

Lake Superior Commons

News from the Lake Superior Collaborative



LSC Partner Feature: Landmark Conservancy

The Role of Land Protection in the Face of a Changing Climate

Over the past couple of years, Landmark Conservancy (landmarkwi.org) has explored how we can mitigate the effects of climate change in northwest Wisconsin. As a land trust, it is not surprising that we confirmed our role in boosting ecological resilience is through permanent land protection. So, in 2018 Landmark embarked on an ambitious endeavor to develop a strategic conservation focus to protect targeted areas in our region that are rich in biodiversity and resilient to climate change.

Our approach emphasizes the ecological connectivity of natural landscapes and habitat in and around Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs), and further incorporates climate science. Working with partners and agencies, including The Nature Conservancy, we overlaid our conservation priorities with areas having the greatest potential for resilience to climate change.

“Our strong partnerships are key to doing this important work,” said executive director Lindsey Ketchel. “Permanent land protection can only be done in collaboration with willing landowners, and our regional partners are very helpful in facilitating these projects.”

This process resulted in 17 focus areas in our 20-county service area. The resiliency of these areas is attributed to their physical geography – the geology, soils, mineralogy, slope, aspect, and temperature all create the physical diversity of place to host the resulting ecological diversity. These are the places that over thousands of years have hosted rich species diversity and will continue to do so even with a changing climate, although the composition of that diversity may change.

Seven of the 17 focus areas have been selected for initial landowner outreach: the Lake Superior South Shore Streams, the Upper Eau Claire River and Barrens, and the St. Croix River Watershed (a combination of five smaller areas). Landmark will continue to consider high-quality projects outside of these focus areas as capacity allows.

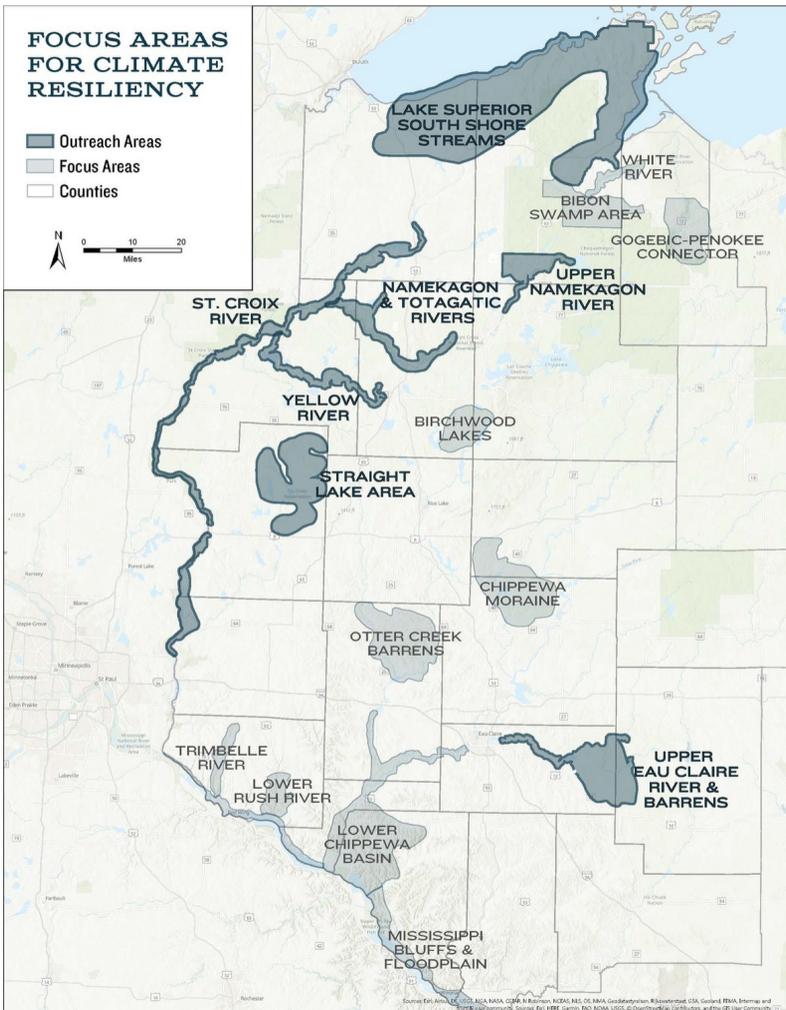
“We are eager to connect with landowners in our priority areas to provide education about land protection and how conservation easements will help ensure that their land continues to support biodiversity as our climate changes,” said conservation manager Erika Lang.

The Lake Superior South Shore Streams is one of three focus areas in which Landmark will begin targeted landowner outreach. Being the coldest and deepest lake of the Great Lakes, Lake Superior is the backdrop for this focus area. This area has cool temperatures off the lake, deep clay tills, and cool ravines that host boreal forest – some of the only places in Wisconsin with these attributes outside of Door County. Migratory birds stopover along these shores to rest and feast on insects that hatch in synch with their journey. The Bayfield Sandstone of the Bayfield Peninsula rises above the clay plain, providing sources of springs and seeps that flow to Lake Superior. Landmark anticipates beginning outreach in the South Shore Streams Focus Area in spring 2021.

There are many positive ways to address climate change through conservation: restoration, adaptation, legislation, education. Landmark Conservancy protects land. In doing so, land protection with a focus on resilient and connected landscapes will help build a firm foundation for nature’s stage.

Landmark Conservancy is a nationally accredited, non-profit land trust serving 20 counties in northwestern Wisconsin. We work primarily with private landowners who wish to conserve their land in perpetuity. We also work with local municipalities, state, and federal entities to create public preserves and trails for all to enjoy. Contact Landmark Conservancy staff at info@landmarkwi.org.

To learn more, visit landmarkwi.org.



Landmark Conservancy's Focus Areas for Climate Resiliency

The Lake Superior Collaborative formed to facilitate collaboration and coordination among the governmental and non-governmental organizations and academic institutions that work to protect and restore natural resources in Wisconsin's Lake Superior Basin.

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