Foot travel only – please stay on trails.
- No bicycles, horses, or vehicles.
- No hunting, fishing, trapping, or collecting of wildlife.
- Do not remove plants, wood or rocks.
- Do not bring trash or yard debris into the preserve.

Enjoy your visit.

Trails are maintained by volunteers. Trail conditions vary widely.



The Natural Beauty that is Joy Road

By Sue Hughes

In 1826, early Superior Township settlers Esek Pray and his wife Sally were granted 330 acres by President John Quincy Adams, abutting Joy Road to the north and along Plymouth Road to the south. This family prospered for many years in the area. A grandson, George Pray, kept a diary from 1844 until 1850. He would walk from his home to his classes at the University of Michigan, and he said that “the woods were his sanctuary.”

Nowhere is the mission of Superior Township to remain a rural and natural Township satisfied better than along Joy Road. Running east-west from Napier Road on the east to Dixboro Road on the west, natural delights meet the eye continually. Many sections of the road are totally covered by the beautiful tunnel-like tree canopy. Just east of Curtis lies a very large cemetery which also contributes to “green space.”

Near the eastern corner are several horse farms, some of which have active riding lesson programs and the occasional horse show. Anchoring the western corner is an equestrian center with a large indoor arena as well as an outdoor arena and boarding facilities.

West of Curtis Road along Joy Road are farm fields, all in actual production. Agriculture itself is the second largest industry in Michigan, and crops of corn, hay, soy beans and grains can be seen here. Dairy cattle fill some fields, and beef cattle are glimpsed.

Some “empty” fields serve as natural habitat along Joy and are home to local wildlife. A friend recently sighted both mink and weasel which can be included

with the more commonly seen woodchucks, raccoons, and possums. The deer herd is extensive, to the delight of some and the dismay of gardeners and farmers. Fleming Creek and Johnson Creek provide corridors along which wildlife can move and thrive.

The Joy Road bridge over M-14 is bracketed by large ponds, created during its construction, which attract many water birds. Flocks of Canada geese even overwinter there, and cliff swallows live in the banks, with herons and egrets joining the mix. Backyard birders love the abundance of species, and of special note are the growing populations of sandhill cranes and wild turkeys.

We treasure the heritage left to us by our local pioneers, as many of these same natural areas remain today. It is the goal of the Superior Land Conservancy, a local chapter of SMLC, to sustain this rural heritage.



Open field approaching dense tree canopy on Joy Road

Photo by Brenda Baker

History (continued from page 1)

Rouge and Washtenaw Land Trust (now Legacy Land Conservancy). SMLC also pledged to help maintain the property (creating trails, doing cleanups, invasive species removal, etc.) for a minimum of 10 years.

Within about 3 months – a record time – the County purchased the property for \$3.1 million. This was the only preserve acquired by the County in the Rouge River watershed, and that fact played a role in naming the preserve. The County traditionally had named many of their preserves after former owners, but since protecting the headwaters of the Rouge River was

one of the primary reasons for acquiring this land, a hybrid name was proposed: Kosch-Headwaters Preserve.

The Superior Land Conservancy, SMLC’s local chapter, has since taken on the important role of stewarding the pollinator meadow located on the preserve. This includes wildflower plantings and weed removal. Volunteers are needed for this as well as SMLC workdays at the preserve. Yes, we are truly fortunate that this wonderful landscape is permanently protected...and you can help assure that it receives proper care.

**I would like to help the Superior Land Conservancy,
a local chapter of SMLC, in preserving the
rural character and natural habitats of Superior Township:**

- Volunteer for workdays
- Volunteer for a "specialized" task
- Help staff the SLC booth at events
- Help prepare mailings

Please add me to the SMLC email list

Please send me information on

Please send me an envelope to make a donation

Tax-deductible donations can also be made at

www.smlcland.org/donate

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Mail to:

Superior Land Conservancy
SMLC Local Chapter
8383 Vreeland Rd.
Superior Township, MI 48198



Photo by Charles Scott

Gray-headed Coneflower, *Ratibida pinnata*, a native prairie plant of Michigan

“Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul.”

— John Muir

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