Marsh Madness!

OUR ANNUAL REPORT CHRONICLES THE MANY RESULTS OF YOUR SUPPORT in the last year. Thanks to you, valuable land was permanently protected. Beautiful wildlife habitat was restored. And more people gained access to land. All this good news is for our fiscal year ending June 30, 2020.

My personal highlight of the year was Marsh Madness. It is a kids-teaching-kids spectacular that takes place every fall at Sun Prairie’s Patrick Marsh. You cannot top Marsh Madness for the level of energy and enthusiasm it generates. Vince Brandl, a seventh-grade teacher at neighboring Patrick Marsh Middle School led the charge. Middle-school students created outdoor learning stations for younger students from four local elementary schools. The elementary school students made art out of natural materials, learned how prairie soils prevent erosion, explored the inside of a bee hive, watched a saw mill in operation, and more.

Groundswell and our partners have set the stage for Marsh Madness by preserving and managing the prairie and savanna habitat and taking care of the trail system, signs, and parking lots at Patrick Marsh. It is an intriguing and inviting place for the community to explore nature and enjoy being outside.

Marsh Madness couldn’t be held this fall due to the pandemic. But let’s hope it comes roaring back next fall. It is a perfect way to foster the conservation heroes of the future.

As you read our Annual Report, I hope you will be inspired by all the great things you helped accomplish this year. – Jim Welsh, Executive Director
The 258 acres of land and water you helped protect this year are hard-working. They make our communities more resilient to flooding. They give farmers confidence to invest in their soil knowing it will not be developed. They provide wildlife with more places to thrive. And they give everyone more nature places to enjoy.

**Thanks to the conservation vision** of Oscar and Norma Bjugstad we placed a conservation easement on 106 acres of **high-quality farmland** on the southeast side of **Evansville Wildlife Area** in Rock County. The easement permanently prevents development of the property. It keeps it available for farming and open to the public for hunting at the adjacent wildlife area. As Oscar and Norma put it, “We believe in preserving the farmland for future generations!” That sentiment runs in the family. Their son Brian already protected his adjacent farm with a permanent conservation easement.

**Groundswell has been working** with landowners to protect more than 1,000 acres of land in the **Black Earth Creek** valley between Middleton and Mazomanie for almost 20 years. This year, we added another five acres of land to the beautiful conservation landscape. This property is adjacent to state-owned land on the east side of Cross Plains. It is part of the DNR’s Black Earth Creek Fishery Area and Dane County’s Black Earth Creek Natural Resource Area. Best of all, this acquisition prevents development of the property. A 2003 University of Wisconsin study found that water quality in the creek goes down as more pavement and rooftops are built in the valley.
As we learn more and more every day, every single piece of wetland we have left is worth protecting — the health of Madison’s chain of lakes and other waterbodies depends on our wetlands. We purchased two important pieces of wetland this year. On Six-Mile Creek on the northwest side of Waunakee, we acquired 84 acres of wetland and a beautiful stretch of the creek. Six-Mile Creek flows south of Waunakee into Lake Mendota. The creek’s wetlands play a vital role keeping the water clean and reducing flooding. The O’Malley family worked patiently with us for four years to protect the land which had been part of their farm for three generations.

MCFARLAND LANDOWNERS Ken and Eileen Brost sold us 63 acres (mostly wetland) that they have loved for years. Like the other landowners we worked with this year, their commitment to conservation has created a lasting legacy. The property is adjacent to Lower Mud Lake State Fishery Area east of Hwy. 51. It helps fill in the project boundary for Dane County’s Lower Mud Lake Natural Resource Area. Groundswell will manage the property like the adjacent state land, providing public access and protecting habitat for ducks and other wildlife.

Funding to permanently protect these great places came from Groundswell supporters like the estate of Marie Fraser, landowner donations, the Rock River Valley Chapter of Pheasants Forever, Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, Dane County Conservation Fund, Town of Dunn, US Department of Agriculture, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and the Village of Waunakee.

The conservation of cherished places doesn’t happen by accident. It happens thanks to the vision and dedication of landowners, partners, communities, and individuals. Thank you for making these community successes possible.
SOME OF OUR BIGGEST NEWS is that we secured another grant through the John C. Bock Foundation to restore more wildlife habitat at Patrick Marsh. The funds will be used to improve the oak savanna around the kettle pond on the west side of the marsh. Our long term goal is to create a seamless transition from prairie to oak savanna at Patrick Marsh. To do this, we are removing invasive trees and shrubs like honeysuckle, buckthorn, and boxelder that stand in the way.

Speaking of restoration, our monthly volunteers have been collecting more prairie seed and cutting more brush. Our oak savanna habitat around the kettle pond is really starting to open up. The oaks are now able to stretch out their limbs. All of the seed that our volunteers have collected will be planted in the area restored with the John C. Bock Foundation grant. Patrick Marsh is a much better place because of our volunteers!

Our Conservationist BJ Byers has created a new monthly email that is growing in popularity. The emails are based on “phenology” or nature’s calendar. Each month, BJ writes about some of the plants, insects, or wildlife that you might encounter during the month. Most of his photos are taken at Patrick Marsh and Westport Prairie. The next time you read his phenology email, head out into nature and see if you can also find what he discovers, like the oddly-beautiful cecropia moth caterpillar BJ found at Patrick Marsh. To sign up to receive these monthly emails, send an email to liz@groundswellwisconsin.org.

Each year, GROUNDSWELL inspects the places we’ve helped protect. This includes 80 properties where the landowner has agreed to protect the land from incompatible land uses. This agreement is called a conservation easement. Our annual visit helps make sure our agreement is upheld. It’s also a chance for us to reconnect with landowners.

Vern and Vicki Treinen protected their farm in the Village of Windsor ten years ago this fall. They were concerned that their farm was a prime location for development. Vern’s grandfather taught him the importance of farmland. “When the opportunity came available to protect our property, it was a no brainer,” said Vern. “It’s what my grandpa would’ve wanted, and it’s what I wanted.” The Treinen farm will remain farmland forever.

Thank you to the landowners who protect their land and share their stories. Their dedication to conservation protects special places forever.
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC forced the closure of farmer’s markets around Madison this spring. Some growers not proficient in technology or whose primary language isn’t English were left behind when markets moved on-line. Groundswell helped by organizing a market on the east side of Madison. Hmong growers sold produce at our market in a safe, socially-distanced setting directly to residents of Linden Cohousing and the local neighborhood.

THE WOLF RUN TRAIL connects Mazomanie with Wisconsin Heights School. Sections of the bike/hike trail were seriously damaged in the August 2018 flooding along Black Earth Creek. This summer the Wolf Run Association finished the installation of a culvert that will keep the trail high and dry when the next flood comes.

TEENAGERS in Neighborhood Food Solutions’ summer program got their hands in the dirt growing vegetables at our Pasley’s Swan Creek Farm in Fitchburg. Under the guidance of farmer Robert Pierce, the crew worked in the new raised vegetable beds. The beds are made with compost that improves the health of the soil.
Give back to the land… and your gift will be TRIPLED

AS YOU THINK ABOUT YEAR-END GIVING, please consider a gift to Groundswell. An anonymous donor will TRIPLE your gift if you give by December 31st. That means if you give $50, a matching donor will give $100 for a combined gift of $150. Donate $100 and your gift becomes $300! Conservation doesn’t happen by accident. You make it possible to protect the land, make conserved land accessible to the community, and preserve our area’s natural beauty. Give online at groundswellwisconsin.org/donate or visit groundswellwisconsin.org/ways-togive for more options. Checks should be mailed to Groundswell, 303 S. Paterson St Suite 6, Madison, WI 53703.

AS A LEGACY CIRCLE MEMBER, you are crucial to preserving our irreplaceable lands for the future. To learn about your options for adding Groundswell to your estate plans, including bequests, IRA or life insurance designations, and more, visit groundswellwisconsin.org/legacy or contact Heidi Habeger at (608) 258-9797 or heidi@groundswellwisconsin.org.

LEGACY CIRCLE MEMBERS

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Please welcome to Groundswell

MARY BINKLEY, BOARD OF DIRECTORS. Growing up in Wisconsin, my daily activities as a child included looking for snakes, bugs, wildflowers and rocks. Fields, forests, and the Wisconsin River were close by and I enjoyed it all. Excitement was a red-backed salamander, green snake, hepaticas in spring, or an interesting rock. During college, I declared majors in Occupational Therapy, Music, Education, Biology, Art, and finally Botany. After discovering that a naturalist is poorly paid, I pursued a career in real estate. I love the natural world and believe in preserving special places. That is why I support and volunteer with Groundswell. I am fortunate to live on land protected with a conservation easement held by Groundswell. Recently retired, my time is spent working on the land, creating pottery, walking, paddling, and gardening.

LIZ PELTON, DEVELOPMENT AND OUTREACH COORDINATOR. As our new Development and Outreach Coordinator hired in August, I grow relationships with supporters who make our conservation work possible. While the pandemic prevents me from meeting supporters in person, I’m making connections with notes, calls, emails, and social media. I love hearing donors’ stories — why they give, which places are special to them, and how they connect with nature.

I grew up in Waunakee playing in Six Mile Creek and camping and hiking at state parks around Wisconsin. After earning a B.A. degree in English from the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities, I worked as a medical editor in pharmaceutical research. In 2015, I moved to the nonprofit sector and worked in fundraising at the International Crane Foundation. I wrote grants for their conservation programs in North America, mainly focused on Whooping Crane reintroduction and protection.

My husband Sam and I love exploring Madison by bike and going on adventures with our rescue dog Ramona. I also enjoy reading, writing, cooking, yoga, and hiking. Fun fact: Sometimes beagles get tired on hikes and need a helping hand.

YIMMUAJ YANG, COMMUNITY DIRECTOR. Although she is a new Groundswell staff member as of this October, we have been lucky to work with Yimmuaj for several years as we secure land for immigrant farmers and farmers of color.

In Yimmuaj’s words: “Do you love food? Me too! I grew up growing all sorts of vegetables with my parents; almost anything you can think of that grows well in South Central Wisconsin. Food is a basic human right but not everyone has the same access to food. I’ve spent a decade of my professional life advocating and fighting for equitable access to food, land, services, and resources for the community of colors. I believe in community-based approaches to resolving conflicts, issues, and barriers. It’s important for me to build relationships with honesty, integrity, and trust. I hope to continue to make further progress at Groundswell.”
July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020
Your individual gift makes a big difference!

763 Supporters
258 Acres Protected Forever
$1,486,000 Value of Land Permanently Protected

Between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020 Groundswell Conservancy received $601,042 for programs and operations and spent $557,390 for programs and operations. In addition, Groundswell received $1,168,352 in private gifts and public funds from Rock River Valley Chapter of Pheasants Forever, Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, Dane County Conservation Fund, Town of Dunn, US Department of Agriculture, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and the Village of Waunakee to permanently protect 258 acres of land.

Income for Programs and Operations
Contributions from individuals $449,290  75%
Restricted gifts $52,759  9%
Consulting fees, rental income, and other $60,541  10%
Endowment distributions from Madison Community Foundation $11,807  5%
Easement Enforcement Endowment $11,807
Operations Endowment $4,262
Bob and Anne Bolz Gift Endowment $7,383
Investment Fund distribution $15,000  2%
Total Program and Operating income $601,042  100%

Total Income for Land Acquisition $1,168,352

Expenses for Programs and Operations
Conservation, Education, and Outreach 400,095  72%
Fundraising $96,218  17%
Management and General $61,077  11%
Total Program and Operating Expenses $557,390  100%

As of June 30, 2020 Groundswell Conservancy had total assets of $8,670,399 and liabilities of $173,618. Most of our assets are our nature preserves.

To view the details of our financial health, please see our financial reports posted at www.guidestar.org. The 2019-2020 report should be posted by February 2021. You can also view our federal tax returns at our website under the tab “ways to give”/ “donate with confidence”.

We protect special places forever. We want everyone to live in a world filled with green places where communities thrive. We believe that land is essential for people’s physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness. If we don’t protect undeveloped land now, it may be lost forever.
Thank you for your investment in conservation where you live

Each and every gift, no matter the size, helps protect the land we love, forever. These generous supporters gave gifts to Groundswell Conservancy between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020. Thank you for protecting special places, forever.

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Marie Fraser Estate

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Tom Haag
Timothy Hacker & Carol Chen
Drew Hanson
Sharla Hanson
I’ve been a tree climber, hugger, friend, and admirer for over 70 years. I’ve benefited from their wisdom, admired their tenacity, appreciated their shade, and marveled at their diversity. Protecting the trees and the earth are essential to me. Contributing to Groundswell’s efforts to protect natural places in Dane County brings me a sense of hope for future generations, who will be provided with the opportunity to enjoy these special places. I have chosen to become a Qualified Charitable Distribution giver. It’s simple, dependable and tax-savvy. Each year, I look forward to the pleasure of sharing a portion of my resources with those who have pledged to protect my friends.

- Ann E. Aswegian, Supporter

QCDs from IRAs are still available in 2020 and still offer tax benefits, even though required minimum distributions are not necessary this year due to the CARES Act.
Like many others, I have always spent time in natural areas when in need of rejuvenation, peace, or solace. This year has been no different. I am so thankful for Groundswell’s work, partnering with private landowners and state/local governments to ensure that there are natural areas for all of us to turn to. That is why I am happy to give as a monthly Sustainer and have included Groundswell as part of my estate plan.

- Johanna Allex, Groundswell Sustainer and Legacy Circle member

$100 to $249 continued

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My wife and I enrolled in a donor advised fund sponsored by a well-known investment company about seven years ago. We find it very convenient to direct annual donations from this fund to Groundswell Conservancy and other groups we like to support. We replenish funds in this fund from time to time by surrendering appreciated securities which is quite tax advantageous.

- Marty Evanson, Supporter
THANK YOU Volunteers

WE ARE DEEPLY GRATEFUL to the dedicated volunteers, who devote many hours to serve on our board and committees, help with field trips, assist in the office, manage the lands, and more.

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In memory of Margaret Huss
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Daniel Fields & Jeanne Behrend

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In memory of Jane Reddin White
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& Sharon Reddin White

In Kind Contributions
Ace Hardware
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KOSA Wellness Spa & Retreat
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Gifts or Partial Gifts of Land or Easements
Oscar & Norma Bjugstad

Government Grants for Land or Easements
Dane County Conservation Fund
Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program
Lake Ripley Management District
North American Wetlands Conservation Act
Town of Bristol
Village of Waunakee

In preparing this report, we tried to ensure that it is accurate and complete. If we made an omission or error, please accept our apologies and contact Liz Pelton at 608-258-9797 or liz@groundswellwisconsin.org so we can correct our records.
Places worth knowing

To keep our families and communities safe during the coronavirus pandemic, we are planning virtual outings for 2021. Visit groundswellwisconsin.org/events for more details.

Thank You Party

Tuesday, December 8th
Virtual Zoom videoconference
4:00 - 5:00 pm

WE ARE INCREDLIBLY GRATEFUL for your support of conservation where you live. While we can't celebrate this year's achievements in person, we hope you will join us online. Our staff will share stories and you'll have chances to win local door prizes! RSVP online at groundswellwisconsin.org/thankyouparty for the Zoom link.

Thank you to our sponsor:

Self-Guided Story Hike at Patrick Marsh
February 1-28, 2021

EXPLORE A STORY in a new way as you hike the pages of a children's book by local author Dineo Dowd or ponder winter poems at Patrick Marsh on the east side of Sun Prairie. This self-guided hike is family-friendly and open to all. No registration is required. Come hike and read any time during the month of February.