

Trust Matters

Volume 1, Issue 1

Fall 2007

Board of Trustees

- Debbie Bruce, Chair
- Steve Frank, Vice Chair
- Walter Lynn, Sec/Treas
- Paul Briney
- Eldon Greenwood
- John Hawkins
- Carol Herndon
- Bob Komnick
- Randall Leka
- Tom Skelly

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PLEASE JOIN US!

Fundraiser at Prairie Creek Habitat Sunday - October 14 - 1 to 3 p.m. Pleasant Plains Schools-Farmingdale Campus (See map on back)

Please join us for an afternoon of beautiful autumn weather (we hope), fellowship, and environmental education as we meet at the Prairie Creek Habitat at the Pleasant Plains Middle School/Farmingdale Elementary School campus on Farmingdale Road just six miles west of Springfield (See map on back page).

The Habitat is the beneficiary of a \$15,000 grant received by The Sangamon Conservancy Trust. We, along with the students and faculty of the School District, would like to introduce you to the site, if you have not already seen it, learn about its formation, development, and its use as an outdoor classroom. At the same time learn more about The Sangamon Conservancy Trust, the work that we do, and hope to do, and the potential benefits that estate planning for land preservation can bring to your family.

As the not-for-profit arm of the Sangamon County Soil and Water Conservation District, farmland and natural areas preservation and enhancement area among our goals, in addition to environmental education opportunities such as helping the Prairie Creek Habitat.

For \$25 bring the whole family for a couple of hours of enjoyment on an autumn afternoon. Find food and refreshments and take a walking tour of the Habitat. As an added benefit, you will become a member of The Sangamon Conservancy Trust for calendar year 2008.

IF YOU CANNOT SHARE THIS AFTERNOON WITH US, BUT WOULD LIKE TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT, PLEASE USE THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE.



SCT Supports Prairie Creek Habitat

Paul Briney



Paul is a retired farmer who now manages his wife's family farms. Sally Jo and Paul live on their 40-acre horse farm near Chatham . Paul is very concerned about water quality and conservation of our soil resources. He likes to hunt quail and pheasant with his dog Sadie. Many years ago Paul sowed the seeds about forming a not-for-profit arm of the Soil & Water Conservation District.— now known as The Sangamon Conservancy Trust.

Steve Frank



Steve is Supervisor of the Land & Water Resources Department with the City of Springfield. He oversees farm and watershed management for the City. Steve's focus is all about working with the public and conservation partners to promote and implement needed conservation practices to improve water quality.

John Hawkins



John is the News Service Director for the Illinois Farm Bureau, where he performs media relations and provides online content for IFB websites. John also owns a 640-acre farm near Buffalo in Sangamon County, which utilizes terraces and other conservation practices to help reduce soil erosion on the land. John is the immediate past Chair of The Sangamon Conservancy Trust.

Bob Komnick



Bob has lived and worked on his family's farm southwest of Curran since 1936. Bob and his wife, Joy, have turned the farming of some 1500 acres over to the next generation of Komnicks. Bob has served or continues to serve on numerous boards including the Warren-Boynton State Bank, U of I Extension Council, Sangamon Valley Farm Business Farm Management Board, Lincoln Land FS, and Growmark Boards.

Walter Lynn, Jr.



Walter is a Certified Public Accountant who practices extensively with farms in the Midwest. He was raised on a farm in Mason County, IL and is a family farm owner. He is sensitive to the transition issues and family dynamics associated with today's family farms. A conservation ethic is part of his heritage. Walt is a past Chair of The Sangamon Conservancy Trust.

Debbie Bruce



Debbie is the Program Support Administrator for the Office of Resource Conservation at the IL Department of Natural Resources. She administers the State side of the IL Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, IL Landowner Incentive Program, the IL River Basin Restoration, and other private land conservation programs. She has been working with conservation easements for over 12 years.

Eldon Greenwood



Eldon is a retired farm manager and trust officer for INB/First of America Bank. He and his wife Betty have lived in Chatham for 50 years. They have three children and six grandchildren. Most of Eldon's charitable work is for agriculture-related organizations.

Carol Herndon



Carol is retired from Southern Illinois University School of Medicine where she served as director of grants and sponsored programs. She also serves as a board member of The Nature Conservancy's Great Rivers Regional Board, a member of the Nature Conservancy 50th Anniversary Steering Committee, and the immediate past president of Lincoln Memorial Garden Board of Directors and a current board member.

Randall Leka



Randall is a partner in Worrell-Leka Land Services, specializing in farm management, appraisals and land brokerage. He has been a professional farm manager for 20 years and a licensed real estate agent/broker for 11 years.

Tom Skelly



Tom is the Water Division Manager of the City of Springfield and has been actively involved in Lake Springfield watershed issues for more than 20 years. He is past Chair of The Sangamon Conservancy Trust and is currently serving a term as the Chair of the Illinois Section of the American Water Works Association.

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SCT Establishes Endowment Fund with Sangamon County Community Foundation



The Sangamon Conservancy Trust (SCT) recently established *The Sangamon Conservancy Trust Farmland Preservation and Conservation Fund* through the Sangamon County Community Foundation (SCCF) (www.sccf.us). The Trust received several benefits from setting up an Organization Endowment Fund at the Sangamon County Community Foundation:

- It allows us to focus on our core mission, while we let professionals manage our investments.
- Pooling our funds with other SCCF funds helps diversify and maximize our investment income.
- SCCF administers the receipt of charitable gifts to the Trust for all contributions made through the Foundation.
- Inclusion of the Trust in SCCF's printed and web-based materials will create a new awareness of our organization and our mission among potential partners and donors.

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SCT Joins Land Trust Alliance



The Sangamon Conservancy Trust (SCT) recently joined the *Land Trust Alliance (LTA)* (www.lta.org) in an effort to associate with a strong organization of over 1600 land trusts with many available resources to help us run an effective organization. The SCT adopted the **Land Trust Standards and Practices** of the LTA, which are the guidelines for the responsible operation of a land trust. We have pledged to run our program legally, ethically and in the public interest and to conduct a sound program of land transactions and stewardship. The Land Trust Alliance originally developed the Standards at the urging of land trusts who believe a strong land trust community depends on the credibility and effectiveness of all its members.

The LTA can provide a variety of training, publications, grants, lobbying, insurance for land trusts, census of land trusts, a digital library, and a host of other resources to LTA members to help them conserve the land and its resources in the most effective manner.

To quote the LTA website, "Americans love their land and are meeting the challenge—individually and collectively through land trusts—to preserve the best of the American landscape, rural livelihoods and natural areas across the country. A growing corps of willing and visionary landowners are entrusting their lands to the perpetual care of land trusts, making a commitment that will extend beyond their lifetimes. This growth in virtually every region and every aspect of private land conservation attests to the professionalism and public trust accorded to the 1,667-member land trust community—today and in the future. The land trust story is not just about acres; it is about local people taking individual steps to preserve the natural features that define their quality of life. Private, voluntary land conservation is working, community by community, across America."

We are pleased to be associated with this organization as we build for the future.

"Americans love their land and are meeting the challenge—individually and collectively through land trusts—to preserve the best of the American landscape, rural livelihoods and natural areas across the country. . ."

The Komnick Family Farm – Their Conservation Easement Story

Joy and Bob Komnick with Oscar



Joy notes, “ *We are just stewards of the land for the short time we are here on earth, then we pass it along. We want it to forever be farmland,*

Seeing the housing pop up on the west side of Springfield and Chatham, it doesn’t take too much of a stretch to also see the Komnick farm, five miles west of Route 4, as a subdivision some day, say 30 years from now. Right now, rural home sites popping up everywhere could easily dot the ridge above the Sampson Branch of Lick Creek that traverses the family property.

However, that’s not the vision of Bob and Joy Komnick and their family, who have been farming the land since 1913, when Bob’s great grandfather, August Komnick, first leased the land from the Scully family. Bob began farming the land as his life’s work after his dad, Albert, passed it to him and Joy when they were first married. Bob and Joy have now passed that livelihood on to their son Mark and his family.

Bob and Joy’s feelings about the land run deep, and they have passed those sentiments on to their sons, Mark and Michael, and daughter, Joan. Joy notes, “ *We are just stewards of the land for the short time we are here on earth, then we pass it along. We want it to forever be farmland, or if not that, then parkland – never to be under concrete and buildings.*” The Komnicks are fulfilling a promise they made to Bob’s dad and mother, that they would take care of the land – and keep it in the family for as long as possible.

Aside from the many conservation practices installed on the farm (Bob notes it all looks a lot different from the 1960s), the Komnicks found a tool in conservation easements that will help them fulfill their promise to Bob’s parents. Bob and Joy note that while the tax benefits are welcomed, the motivator was to forever and legally bind the land to agriculture. “*We wanted everyone to know we were firm in our commitment and serious about the forever nature of the dedication,*” noted Joy. “*We talked with our children and explained to them what our goals were. We know that someday our great, great grandchildren will likely see that the market value of the property will not be what others are getting who are selling theirs for subdivisions. They’ll learn that’s OK. We hope they will love the land as much as we do – and know that it’s not about them. We work in a partnership between land and operator – the land will give back if you treat it right.*”

Bob and Joy committed their first 80 acres to a conservation easement in 2005. They thought it was a little scary at first, but after becoming educated with the help of their accountant and attorneys, they became comfortable with the concept, and they thought this tool met their needs and desires for farmland preservation. After another 80 acres were put into easement in 2006, their remaining 400 acres at this site will be enrolled by the end of 2007 to take advantage of the favorable tax laws that might soon be changing.

While the tornados of 2006 sadly destroyed all of the buildings on their farmstead (including their beloved 1917-era home), the new beginning afforded by that event made them realize even more the value in the land and the greater powers that are really in charge. **Bob notes with sadness when he sees a farm turn into a development, “*After that the land’s just gone – I don’t want that. We want to keep our land the way we see it today – or make it better – and not just for one generation.*”**

We think Bob has the right idea about the land. Give us a call if you would like more information about conservation easements.

Considerations for Donating a Conservation Easement

The Sangamon Conservancy Trust is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that can hold conservation easements donated to the Trust. As a farmland owner, establishing a conservation easement on his/her land in the interest of farmland conservation and preservation is a long-term decision for the owner which should not be taken lightly. While the final decision is that of the landowner, it is important that family members are aware of your plans for the land. This easement is a permanent encumbrance on the property's title, specifically for farmland and natural areas preservation and is recorded by the landowner with the County Recorder of Deeds following acceptance by the Trust.

Once a landowner has made a request to the Trust, personally or through his legal advisor, asking consideration of acceptance of an easement, the Trust begins its approval process which includes:

- Identification of location and suitability issues such as current land uses and proximity to development areas
- On-site visits to the property by Trustees, with SWCD technical personnel, to visually inspect the land.
- Review of existing conservation plans and potential conservation needs for the land with soil and water conservation technical personnel.
- Request approval of a resolution by the local soil and water conservation district (SWCD) in which the land is located, declaring the property is worthy of protection in its existing open space, agricultural state.
- Vote by the Trustees to approve or deny donation of the easement, pending acceptance of the easement agreement and easement fees.
- Review of the conservation easement agreement documents prepared by the landowner's legal counsel. These documents include considerations for hunting rights, future family home sites, site supporting building construction and other issues of concern to the landowner and the Trust. All parties execute the documents.
- The landowner hires a qualified appraiser to complete two appraisals for the landowner—one with the easement and one without. The easement value is the net difference between the two appraisals. This is required to substantiate the charitable deduction for the landowner, when claiming this charitable deduction on federal income tax form 1040 (subject to possible limitations), as well as providing the Trust with the value of the easement.

The Trust conducts annual on-site reviews of all donated easements to ensure compliance with the easement agreements. **The easement process should begin with the Trust no later than November 1 to accomplish the recording process before December 31st of any given year.**

Our Sincere Thanks to Former Trustees

The Board of The Sangamon Conservancy Trust extends its sincere thanks to charter board members **Carolyn Stone, Dale Hedrick and Mike Luepke** whose energies helped get this organization off the ground, and to **Mark Rabin** who recently completed three years of service to the Trust. We are most grateful for the expertise, wise counsel and conservation ethic these Trustees brought to our organization.

"We are most grateful for the expertise, wise counsel and conservation ethic these Trustees brought to our organization".

It's Membership Time!

It's that time of year again. In an effort to further the mission of The Sangamon Conservancy Trust, we request your support to renew, or join with us for the first time, in membership with the Trust. Please find a pre-printed envelope enclosed with this newsletter that lists the membership levels and mailing information. We appreciate your participation as we strive to enhance opportunities to protect and preserve the land and natural resources of central Illinois.

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We're on the Web!
www.sangamonconservancytrust.org

Mailing Label

Our Mission
"To foster exceptional conservation activities for the benefit of all persons"

The Sangamon Conservancy Trust Fundraiser
Sunday - October 14th - 1 to 3 p.m.
Prairie Creek Habitat at Pleasant Plains Middle School
2455 N. Farmingdale Road - Pleasant Plains, IL

