

The Highland Conservancy Newsletter Spring 2005 **www.HighlandConservancy.org**

Our mission is to encourage and facilitate the conservation of land and natural resources to preserve the rural character of Highland Township.

History of Highland Conservancy by Katheryn Krupa

The Highland Conservancy started one year ago when concerned Highland citizens decided it was time to preserve our rural character, natural areas and open spaces before they were gobbled up by development. With the support of Oakland Land Conservancy, Rails to Trails, the Nature Conservancy and other conservancy groups, we have been working to identify land for various levels of protection and conservation. A key focus is to connect existing parks and open spaces to provide interconnected habitat for wildlife. Another goal is to connect multi use trails. People move to Highland because of its meandering rivers, lakes, parks, woodlands and open fields. Our goal is to preserve this natural beauty for future generations to enjoy.

Some of our current initiatives include:

- Facilitating the development of conservation easements, corridors and green spaces in Highland.
- Educate the public on preservation and care of Highland's fragile resources.
- Partner with other conservancies and organizations to create interconnected parks, trails and greenways.
- Partner with neighborhood associations to preserve and protect their common open spaces.
- Work with developers and the township to create guidelines for protecting land and habitats.
- Assist in the stewardship of land held in conservancy.
- Work with Highland Township to develop a conservation plan that is linked with other compatible uses such as parks, recreation, trails and equestrian needs.

A small committed group of citizens has been working to achieve these and other goals. We could use your help in continuing this important work.

“Each of us has a responsibility to be good stewards of our environment. Highland Township’s Conservancy is a great way to fulfill that responsibility.” Triscia Pilchowski, Highland Township Supervisor

Upscale Senior Citizen Complex Proposed for Highland

Among other large parcels in Highland threatened with development, 120 acres of beautiful, rolling open land is now being considered for an upscale senior citizen complex. The proposed development would be located on Hickory Ridge just north of M59, behind Jay Chevrolet and bordering the Dunham Lakes subdivision. Property owner Cleve King has proposed building six story high-rise buildings for seniors, along

with assisted living facilities and other amenities for the 2,500 residents, including a golf course. With entrance deposits of over \$200,000 and high monthly fees, this will not be affordable for everyone. Concerned Highland citizens can attend the June 2nd Planning Commission informational meeting for more details.

“I think an upscale equestrian gated community like you see in California would be a much better fit with our community,” says Highland resident Katheryn Krupa. “We need to protect the rural character of Highland and high density, high rise development is not what we need.”

If you are interested in keeping Highland rural and protecting open spaces, join us for a special conservancy kick-off event on May 19th at 7pm at the Highland Station (the old library).

Vital Connections for Wildlife (adapted from Observer Eccentric article)

When we think about the protection of high-quality natural areas and the wildlife they support, we usually think of large parcels of land. It's true the wildlife we love need plenty of elbowroom to thrive, but another way wildlife can be encouraged to stick around is through the concept of corridors.

As fragmentation of open land continues at a frantic pace, wildlife, whose ranges often exceed boundaries of protected open space, need ways of getting from one protected area to another. Some possibilities for establishing connected corridors include pipeline and electrical easements, trailways, greenbelts, parkways, and conservation easements to link large undeveloped parcels. River corridors, where well-vegetated buffers line the riverbanks, offer corridors for a wide variety of wildlife, including fish. Marshes and fens act as buffers to filter out pollutants from the water and prevent erosion. Abandoned railway beds harbor native plants that haven't been seen in years in other places. So what can we do? Many townships in Oakland County have been working to link up trails into a nationwide trail network. Even those who live on small parcels or lots can be involved in preserving wildlife habitat simply by not cutting down trees, planting native plants and hedgerows, or limiting fertilizer on lawns bordering lakes and streams. Log onto our website for more ideas on what you can do to help: www.highlandconservancy.org

Highland Discovery Hikes by Debbie Bell

The Highland Conservancy invites you to discover unique and special places in your township for outdoor activities and preservation. These may be beautiful hiking spots you weren't aware of or some you know that are being considered for linking into a larger trail system for the township. They may have a unique history that you will learn about during the hike.

One Sunday per month over the summer and fall we will explore and learn more about our township, meeting new friends at the same time. We'll end the season with a cookout and bonfire. Please join us for some excellent exercise and exciting adventure. For more information call Debbie Bell 248-887-5399.

Dates of Hikes:

May 22, 3pm: Haven Hill Nature Area, Highland Recreation

June 12, 3pm: Dunham Lake Greenbelt (meet at main park)

July 17th 3pm: Canoe the Huron River

August 14, 3pm: Alderman Lake

Sept. 18, 3pm: Dodge 10 Park

October 16, 3pm: Final hike and cookout at Teeple Lake

Call Debbie Bell for exact directions or if interested in carpooling.

COME TO OUR KICK OFF EVENT!

HOW CAN WE PROTECT HIGHLAND?

Thursday, May 19th at 7pm

Highland Station (the old library)

250 W. Livingston Road in Highland.

Join the Highland Conservancy and its guests from Highland Township, Oakland County, and the Oakland Land Conservancy as we discuss:

- Highland Township's vision for green space and controlled growth.
- Oakland County's trail vision and how it impacts Highland.
- How you can deed land as conservancy space and obtain tax credits.
- Open discussion about your thoughts for the township's future and how we can continue to preserve our rural environment.

Speakers will include: Highland Township Supervisor Triscia Pilchowski, Larry Falardeau from the Oakland County Planning Department and Donna Folland from the Oakland Land Conservancy.

JOIN US! You are always welcome to join us or just drop in on our meetings. Whether you like to be outdoors or are more comfortable behind a keyboard, there's always something to do. We meet from 7pm until 8 every other Thursday of the month at the old Highland library at 205 W. Livingston Road in the Community Room. Or contact Katheryn Krupa at 248-887-4643 for exact meeting dates.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

We can use your help! With your donation of \$25 you will receive this Enewsletter and become a contributing member. Send your name, address and contact information including email address along with your check made payable to:

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205 W. Livingston Road
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For more information email us at: info@highlandconservancy.org
VISIT OUR WEBSITE ANYTIME: www.HighlandConservancy.org