



# LANDMARKS

Newsletter of the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy

Spring 2023



Monarch butterfly at Sibley Prairie Nature Preserve – West Prairie.

Photo by Mark Even

## Lend a Hand to Save the Land

By Jill A. Lewis, Executive Director

As SMLC celebrates its 35th Anniversary this year, I am reminded of all of the people who contributed to where SMLC is today. So many people giving in various ways from governing, to donating, to volunteering, to advocating, to partnering – the list goes on. From this wellspring of support, much good has come including more than 3,400 acres of preserved natural lands and open space in southeast Michigan.

Not only have these lands been protected, but many of SMLC’s nature preserves and that of our project partners are open to the public for passive recreation including hiking, nature-viewing, birdwatching, and emotional restoration, spiritual connection, and the enjoyment of nature. Ongoing volunteer events also encourage the outdoor “give-back” experience where participants can get their hands dirty, help a good cause, and depart with the satisfaction of contributing to the betterment of the planet.

If all of these people had not lent their hand to save the land, then where would we be today? And, if this groundswell that is 35 years in the making doesn’t continue into the future, where will that leave us then?

## Land conservation is: taking action to save the earth.

It’s preserving local woods, wetlands, prairies and farmland for the benefit of wildlife and people. It’s stewarding those lands so that nature continues to thrive and helping out when its systems are stressed out. It’s supporting a balance of public access amenities to encourage people getting out on the land with semi-wild parts so that wildlife has a place of their own too. It’s whatever is the most meaningful reason for you – what motivates you to be part of this movement and give back to nature?

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A newsletter published by:



## Conservation is in our Nature.

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## Message from the Executive Director, Jill A. Lewis



**Happy 35th Anniversary to SMLC!** It's exciting to be able to celebrate this monumental achievement with all of you. I'm looking forward to seeing you in-person this year and hearing your favorite SMLC memories, experiences and inspiration.

The big news in 2023 is SMLC's pursuit of Land Trust Alliance Accreditation (see page 3 for more). Last September SMLC was notified that our Accreditation registration was accepted and we were invited to apply. Applying is a multi-phase process and SMLC successfully completed the pre-application at the end of February. We are now in the midst of preparing for the full application submission that is due in early June. After a few more formal steps, the Accreditation Commission will notify SMLC in early 2024 if we've been accredited. This is a goal the organization has had since 2008! Much work has been done to prepare SMLC for this and I am very grateful to all who helped during the past 15 years. Thank you!

Reflecting on 2022, we completed 2 significant public access projects at Secrest and West Prairie nature preserves for almost \$150,000 combined. Past public support allowed SMLC to take on and establish these important amenities (see page 4 for more). We are very appreciative of everyone who has given to our land protection and stewardship fundraising campaigns through the years.

Last summer, SMLC also restored 30 acres of grassland and enhanced 12.5 acres of wetlands at the Conservancy Farm with the help of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Ducks Unlimited – a project that was 8 years in the making. The Superior Township Chapter continued working on the Jack R. Smiley Nature Preserve prairie restoration project and two prescribed burns took place at LeFurge Woods and Lost Lake nature preserves – a first for each site.

Finally, Ethan Glassman, Stewardship and Outreach Specialist, joined the team in August. If you are in the area, stop by and say "hi". Please see the Annual Report on pages 4-7 for more 2022 highlights.

**Thank you** to our donors, funders, Eco-Logical Leadership Club (ELLC) members, volunteers, and conservation project partners. Thank you for helping us grow for the past 35 years and thank you for being here now.



## Public Notice of Accreditation Application

The land trust accreditation program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. **SMLC** is pleased to announce it is applying for accreditation. A public comment period is now open.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how SMLC complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of standards see [landtrustaccreditation.org/help-and-resources/indicator-practices](http://landtrustaccreditation.org/help-and-resources/indicator-practices).

To submit a comment **by July 1, 2023**, visit [landtrustaccreditation.org](http://landtrustaccreditation.org), or email your comment to [info@landtrustaccreditation.org](mailto:info@landtrustaccreditation.org).

Comments may also be mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments, 36 Phila Street, Suite 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.



**Jack-in-the-pulpit.**  
Photo by Charles Scott

## Please Save the Date

**Date:** Saturday, October 28, 2023

**Time:** 6:00—9:30 p.m.

**Place:** The Young's barn, Superior Township  
(address provided upon registration)

**Ticket Price:** \$100 each

Join SMLC and friends as we Take a Walk on the Wild Side in the Superior Greenway! Our bi-annual Red Barn Bash is always a good time with delicious food, fun entertainment and a celebration of local conservation accomplishments. You can help SMLC make this year's event *wildly* successful. Please plan to join the party, dressed up in your favorite animal, plant or other fun costume (optional), and invite your friends!

2023 RBB Corporate and Individual sponsorships are available and appreciated. Please contact Jill Lewis at [jlewis@smlcland.org](mailto:jlewis@smlcland.org) for more information.



# President's Report

By Jim McIntyre, SMLC Board President

As SMLC puts the final touches on our Land Trust Alliance Accreditation preparations, I can't help but think about how our journey through this process presents a recurring theme: that land conservation truly is all about taking action to save the Earth. Everything we do as an organization—whether we're acquiring a piece of land or writing a policy to govern the organization—is done with the ultimate goal of protecting the planet, in whatever ways we can. As far as goals go, this seems straightforward and most would acknowledge this as a noble goal, but a goal is nothing if we don't take actions to realize that goal.

So how do we get there?

This is where all our preparation matters most... where the rubber really meets the road. Saving the Earth isn't just about wanting the earth to be safe, it's about taking specific, deliberate steps to protect land. Saving the Earth isn't about hoping that something positive happens, it's about being the positive thing that happens to the community. Taking action is what makes land conservation happen, and ensuring that the actions we take bring us closer to our goal is the reason we have spent countless hours planning and preparing for accreditation. Accreditation demonstrates that the systems and controls we have in place give SMLC the tools it needs to survive and thrive long into the future, continuing our work of conserving land throughout the region, in perpetuity.



**New Secret Nature Preserve parking lot.**

*Photo by Ethan Glassman*



**2022 Summer Celebration.**

*Photo by Jill Lewis*

In 2022, SMLC took several actions to help make the planet a better place. We completed improvements to two of our preserves: adding a parking lot to our new Secret Nature Preserve, and establishing a new trailhead and footbridge at our West Prairie Nature Preserve. These amenities make it easier for visitors to enjoy these properties while also keeping more sensitive areas off the beaten path. We were also grateful to be able to continue in-person events, enjoying the connections with participants at guided hikes and campfires throughout the year.

I'm looking forward to many more beneficial projects and events for the coming year. Thank you to everyone who has dedicated their time, money, and expertise to make SMLC successful. With every passing year, I grow more and more amazed with the level of commitment, passion, and enthusiasm I see when I talk with people who are involved with SMLC, whether they're attending their first hike, or if they've spent hundreds of hours developing policies and procedures. Thank you all for what you do and for choosing to take action to save the Earth.

Last, but not least, this year marks a significant milestone for our Executive Director, Jill Lewis, as she celebrates 15 years with SMLC. On behalf of everyone in the organization, let me take a moment to thank Jill for her lifelong dedication to land conservation and for her leadership during her time with SMLC. Congratulations, Jill!



## SMLC Leadership Changes

The SMLC Board voted in Christopher “Chris” Flanagan as a new Director earlier this year, for a 3-year term beginning March 2023. This brings our total number of directors to 9.

Chris is a CPA and a Transaction Advisory Services Manager with Plante Moran. He is an outdoor enthusiast and an advocate on the benefits that nature provides. *“At a time when depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses are at an increasing rate, I believe society would benefit greatly on having more opportunities to experience nature.”* Chris is also a new member of the SMLC Finance Committee. He has a Master’s of Science in Accounting from MSU. Please welcome Chris to SMLC!

SMLC also said goodbye to outgoing Director, Michelle Deatrack in January. Michelle joined the Board in 2019 and immediately assisted with the Board Retreat that year. While Michelle served on the Board, SMLC experienced significant organizational changes and the impacts of the global pandemic. Michelle is the Founder and current Chair of the Democratic National Committee’s Council on the Environment and Climate Crisis. She remains a member of the SMLC Fund Development Committee. Thank you, Michelle!



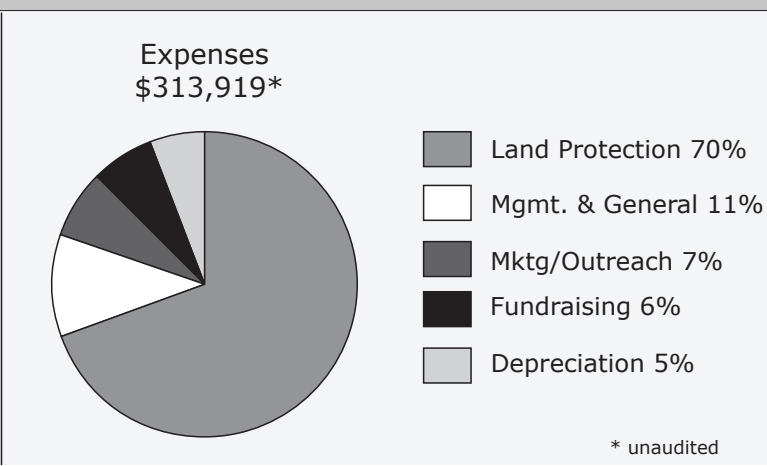
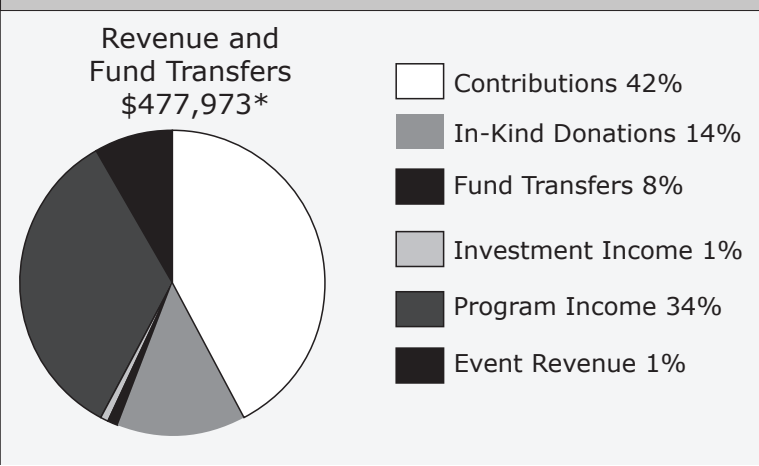
SMLC is deeply grateful to all of the other businesses, individuals, and volunteers who contributed to our Celebration.

### Get Email Updates from SMLC

Don't miss out on the latest Conservancy news, events, and announcements. If your address has changed, be sure to let us know that too.

To sign up, please send an email to: [info@smlcland.org](mailto:info@smlcland.org)

## 2022 Financial Report



\* unaudited



# Thank You

*for supporting our Mission in 2022!*

The Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy extends appreciation to all of our generous donors. Your 2022 contributions made it possible for SMLC to continue to protect and preserve natural lands and open space in southeast Michigan.

We apologize for any errors and omissions. If something is incorrect please let us know.

## Gifts from Foundations & Organizations

**\$25,000 & up**  
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ELLC Eco-Logical Leadership Club



If you are interested  
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 please contact Jill Lewis,  
 Executive Director  
[jlewis@smlcland.org](mailto:jlewis@smlcland.org)

## Memorial Donations

**In Memory of Iren Cole**  
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**In Memory of Judith G. Fritz**  
 By Donald F. Wojack

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**In Memory of David Novak**  
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 Cora Mae Pitts, Michael Windbeck

**In Memory of Randall Self**  
 By Susan List

**In Memory of Wayne Toles**  
 By Neil & Mary Hodges

**In Memory of Daniel R. Sard**  
 By Glen & Gary Sard

**In Memory of Ellen Wilson**  
 By Lisa Lava-Kellar



# Land Conservation is: Preserving Biodiversity

By Ethan Glassman, Stewardship and Outreach Specialist

Many of us enjoy SMLC’s nature preserves as places to recreate. We walk our dogs at Secrest, we meet up with friends for a hike at LeFurge Woods, we photograph wildflowers at Springhill. These natural spaces allow us to recharge and connect with nature. The forests, wetlands, and prairies protected by SMLC not only provide us with places of scenic beauty, but also provide native plants and animals with the diverse habitats they need to thrive.

Biodiversity refers to the diversity of species and the diversity of ecosystems as well. In nature, everything is connected. All aspects of the ecosystem rely on one another to stay in balance. Protecting the diverse habitats of southeast Michigan is one way to ensure that plants and animals have the space and resources they need to survive and thrive. A number of unique and diverse natural communities can be found on SMLC nature preserves including vernal pools and lakeplain prairie.



**Spotted salamanders in a vernal pool.**

Photo by Ethan Glassman

Vernal pools are a type of small, seasonal wetland that can be found throughout Michigan’s forests. Filled by winter snowmelt and spring rains, these pools regularly dry up by mid to late summer. Hundreds of species rely on these pools to survive.

Some crustaceans like fairy shrimp and mollusks like fingernail clams live out their entire lifecycle within vernal pools. Many reptiles, birds, and mammals also rely on the pools as a source for food and water. Finally, some salamanders can migrate up to 100 meters to reach the pools, and amphibian’s sensitive skin leaves them highly susceptible to pollutants, highlighting the importance of protecting the lands surrounding vernal pools as well.



**Lakeplain wet prairie.**

Photo by Ethan Glassman

Lakeplain wet prairie is an ecosystem found only in the Great Lakes region and is home to some of the most diverse and unique plant communities in the world . A variety of grasses and sedges, as well as forbs (herbaceous plants that aren’t grasses or sedges) like purple false foxglove, (*Agalinis purpurea*), colic root (*Aletris farinosa*), small fringed gentian (*Gentianopsis virgata*), and a number of state-listed species can be found at SMLC’s Sibley Prairie Nature Preserve. Many serve as host plants for native insects, like the blazing star borer moth (*Papaipema beeriana*). Once a widespread community in southeast Michigan, today less than 1% of historic lakeplain prairie remains. Protecting remnant lakeplain prairie helps to preserve this unique feature of Michigan’s natural history, and the highly adapted organisms that depend on it to survive.

Next time you’re out enjoying the sunshine on a hike at and SMLC nature preserve, take a moment to appreciate the prairies, forests, wetlands, and all the plants and animals that thrive on these protected lands.







**Hike at Secrest Nature Preserve.**

*Photo by Jack Smiley*

## Seasons in the Greenway

*By Carla Bisaro, Superior Township Committee Member*

As one could presume by its name, the Superior Township Chapter focuses its attention on SMLC efforts within Superior Township and within the Superior Greenway. To that end, for many years the Chapter has organized and presented two "Signature" nature events in the Superior Greenway.

The first of the Chapter events, Spring Has Sprung at Springhill, is a seasonal event presented at Springhill Nature Preserve. It has introduced visitors to the beauty of some of the earliest of the spring ephemerals, and participants have come to anticipate the recurring outing. The other Chapter outing is a similar nature excursion, usually held at LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve. This event, the Autumn Spectacular, lives up to its name as it travels through varied trails of the preserve.

In support of SMLC, this year the Chapter took on the responsibility for the Winter Walkabout at LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve. After our successful initial experience with the walk, we have adopted ongoing responsibility for this event as well. With three seasonal outings in the Superior Greenway, a fourth seems natural. We are now laying our plans for the Midsummer Greenway Delight that will take us to three different Greenway preserves this year, introducing visitors to less frequented sites. Watch for announcements and more information!

**LANDMARKS Spring 2023**

## Notes from the Garden

*By Cathleen "Cat" Adams, SMLC Community Organic Gardener*

My earliest recollection of planting is as a child, when my Dad and I placed bulbs in the ground, just as the warm yellow maples started their fall glow. After Easter, we returned to see fresh green emerge, with popping faces of purple, white and yellow crocus. Dad raked off our plot, opened seed packets, and gardening began.

A garden is both a place and a process. Experiencing growth of seeds into plants, flowers and fruit, is an amazing blessing. Thoreau says "Nature is but another name for health." For over a decade now, this spurs me on to tend a community organic garden site. This commitment returns rewards in the realm of beauty for all five senses. Gardening facilitates not only wonderful bounty, but also delights before and after.

The garden is a restorative place for meditation, care and sharing which brings soothing qualities of cycles or sameness, not of redundancy but of hope and rejuvenation. Each year has new discoveries such as: companion plants, new bird songs, and interactions with fellow gardeners. Gardens are for children and adults. These are places where the correlation between nature and joy are gifts we partake in. Participation in the garden, active or passive, is of wellness.

## Garden Plots Available for 2023

Garden plots are available in SMLC's Community Organic Garden at the Conservancy Farm in Superior Township. Started in 2005, the garden offers 20' x 20' plots on a first-come, first-served basis. Half plots are also available. Please contact volunteer Garden Coordinator Jack Smiley by email at [jackrsmiley@gmail.com](mailto:jackrsmiley@gmail.com) if you are interested in growing your own veggies at the Farm. Additional information is available on SMLC's website at [smlcland.org](http://smlcland.org)

## Guidance for Organizational Prescribed Fire Programming

By *Ethan Glassman, Stewardship and Outreach Specialist*

There is a long history of fire on Michigan's landscape. As much as soils, sunlight, and water, fire has shaped Michigan's ecosystems, with many native plants depending on it to thrive. As much as it is a natural force, fire was utilized as a tool by indigenous communities throughout the Great Lakes region. Since European settlement and the suppression of fire, invasive species and other fire-intolerant species have become established, changing the face of native habitats.

As a result of fire suppression, many southeast Michigan prairies, savannas, and woodlands have become overrun with invasive species. Habitats that were once made up of fire-dependent native plants have been choked out by invasives and shaded out fire-intolerant species. Reintroducing fire helps to kill invasive species and to stimulate new growth in native species.

## Many thanks to our volunteers...

To the **Landmarks** newsletter guest writers: Cathleen "Cat" Adams, Carla Bisaro, and Jim McIntyre

To our **photographers**: Mark Even, Jim Robertson, Charles Scott, and Jack Smiley

To the **stewardship volunteers**:

Miles Anderson, Tim Devine, Blake Duddles, Matthew Fischer, Emily Holiday, George Kasdorf, Ethan Larson, Heather Martinez, John Metzler, Daniel Smith, Peter Son-Bell, Gene Szedenits, Margaret Szedenits, Taaja Tucker, and Alex Tuckey

And especially to our dedicated **Committee Members**: Cathy Bach, Brenda Baker, Carla Bisaro, Misty Callies, Bryan Collett, Ani Cooper, Michelle Deatrick, Don DeMallie, Mary Ericson, Craig Fields, Chris Flanagan, Heidi Guenther, Mike Hahn, Mitch Hall, Michelle Harris, Ruth Hart, Richard Kent, Amanda Louks, Sally Lunn, Andrew Magsam, Jim McIntyre, Michelle McIntyre, Veronica Nehasil, Tony Pitts, Jon Richards, Jim Robertson, Bill Secrest, Shawn Severance, Jack Smiley, Jon Trevathan, Jim Weiner, and Jacob Yesh-Brochstein.

Since the start of 2022, staff and members of the Stewardship Committee have been working with a group of master's students from the University of Michigan School of the Environment and Sustainability (SEAS) to develop a prescribed burn initiative for the Conservancy. The students have explored the history of fire use in Michigan as well as best practices, in order to develop guidelines and tools that SMLC and other conservation organizations can use when considering prescribed fire in land management. These tools include a communications plan and burn plan templates, that can be tailored to the specific conditions of each burn site.

As a result of this project, SMLC hopes to continue to use prescribed fire at sites where it has already been introduced (LeFurge Woods, Lost Lake, and West Prairie). In the future, we will also explore how we could best utilize prescribed fire at other sites, in ways that are consistent with our conservation goals and site management plans.

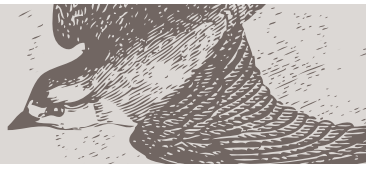
**Thank you to everyone who volunteered with SMLC!**

We are always looking for dedicated people who want to help SMLC achieve our mission. For more information, please contact Ethan Glassman at [eglassman@smlcland.org](mailto:eglassman@smlcland.org) or call 734-484-6565.



**Stewardship Volunteers.**  
Photo by *Ethan Glassman*





## Great-horned Owl

By Ethan Glassman, Stewardship and Outreach Specialist

If you've ever been out at LeFurge woods at dusk and heard a familiar hooting up in the trees, you might have heard the call of Michigan's deadliest nocturnal hunter. Unmistakable by their large size and "horns" (tufts of feathers called plumicorns), great-horned owls (*Bubo virginianus*) are found across North America, with many calling the Superior Greenway home. Grey-brown plumage helps them remain camouflaged in the woodlands during the day, before heading out at night to hunt.

Great-horned owls aren't picky, and will eat just about anything they can sink their powerful talons into. Flying completely silently under the cover of darkness, the owls use their great eyesight and excellent hearing to pick off unsuspecting prey. Messy eaters too, small mammals, birds, even reptiles and fish are scarfed down whole and any undigestible bits of fur and bone are regurgitated as little pellets, which lucky hikers can often find underneath an owl's perch.

Great-horned owls don't build their own nests, instead choosing abandoned nests of other birds, or large tree cavities. Eggs are usually laid in January or February, and after a little over a month of incubation, two to three fuzzy little owlets hatch. Female owls protect the nest while male owls do most hunting to bring back food for their rapidly growing chicks.

*Continued from page 1*

Earth Day 2023 is the 53<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of this once a year celebration and inspiration to do some positive things for our planet. For SMLC, though, *Earth Day is every day*. This is what keeps me going, continuing to work towards SMLC's mission, because I can't imagine a world without frogs singing in spring, fireflies dancing in summer, colorful autumn leaves and quiet winter landscapes. I have a feeling that your connection is meaningful too.

In 2023, I encourage you to lend a hand to save the land – whenever it works for you. This is how we continue to build on all of that positive momentum that got us to where we are today. **Thank you** for helping SMLC get to 35 years old and for being part of the start of our next 35.

Protecting southeast Michigan woodlands ensures that the habitats great-horned owls need to hunt, nest, and mate is preserved for these powerful nighttime predators.



**Great-horned owl.**

Photo by Jim Robertson

## Forest-to-MiFaucet Initiative

Does your drinking water come from a well, river or lake? Find out at [MiDrinkingWater.org](http://MiDrinkingWater.org).

### Forests are the best land use to provide clean drinking water:

- Permanent vegetation slows water velocity from the sky and along ground
- Undisturbed soils and leaf layer reduce runoff and erosion
- Forests regulate timing and magnitude of stream flow
- Minimal infrastructure and impermeable surfaces
- Infrequent and small chemical spills
- Soil and vegetation filter pollutants

SMLC is one of 12 grant recipients of the DNR's Forest-to-MiFaucet Initiative funded by the USDA Forest Service/National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. SMLC's grant will: empower landowners to manage/conservate their woodlands, contribute our share of the DNR goal to plant 60,000 trees in forest riparian zones, and educate the public about how forests contribute to their drinking water quality. [Michigan.gov/ForestToMiFaucet](http://Michigan.gov/ForestToMiFaucet)

**Yes!** I want to help preserve critical natural habitat in southeast Michigan by supporting Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total Gift

Check here to let SMLC use my gift where it is needed most.

**Or, direct my donation:**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Stewardship Fund

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Superior Township Fund

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Land Protection Fund

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Stewardship Endowment Fund

Please make checks payable to Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy and mail to:

**Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy**  
**8383 Vreeland Rd.**  
**Superior Township, MI 48198**

Or, make a secure online credit card donation at [smlcland.org](http://smlcland.org)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

All donations are tax deductible to the extent provided by law. The donor received no goods or services in exchange for this donation. E-mail used only for SMLC news/announcements. We will never give or sell your personal information to any other group.

**Our Mission** *The Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy conserves natural land and open space — including forests, wetlands, meadows, agricultural lands, and places of scenic beauty — to provide habitat for wildlife and to enrich the lives of people.*

## Wish List

SMLC could use the following items:

Item Needed	Retail Cost
3 point hitch tractor wood chipper attachment	\$2,500
Fire Safety Equipment	\$1,100
4-5 drawer filing cabinet —Letter sized	\$300
Good working order black and white laser Business Printer	\$250
Heavy-duty poster easels (2)	\$150 each
Gently used folding handsaws	\$22 each
Gently used loppers	\$15 each
Water Bottles for volunteers (24 pack)	\$4 each

Please contact the SMLC office if you would like to make our wishes come true!

**734-484-6565 | [info@smlcland.org](mailto:info@smlcland.org)**

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