



PHOTO: JASON LINDSEY

Get to know the
**Land
Conservation
Foundation**

The Land Conservation Foundation
protects natural areas for wildlife...
for people... forever.

What is a conservation land trust?



CONSERVATION LAND TRUSTS are nonprofit organizations governed by a non-paid volunteer board of local people who are dedicated to the protection and stewardship of lands and waters with conservation value for public benefit.

They generally have an executive director and may have other staff depending on their funding. They must meet a set of IRS standards to qualify as a 501(c)3 charitable nonprofit organization.

The Land Conservation Foundation is one of the 40 conservation land trusts in Illinois working across the state to protect natural areas, river corridors, wildlife habitats, biodiversity, and other important conservation goals.

WHAT DOES A CONSERVATION LAND TRUST DO?

Conservation land trusts generally do some or all of the following:

1. **Protect important community resources** such as natural areas, rivers, biodiversity, farmland, historic sites and water sources such as aquifers
2. **Provide stewardship** for land and water with high conservation value
3. **Connect people to the land** via trails, outdoor events, etc.
4. **Provide models** for community conservation
5. Use legal means to **provide the highest protection** of land and water within a state
6. Provide **guidance for land management** protection by individuals, and
7. Sponsor public **educational events**.



PHOTOS: MELISSA RECORDS



Why are Illinois conservation land trusts working to protect local biodiversity?

BIODIVERSITY MATTERS, NO MATTER WHERE YOU LIVE ON EARTH. Biodiversity provides humans with ecosystem services such as pollination, nutrient cycling, soil fertility, medicines, food sources, clean water, wood and fiber for clothing and shelter, and the land and water that support this immense variety of life on earth provide us with outdoor venues for art, religion, philosophy, and recreational experiences.

The science is overwhelming — biodiversity matters; our economies depend on it; our quality of life depends on it; our agriculture depends on it.



PHOTO: METTLER WOODS BY MELISSA RECORDS

A changing climate also matters.

HUMAN ACTIVITY IS CAUSING A SHIFT IN OUR CLIMATE. For example, the statewide average for precipitation in Illinois increased from 36 inches to 40 inches per year in the last century.

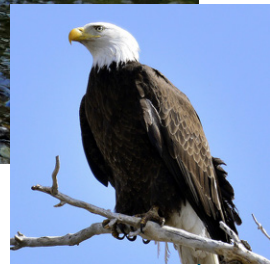
We may be able to modify climate change over time, but until then, we should also be working hard to mitigate some of the negative impacts of a shifting climate on ecosystem services **at the local level where it matters most** to the people and wildlife who live there.



Think globally, donate locally!

River corridors show a high return on investment.

RIVERS ARE ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT natural resources in the world and Illinois is blessed to have **over 87,000 river miles**. The Sangamon, Vermilion, and Embarrass River systems are examples in Central Illinois. Wooded river corridors provide the highest opportunity for protecting biodiversity, water quality and providing outdoor recreational opportunities. LCF owns four properties on the Sangamon River and one on the Salt Fork River.

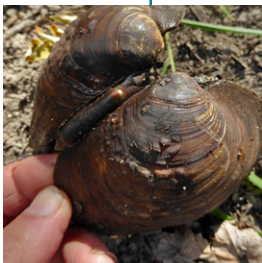


EXAMPLES OF RETURN ON INVESTMENT

River corridors attract a myriad of species that are often dependent on each other to survive. River corridors also provide a safe highway for animals to recolonize areas and for dispersal of young into unoccupied habitats.

Examples of “returns” in the Sangamon River Corridor are the **river otter, bobcat, bald eagle**, all three species had been extirpated from Central Illinois.

Near the Sangamon River in Piatt County, **bald eagles** have returned with at least two known nests established. The **river otter** and **bobcat** are appearing on trail cameras at Allerton Park, Lodge Park, the Land Conservation Foundation’s Bruce Hannon Levee Trail, and at other locations along the Sangamon River Corridor.



The Salt Fork River in Vermilion County and its tributaries are also considered highly valued for their **freshwater mussel resources** and water-based recreational activities such as fishing, canoeing and kayaking.

Jordan Creek, a tributary of the Salt Fork River, is also on the **Illinois Natural Areas Inventory**. LCF’s Mouth of Jordan Reserve is located at the mouth of Jordan Creek on the Salt Fork River.

LARGE PHOTO: MOUTH OF JORDAN BY MELISSA RECORDS

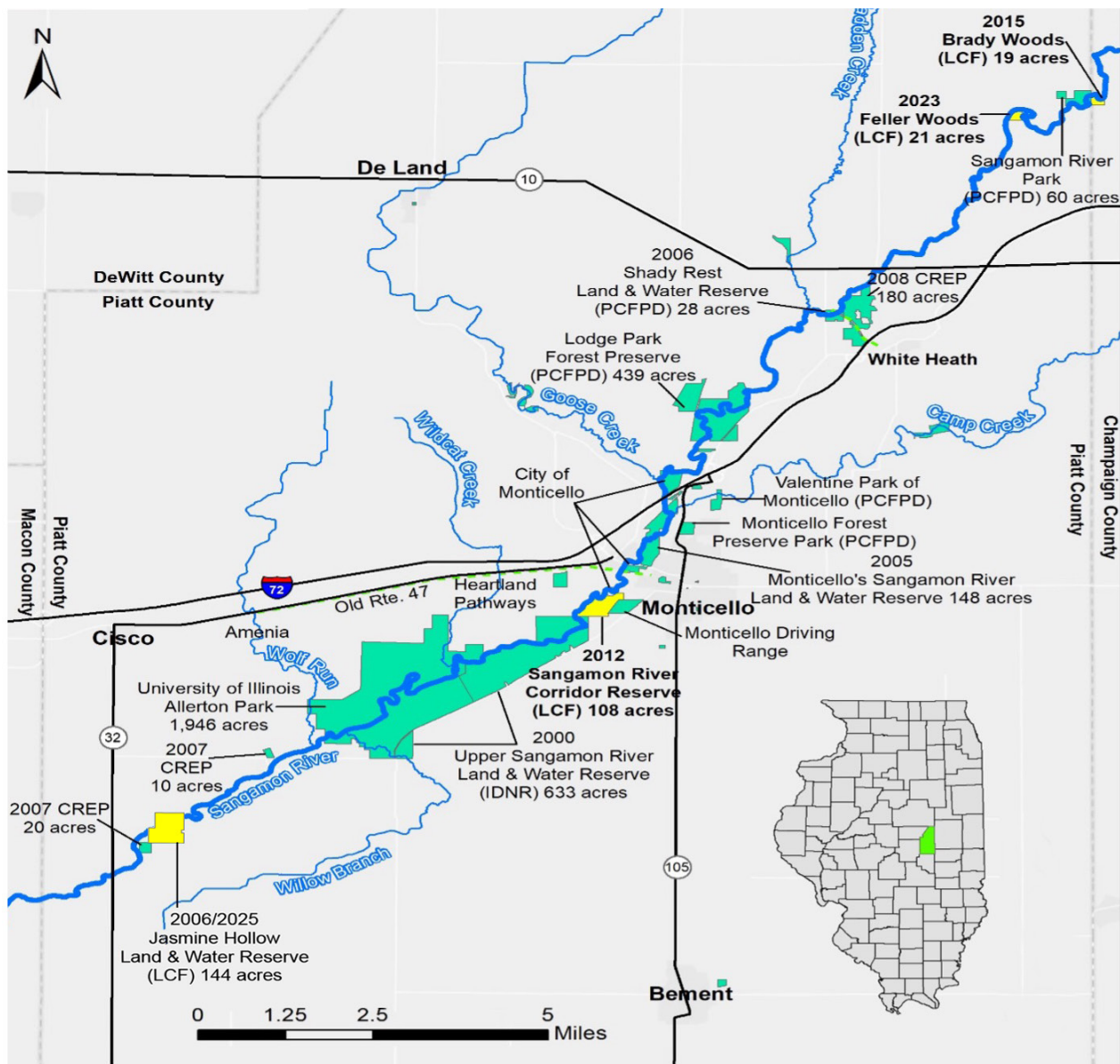


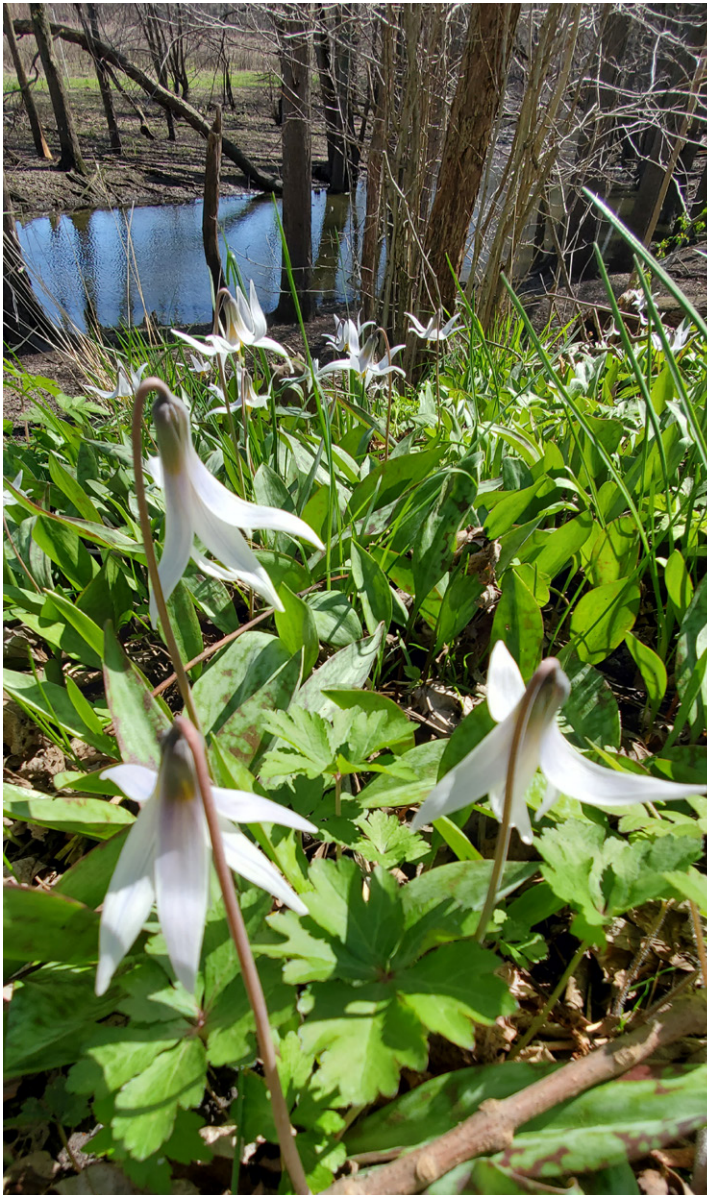
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Sangamon River Corridor in Piatt County

THE SANGAMON RIVER CORRIDOR provides an opportunity to partner with other land owners and organizations to expand the protected areas along the river. The Sangamon River Bluff Trail, opened in 2026, is a collaboration between LCF and the City of Monticello, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission and Allerton Park and Retreat Center.

The Sangamon River Corridor has a **rich variety of aquatic resources**. In just a one-mile stretch of river, 17 species of mussels have been identified. The **mudpuppy**, a fully aquatic salamander, is also found here and is on the Illinois Threatened species list. The state endangered **Sangamon phlox** is only known from Piatt and Champaign counties in the upper Sangamon River watershed.





PHOTOS: MELISSA RECORDS

WIDE FORESTED CORRIDORS along rivers in Central Illinois also provide habitat for the crow-sized **pileated woodpecker**, the largest woodpecker in North America, and high protein insects — a food source for birds and nestlings during the breeding season, and again during migration on their long journey back to their winter habitats in Central and South America. The Sangamon River Corridor is also a recharge area for the **Mahomet Aquifer**, that provides drinking water for approximately 800,000 people.

The **Sangamon River** across Piatt County is listed on the **Illinois Natural Areas Inventory** due to its high diversity of freshwater mussels which are the most imperiled group of species in North America. Four of our properties are on the Sangamon River.



Land Conservation Foundation Properties

SANGAMON RIVER CORRIDOR RESERVE — PIATT COUNTY

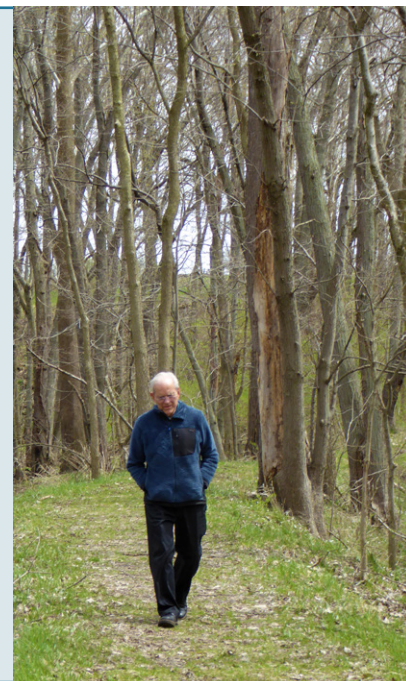


THIS 108-ACRE FLOODPLAIN FORESTED TRACT is located along the Sangamon River just west of Monticello. It's a rich area for hiking, birding, and nature study. The 2.3-mile **Bruce Hannon Levee Trail** offers elevated views of the river and floodplain. The **Sangamon River Bluff Trail** continues 4.5 miles west to connect with Allerton Park.



"Surely, one is formed by the community where one is raised, by the people of that place, and by their connection to the land. Hopefully, it is possible to start with the local sense of place and extend your awareness to the larger scale. My experience tells me that as we reach to larger and larger geographic scales of environmental concern, we become less and less effective. Clearly, organizations need to exist to address the large-scale problem but those who run them will lose the fire of purpose if they did not start with a local sense of place and constantly renew that sense by their return."

— Bruce Hannon



BRUCE HANNON LEVEE TRAIL PHOTOS: MELISSA RECORDS



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FELLER WOODS — PIATT COUNTY



THE SANGAMON RIVER runs through this 20-acre wet floodplain forest known for its large bur oak trees and abundance of spring wildflowers. Feller Woods was donated to LCF in 2023 by **Theresa Feller**, wife of long time LCF Board Member, the late **Bob Feller**. Feller Woods is the third gift of land that LCF has received. Currently there is no public access to Feller Woods.



FELLER WOODS BUR OAK, MUSSEL SURVEY PHOTOS: FRAN HARTY

“Bob loved his time with LCF and it gave him a renewed energy. From this energy, he found purpose in working with contractors, and volunteers through the guidance of the board, advisors, and the executive director to develop, maintain, and preserve LCF properties. His enthusiasm for preserving natural areas and working with others in this way was contagious. During his tenure on the board at LCF, Bob renewed friendships and made new friendships.

It was through working with these friends, Bob began to understand the process of preserving an area into perpetuity. It is with this understanding that Bob embraced LCF and its mission. In 1993, Bob purchased 20 acres of bottom ground on the Sangamon River. His goal was to care for it and to keep it as pristine as possible.

For the past 31 years, this ground had seen an increase of flooding due to development along the Sangamon River. Prior to his tenure at LCF, Bob and I talked often about how this ground should be preserved. We never talked about donating the ground to LCF, but his longtime involvement with LCF made it an easy choice for me to make after his passing in 2021.”

— Theresa Feller



JASMINE HOLLOW LAND & WATER RESERVE

— PIATT COUNTY



PHOTO: ELIZABETH OTTO



BOTTOM PHOTOS: MELISSA RECORDS

JIM AND MARE PAYNE of Cerro Gordo donated the 145-acre Jasmine Hollow Land & Water Reserve in Piatt County to LCF in 2025. Primarily floodplain forest, it stretches along a mile of the Sangamon River. There are at least 11 species of **freshwater mussels** here, and the threatened **mudpuppy** is known to occur in this area. The **bobcat** has been sighted here — and it's likely that the **river otter** is here, too. Access is limited to LCF special events.

"Since acquiring Jasmine Hollow in 1993 (named for our dog who died the day we bought it), we have spent thousands of hours working to eradicate signs of overgrazing and invasives — among them garlic mustard, bush honeysuckle, multiflora rose, and others — with the goal to restore it to pre-settlement conditions. By placing this very special site in the capable and dedicated hands of the Land Conservation Foundation, we know our stewardship and our vision will continue. We are thrilled."

— Jim & Mare Payne



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CHARLOTTE & DAN BRADY WOODS NATURE PRESERVE

— CHAMPAIGN COUNTY



PHOTO: DAN BRADY



PHOTO: MELISSA RECORDS

BRADY WOODS WAS DONATED to LCF in 2015 by **Dan and Charlotte Brady** and was dedicated as the Charlotte & Dan Brady Woods Nature Preserve in January 2021. The Sangamon River runs through this 20-acre wet floodplain forest known for its **large sycamores** and **bur oak trees**, as well as the abundance of spring wildflowers, especially bluebells. Great Blue Herons have nested here. This site is located on the Piatt and Champaign County line, next to the Piatt County Forest Preserves' Sangamon River Park. Access is limited to LCF special events.

"My wife Charlotte loved the natural world and as an artist, she painted nature with passion. For Charlotte, acquisition of 20-acres along the Sangamon River was a life dream. Together, we lived in this beauty for over thirty years.

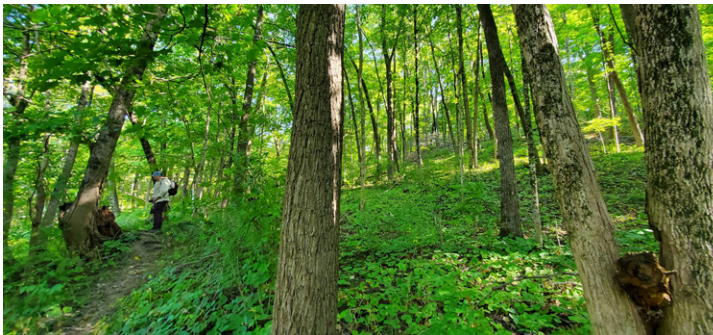
With her Parkinsonian illness progressing she wanted to leave a legacy of her land on the Sangamon River. We knew of LCF through friends who suggested we consider a land donation to LCF. We moved forward and the donation to LCF was completed in 2015. In succeeding years, we experienced several nice events sponsored by LCF and met many likeminded people.

Charlotte passed away in 2019 knowing her land would be preserved as a State of Illinois Nature Preserve, the highest protection for land in Illinois. Thus, the LCF donation was a deeply meaningful action. Charlotte and I were dedicated to preservation of Earth. I continue with that dedication and for this reason support the Land Conservation Foundation. I encourage anyone to do the same."

— Dan Brady



MOUTH OF JORDAN RESERVE — VERMILION COUNTY



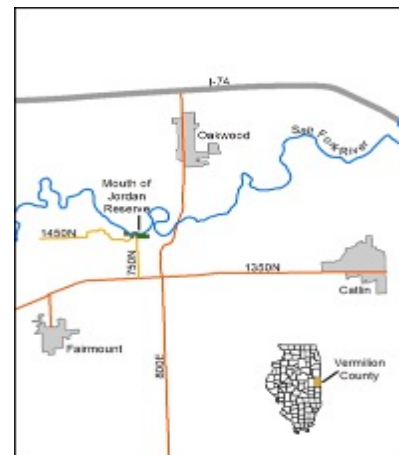
PHOTOS AT LEFT: MELISSA RECORDS

Former LCF Director Dr. Wendy Brown leads her students from Danville Community College cutting a hiking trail at the Mouth of Jordan Reserve and participating in a mussel survey.

THIS 31-ACRE SITE is situated where **Jordan Creek** meets the **Salt Fork of the Vermilion River** in Vermilion County. Both of these streams are on the **Illinois Natural Areas Inventory**, an indication of their high quality, particularly for mussel species, fish diversity, and the state threatened **mudpuppy**.

The surrounding floodplain and upland forests support an abundance of wildflowers. A trail system has been developed. This site is located south of Oakwood, Illinois.

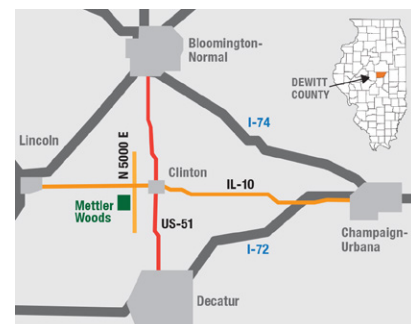
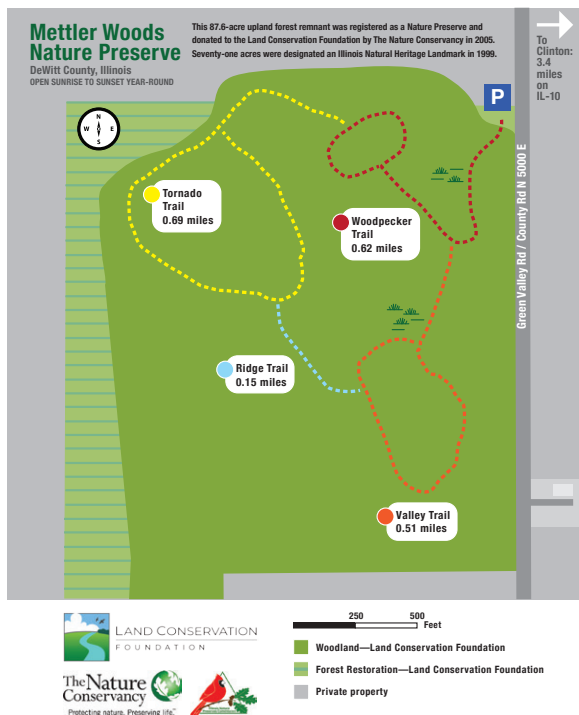
The acquisition of Mouth of Jordan properties was initiated and facilitated by Jason Lindsey and Anna Keck, who provided essential information and funding.



METTLER WOODS NATURE PRESERVE — DEWITT COUNTY



THIS 87-ACRE, UPLAND FOREST is on the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory. In 2005 it was dedicated as an **Illinois Nature Preserve** and The Nature Conservancy donated it to LCF. Mettler Woods has old oak and hickory trees and a spectacular spring wildflower display. Located off Illinois 10 west of Clinton, it has almost **two miles of trails** to hike and explore.



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Partners and Volunteers

THE LAND CONSERVATION FOUNDATION has worked with the City of Monticello, Piatt County Forest Preserve District, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Natural History Survey, University of Illinois, Master Naturalist Program, Allerton Park & Retreat Center, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, and others to protect biodiversity, protect the recharge areas of the Mahomet Aquifer, and provide outdoor recreation opportunities for everyone. Volunteers are vital to all our efforts and projects. For example, our freshwater mussel surveys, invasive species removal projects, and special events such as the **Mudpuppy Festival** are done with volunteers.



Thirteen mussel species were counted during this Sangamon River survey.



Below, volunteers help to clear trails and remove invasive species.



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Annual Mudpuppy Festival

IN 2018, LCF WANTED TO HOST an event to draw attention to how important the Sangamon River is for biodiversity and aquifer recharge. The **Mudpuppy Festival** was born and thanks to our generous sponsors we have held it every year since at the **Monarch Events Center** in Monticello.



Hundreds of kids and adults attend to learn about the river, freshwater mussels, the mudpuppy, birds, plants, fish, and of course to get their faces painted, engage in a nature scavenger hunt and other games, and eat some delicious food provided by a local caterer. This event is made possible by generous sponsors, donors, and volunteers who help in all aspects of the day's activities.



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Frequently Asked Questions

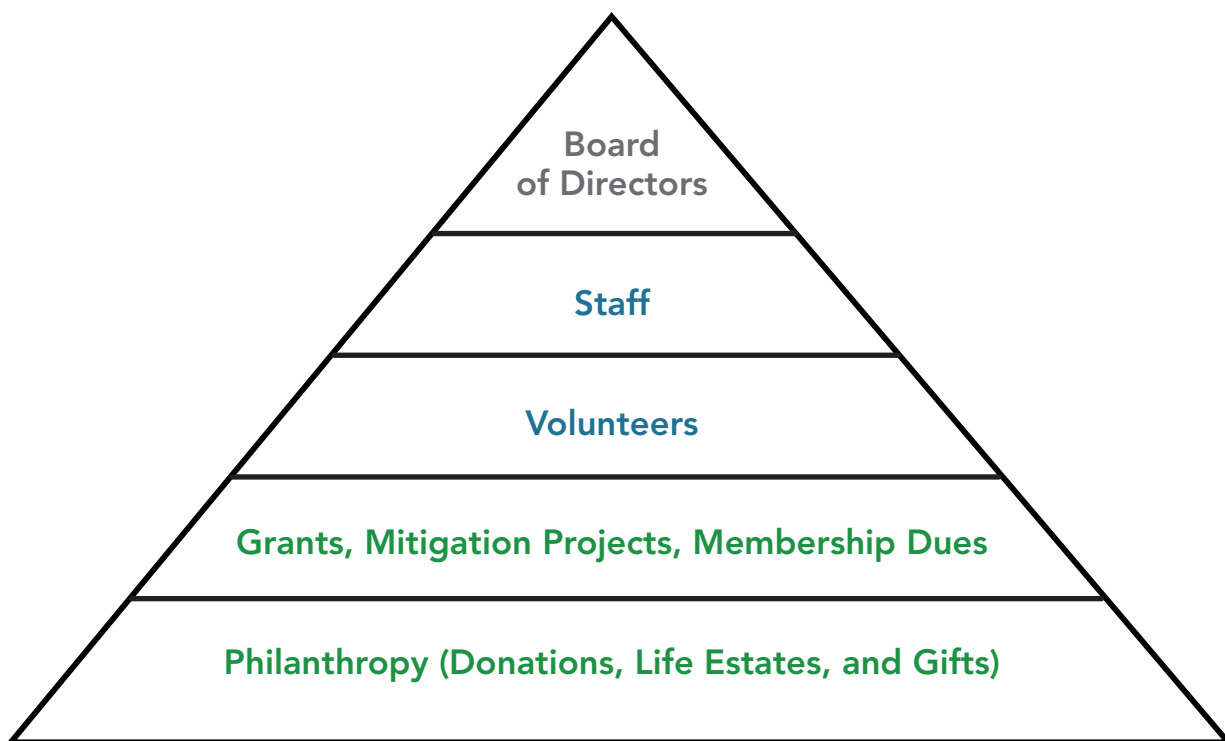
How does LCF protect the land donated or purchased?

Qualifying lands obtained by LCF either by donation or fee simple acquisition are enrolled into the **Illinois Nature Preserves System**, which provides the highest legal protection for land in Illinois (<https://dnr.illinois.gov/inpc.html>).

Statewide there are currently over 600 sites with over 120,000 acres enrolled in the Illinois Nature Preserves System. Currently, LCF has two properties enrolled as dedicated Illinois Nature Preserves. Enrolling land that qualifies into the Illinois Nature Preserves System ensures that it will not be converted to other uses over time.

How do land trusts fund their projects?

Successful nonprofit organizations depend largely on philanthropy, such as donations, gifts, and membership dues to support their work. But a dedicated staff, a committed volunteer workforce, and board leadership are needed to execute projects, ensure that all the administrative requirements required by grants are met, provide timely reports to meet IRS guidelines, and do day to day operations. The triangle below shows a visual of this dynamic.



How would you use a donation from me/us?

We have three key funding areas for LCF to be successful.

1. A **land acquisition fund** to put LCF in a position to act quickly when important parcels of land come up for sale. This fund would pay for:
 - a. Actual land cost
 - b. Appraisals
 - c. Legal surveys
 - d. Title surveys

Note: Even donations of land incur costs for b, c, and d.

2. **Stewardship of land** that we acquire. This includes managing the stewardship needs at the preserves that LCF owns. For example, controlling invasive species, maintaining trail systems, coordinating with contractors, verifying boundaries, and supervising volunteers.
3. **Operating funding** to support our Executive Director and volunteer activities and events which LCF sponsors, such as the annual Mudpuppy Festival.

How much funding would you need for a land acquisition fund?

Historically we have been able to get 80% of the acquisition price from foundations and raise the remaining 20% from members and donors. A solid target would be to establish a one-million-dollar revolving fund for land acquisition alone.

What are your land acquisition priorities?

LCF has two general focus areas for land acquisition:

- Increasing the size of our existing sites
- Continuing to protect parcels along the Sangamon and Salt Fork Rivers and other river corridors in Central Illinois



Tell me a little about the land LCF owns now.

LCF owns **6 tracts totaling 409 acres**, 3 in Piatt County and 1 in Champaign County along the Sangamon River, 1 in DeWitt County, and 1 in Vermilion County on the Salt Fork River.

LCF LAND PROTECTION HISTORY

Property Name	Size acres	Date	Transaction	Valuation	Funding Source		
					Grants	LCF Match	LCF
Mettler Woods Nature Preserve	87	2005	Donation	NA	NA	—	—
Sangamon River Corridor Reserve	108	2012	Fee Simple	\$543,758	\$445,000	\$98,758	—
Charlotte & Dan Brady Woods Nature Preserve	19.63	2015	Donation	\$88,335	NA	—	—
Mouth of Jordan Reserve	30.41	2020 / 2024	Fee Simple	\$127,370	\$45,600	\$14,021	\$68,000
Feller Woods	20.4	2023	Donation	\$95,880	NA	—	—
Jasmine Hollow Land & Water Reserve	144	2025	Donation	\$460,000	NA	—	—
TOTAL	409						

Illinois Clean Energy Foundation was the source of most large grants. NA means not applicable.

What does LCF's volunteer program look like?

Currently volunteers are informal but indispensable. Since 2019, LCF volunteers have devoted more than 2,343 hours for stewardship activities such as trail maintenance and mowing, tree plantings, controlling invasive species, and working special events. We have a corps of dedicated volunteers for our Sangamon River Corridor Reserve, Mouth of Jordan Reserve and Mettler Woods Nature Preserve.

LCF also has a volunteer Facebook page administrator, website administrator, graphic artist, 2 photographers, a trail camera manager and a host of students and others that help put on the annual Mudpuppy Festival. Our board of

STEWARDSHIP

Dates	Hours	Volunteers
5-2019 to 12-2020	319.75	76
2021	112.5	45
2022	419.5	136
2023	459	138
2024	559.75	33
2026	473 (eff 6-31)	45

SOCIAL MEDIA HOURS

Dates	Hours
2019 to 2020	256.5
2021	146.5
2022	152
2023	121.5
2024	107
2026	93 (eff 6-31)



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What does your current staffing look like?

Currently we have a full-time executive director (ED) and hourly administrative assistant. Our goal is to have funding to support the ED position, a ¼ time administrative support person, ½ time Marketing Outreach Coordinator and a full-time land steward. That would require annual funding of approximately \$170,000.

Has LCF handled many grants?

Since 2012 LCF has received and executed 14 grants valued at \$719,202, ranging from \$700 to over \$450,000.

LCF GRANT RECORD 2012 – 2026

Year	Source	Type of Grant	Amount
2012	Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (ICECF)	Land acquisition & stewardship – Sangamon River Corridor Reserve	\$455,000
2014	ICECF	Hydrology restoration – Sangamon River Corridor Reserve	\$30,000
2017	ICECF	Amenities & Events	\$5,500
	ICECF	Stewardship – Sangamon River Corridor Reserve	\$37,118
2019	ICECF	Amenities & Events	\$5,500
	ICECF	Land acquisition & stewardship – Mouth of Jordan Reserve	\$73,744
	ICECF	Stewardship – Sangamon River Corridor Reserve	\$34,000
2020	The Nature Conservancy – Volunteer Stewardship Network (TNC)	Covid assistance	\$980
2021	ICECF	Capacity building	\$10,360
	TNC	Mudpuppy Festival	\$700
	Illinois Department of Natural Resources – Natural Areas Stewardship	Invasive species control – Charlotte & Dan Brady Woods Nature Preserve, and Mettler Woods	\$20,000
2022	TNC	Stewardship tools	\$900
2023	TNC	Stewardship tools	\$900
	TNC	Stewardship tools	\$1,500
2026	Dale and Deborah Smith Foundation	"Art and Nature Entwined" program	\$43,000
TOTAL			\$719,202



What other revenue generators has LCF engaged in?

A major revenue generator has been several **mitigation projects**. Beginning in 2014, LCF has been contacted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to administer wetland mitigation projects at its Sangamon River Corridor Reserve.

As of 2025, the USACE has approved the completion of three mitigation projects, generating **\$624,000 in payments** to LCF. Below is the record for the three projects LCF has undertaken.

LCF U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS MITIGATION PROJECTS

Company	Start Date	Acres	Payment to LCF	Completion Date
Enbridge Pipelines (Illinois)	May 2014	10	\$500,000	December 2025
Ameren Transmission Company of Illinois	July 2015	1.49	\$74,000	July 2020
Unlimited Construction & Development, Inc.	August 2017	1.0	\$50,000	June 2022
TOTALS		12.4	\$624,000	

Additionally, LCF has enrolled 56 acres of frequently flooded farmland into the **Conservation Reserve Program** (CRP) to cover the cost of reforestation and stewardship of the land. CRP payments generate **\$19,200 per year**.





The Land Conservation Foundation

THE LAND CONSERVATION FOUNDATION is a 501(c) 3 charitable nonprofit organization incorporated in Illinois in 2003. We have a board of directors, an executive director and several advisors.

Our mission is to ***Preserve natural areas for wildlife ...for people.... forever.***

The Land Conservation Foundation currently owns **6 sites: 3 in Piatt County, 1 in DeWitt County, 1 in Champaign County and 1 in Vermilion County.** Three of these sites were donated to LCF and three were purchased. We develop trails in our preserves for passive recreation such as hiking and bird watching and LCF founded and coordinates the annual Mudpuppy Festival in Monticello.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Eric Mollahan
ericmollahan@landconservationfoundation.org
217-303-3340

LCF ADVISORS

Deanna Glosser, Champaign
Fran Harty, Monticello
Keddy Hutson, Monticello

LCF MAILING ADDRESS

508 S Broadway
Urbana, IL 61801

FACEBOOK

facebook.com/LandConservationFoundation/

LCF WEBSITE

landconservationfoundation.org

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The Land Conservation Foundation is a proud member of PSCC.



Want to learn how you can support the Land Conservation Foundation?

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT the **Land Conservation Foundation** financially, as a volunteer, to donate land, or make a donation via stock options, or in your will, or donation from your IRA required minimum distribution **please contact Eric Mollahan**, Executive Director for LCF.

Email: ericmollahan@landconservationfoundation.org

Phone: **217-303-3340**

Donate to LCF

Donations by check, should be made out to the:
Land Conservation Foundation

And mailed to:

**Land Conservation Foundation
508 S Broadway
Urbana, IL 61801**



Or online at: landconservationfoundation.org/donate

Website: landconservationfoundation.org

Facebook: facebook.com/LandConservationFoundation

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