



A Message from Executive Director, Kris Krouse

For the past 35 years Shirley Heinze Land Trust has been working diligently to protect land that provides significant public benefit for conservation, education, or scientific research purposes. We focus on saving the best remaining examples of natural communities, and work to enlarge existing protected areas, build buffers around them, and establish corridors between them. Shirley Heinze Land Trust manages its properties to enhance their biological health through wise stewardship and restoration.



Our success is thanks to innumerable partnerships and collaborations that have allowed us to maximize our ability to protect and restore land, and provide outdoor educational opportunities. These partners include government agencies, nonprofits, universities, museums, corporations, foundations, schools, municipalities, and clubs. We provide internships to college students annually in conjunction with the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. There are now more than 3,500 elementary students participating in the Mighty Acorns Partnership, a project funded by ArcelorMittal. We created the Bringing Nature Home Awards Program to promote the use of native plants in local gardens and recognize those individuals and entities who do so in an annual ceremony.

Shirley Heinze Land Trust has become much more widely recognized in Northwest Indiana because of efforts by the staff, board members, and volunteers who “fly the flag” at events and forums throughout Northwest Indiana, the greater Chicago area, and the Midwest as a whole. Press coverage has increased, donors and volunteers seek us out, and our brand is recognized for its reliability, competence, and leadership in the field.

One of our key priorities going forward will be to expand our mission into St. Joseph County. This high quality bog was permanently protected by Shirley Heinze Land Trust thanks to donors and key funders, including Northern Indiana Public Service Company and the Bicentennial Nature Trust. We are eager to initiate restoration and major access improvements in the not-too-distant future at this site.

Other key strategic priorities include transformative growth and reinforcing our financial, organizational, programmatic and partnership strengths. Specific goals include: developing long-term financial security, including staff capacity in key areas, implementing expansion, doubling acreage protected, expanding public access, substantially increasing the number of education hours delivered and attaining Land Trust Alliance Accreditation.

It is a pleasure to work for an organization with such an important and necessary mission. The land we are protecting and restoring is there for everyone to enjoy. Those who get involved by participating in a volunteer workday, donating to the cause, or just taking a walk in one of our preserves, will be much better off because of it. It is an exciting time for Shirley Heinze and we invite everyone to become a part of a strong, lean, and strategic organization that is providing a great service to our community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kris Krouse".

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Shirley Heinze Land Trust Acquires Rare Bog in St. Joseph County

Shirley Heinze Land Trust announces that it has acquired a 176-acre property in St. Joseph County. The property contains one of the last remaining bog habitats in Indiana, and it represents a milestone for the organization as its first land conservation project outside of Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties.

“It’s truly exciting to have Lydick Bog as Shirley Heinze Land Trust’s first acquisition in St. Joseph County,” says Board President John Swanson. “This is an extremely high-quality natural area, which will now be restored and preserved in perpetuity. We appreciate the encouragement and support we received from environmental and community leaders in St. Joseph County to make this happen.”

Located west of South Bend, the property contains wetlands interspersed with high ridges and islands of upland forest. Wetland habitat encompasses approximately 65 acres of the property. Many interesting plant species characteristic of bog habitats have been identified on site, including round-leaved sundew, pitcher plant, winterberry, tamarack, and large cranberry. Twenty acres currently in agricultural production will be reforested. Plans are underway to develop public access.

Evelyn Kirkwood, Director of St. Joseph County Parks, says “The protection of the Lydick Bog, with its unique plant life, is a significant acquisition and an important step in preserving the natural heritage of St. Joseph County. We are thrilled that Shirley Heinze Land Trust has committed to working in St. Joseph County, since a land trust has been sorely lacking here. We are looking forward to collaborating with Shirley Heinze Land Trust, its staff and outstanding volunteers, on future educational projects and endeavors that connect people to our natural resources.”

“This acquisition came about thanks to many relationships and partnerships within the St. Joseph County Community,” says Executive Director Kristopher Krouse. “We look forward to continuing to develop these partnerships and to advance land conservation in the area.

“Shirley Heinze Land Trust now protects 2,100 acres of natural land. We have a goal to increase that total to 3,000 acres within the next five years,” adds Krouse.

The Indiana Bicentennial Nature Trust, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, The Conservation Fund, and NIPSCO were integral to this achievement. This land is being conserved, in part, by funding and technical assistance made available as mitigation for impacts caused by the construction and maintenance of the Reynolds Topeka Electric System Improvement Project in partnership with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Shirley Heinze Land Trust has been protecting and preserving natural land since 1981. The organization accomplishes its work through a partnership of volunteers, donors, and professionals. Shirley Heinze nature preserves feature significant scenic and ecological value, and most are open to the public for hiking and enjoying nature. The organization protects, restores, and maintains examples of the entire spectrum of Northwest Indiana’s rich and significant natural communities, including tallgrass prairie, high dune, oak savanna, boreal flatwoods, dune-and-swale, woodlands, marshes, swamps, ponds, fens, bogs, and riparian habitat. Five of its properties – Cressmoor Prairie, Seidner Dune & Swale, John Merle Coulter Preserve, Barker Woods, and Ambler Flatwoods – have been dedicated to the people of Indiana as state nature preserves.

For more information on the work and nature preserves of Shirley Heinze Land Trust, visit www.heinzetrust.org, call (219) 242-8558, or access its Facebook page at www.facebook.com/heinzetrust.



Lydick Bog Acquisition Quotes:

"It's truly exciting to have Lydick Bog as Shirley Heinze Land Trust's first acquisition in St. Joseph County. This is an extremely high-quality natural area, which will now be restored and preserved in perpetuity. We are appreciative of the encouragement and support we received from environmental and community leaders in St. Joseph County to make this happen."

John Swanson - President, Shirley Heinze Land Trust

"I can think of no finer site for the first land preservation effort of Shirley Heinze Land Trust in St. Joseph County than Lydick Bog. Our Trust seeks to preserve high quality natural areas of high biodiversity and Lydick is a particularly outstanding example of what we value most. Bogs provide habitat for many rare plants and a bog itself is a relatively rare wetland ecosystem; in this area there is only the Pinhook Bog in LaPorte County and Volo Bog in nearby Illinois."

Dale Engquist - Board Member, Shirley Heinze Land Trust

"This acquisition came about thanks to many relationships and partnerships within the St. Joseph County Community. We look forward to continuing to develop these partnerships and to advance land conservation in the area."

Kristopher Krouse - Executive Director, Shirley Heinze Land Trust

"We have been very excited about this property since our first site visit. The property includes a diversity of habitat types, some of which are very unique and quite rare in our state. The size of the property and the potential for accessibility is also very exciting. The relatively speedy and smooth acquisition of the property is a testament to the hard work and commitment of our Land Specialist, Executive Director, committee members, board members, funding partners, local citizens, and the organization as a whole. We are very proud for this large and ecologically valuable site to be our first acquisition as we expand our conservation efforts into St. Joseph County."

Eric Bird, Stewardship Director, Shirley Heinze Land Trust

"The protection of the Lydick Bog, with its unique plant life, is a significant acquisition and an important step in preserving the natural heritage of St. Joseph County. We are thrilled that Shirley Heinze Land Trust has committed to working in St. Joseph County, since a land trust has been sorely lacking here. We are looking forward to collaborating with Shirley Heinze Land Trust, its staff and outstanding volunteers, on future educational projects and endeavors that connect people to our natural resources."

Evelyn Kirkwood - Director, St. Joseph County Parks

"We are fortunate to have an independent land trust, Shirley Heinze Land Trust, planning to extend their range into St. Joseph County. They have worked hard in the counties west of us to buy and preserve significant natural areas. My husband and I became members of this fine organization a few years ago, because we were impressed with their mission and their ability to get things done. In a time when government spending is being strictly restricted a private land trust can buy and preserve a significant nature area like Lydick Bog. Welcome to my county, I'm glad you are here."

Marjorie Riemenschneider - President, South Bend-Elkhart Audubon Society



Lydick Bog Project Description

Overview

Shirley Heinze Land Trust, Inc. is a non-profit land preservation organization that has operated in Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties for 35 years and recently expanded to serve St. Joseph County. This project will be the organization's first in the county. Shirley Heinze has been working with the Hurwich family to acquire a 176 acre property west of the City of South Bend that contains diverse freshwater wetlands including approximately 12 acres of rare bog habitat, which is about half of the total area of the existing bog. Shirley Heinze intends to manage the property as a natural area, undertake restoration work to enhance its environmental value, work to protect more of the bog and surrounding habitat, and make it available as a community resource for educational and recreational activities. The project has the enthusiastic support of a wide variety of other partners, including county, municipal and federal government agencies, regional and national conservation organizations, and educational institutions. The Indiana Bicentennial Nature Trust, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, The Conservation Fund, and NIPSCO have been integral in funding the acquisition. This land is being conserved, in part, by funding and technical assistance made available as mitigation for impacts caused by the construction and maintenance of the Reynolds Topeka Electric System Improvement Project in partnership with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Property

The Lydick Bog property is located just north of North Chain Lake, south of U.S. 20, and west of U.S. 31 in St. Joseph County, IN. The property is 176 acres in total. The property contains roughly 20 acres along U.S. 20 which is currently being used for agriculture (tillable land). The remainder of the property has escaped significant disturbance and contains freshwater wetlands interspersed with ridges and islands of upland forest. Initial investigations suggest that the wetlands could be segregated into four distinct types. These include a large bog along the northeastern section of the property, emergent wetlands, shrub dominated emergent wetlands, and an ephemeral pond along the north central portion of the property. The southern border of the property includes the northern shore of North Chain Lake. The expansive open water of Northern Chain Lake further diversifies the habitat types found in the immediate area.

Natural Value

The bog portion of the property provides an extremely rare habitat in northern Indiana. The bog is characterized by a floating mat of vegetation with sphagnum moss hummocks surrounded by a brushy moat area. Several conservative plant species characteristic of acidic bog habitats identified on site include gray bog sedge, round leaved sundew, pitcher plant, winterberry, tamarack, poison sumac, bog willow, and large cranberry. A variety of conservative, rare, and desirable native plant species further indicate a high priority for protection based on ecological value.

As a whole, the property is a diverse and heterogeneous landscape providing potential habitat for a variety of native animal species. The property provides excellent habitat for a number of rare and endangered wetland dependent bird species including the American bittern, least bittern, Virginia rail, sora, Wilson's snipe, marsh wren, and sedge wren. The ephemeral pond and adjacent wetlands are a potential breeding ground for amphibians such as the spring peeper and northern leopard frog. Transitional habitats from wetlands to uplands also provide unique habitat that would facilitate rare and state endangered reptile species such as Blanding's turtle, copperbelly water snake, and the eastern massasauga rattlesnake.

Upland forest surrounds the south and east edges of the wetland areas with relatively steep ridges nearer the bog. These forests seem to be dominated by red and silver maple with some oak, hickory, and cherry throughout. A few pin oaks were found near the northern portion of the property. Some wooded areas near the agriculture fields contain a herbaceous layer that indicates mesic to hydric conditions. It is likely that removal of some trees and woody species in these areas would raise the water table and expand the wetland areas.



Lydick Bog Project Description - *continued*

Threats of conversion

Due to the wet conditions of this site, it is not likely that the site itself could be developed, however surrounding development could threaten water quality and the integrity of the site. South Bend is a large municipality and is continuing to grow eastward, so pressures including those of fragmentation will likely continue to increase.

Regional Land Conservation Initiatives & Public Land Enhancement

Protection and restoration of the property will reduce non-point source water pollution by restoring adjacent agricultural land to natural area and preventing further residential development. The bog and surrounding wetlands will also provide a large area for storage and bio filtration of stormwater. This will support the efforts of South Bend's Comprehensive City Plan, IDEM's Kankakee River Watershed Restoration and Action Strategy Plan, St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Michiana Stormwater Partnership to protect wetlands and reduce the impact of non-point source pollution in the St. Joseph River and Kankakee River watersheds.

Benefits to the Local Community

Environmental benefits:

There is a significant need to protect the bog habitat found on this property. Bogs are an extremely rare habitat type in Indiana, and the only other protected bog in the state is Pinhook Bog, which is not open to the public without supervision. This property and adjacent parcels are largely forested and represent a significant air quality resource for the region. The property also enhances the quality of local waterways including the Chain o' Lakes and the headwaters of the Kankakee River. The preservation of the property will contribute to good stormwater management for surrounding land.

Educational Benefits:

Shirley Heinze would use this property as an outdoor learning laboratory and the venue for a variety of educational activities for students and the general public. The organization and other groups would host public hikes and other educational programs. The property would be available for scientific study by college students, who might also participate as interns under the Great Lakes Innovative Stewardship Through Education Network (GLISTEN). St. Joseph County has previously lacked a land trust organization to provide outdoor educational programming and this property will provide an exceptional venue for Shirley Heinze Land Trust to provide these types of opportunities to the community.

Recreational Benefits:

Shirley Heinze has well developed trail systems at many of its preserves and plans to create a strategy to allow the public to visit Lydick Bog for hiking, birding, nature study, and other non-consumptive recreational activities where appropriate.

Community Benefits:

Shirley Heinze Land Trust is committed to increasing the impact of its work by engaging other non-profits, educational institutions, government agencies, and community groups as partners. The protection and management of this site will create opportunities for the organization to seek new cooperative efforts that will benefit the St. Joseph County and greater Northwest Indiana community.