



SPRING-SUMMER 2024

# CONNECTIONS

UPPER PENINSULA LAND CONSERVANCY

## MEET UPLC'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As I write this letter, I am marveling at the dynamic ebb and flow of our seasons. At this moment, winter holds sway, with giant snowflakes draping the daffodils and keeping me from pruning our orchard (I trust the weather is much nicer as you read this, but remember this is the U.P., so just give it 10 minutes!). As with the dramatic and sometimes surprising changes to our seasons here in the Upper Peninsula, our lives also reflect seasons of change. Recently my wife and I resettled in Marquette County after a short residency in Vermont and a whirlwind stay in the Keweenaw Peninsula.



Today, I'm excited to embark on a new chapter as I step into the role of Executive Director with UP Land Conservancy. After nearly 15 years dedicated to land conservation, including positions at land trusts in Northeast Michigan and the Keweenaw, as well as past service as a Board Member for UPLC, I look forward to sharing my experiences and continuing the work that UPLC set out to do 25 years ago, "protecting land today, for life tomorrow". I bring a broad range of experience to fulfill this mission including forestry, small scale food production, silent sport trail development, sustainable infrastructure, and thoughtful community design. While far-reaching, they all share a common thread: a commitment to minimizing our impact on the natural world while enhancing the well-being of those around us.

What truly excites me about this opportunity is the chance to collaborate with a dedicated community of conservationists like yourself, who share a passion to protect the most precious landscapes of the Upper Peninsula. I eagerly anticipate connecting with new communities, as well as forging new partnerships, while advocating for sustainable and inclusive growth for all. I hope you will join us at UPLC's Annual Meeting on May 22nd so I can introduce myself in person.

Here's to embracing the seasons of change and the journey ahead.

John Frye, UPLC Executive Director



## SUMMER STEWARDSHIP IS HEATING UP

A NOTE FROM UPLC'S LANDS PROGRAM MANAGER & PAST INTERIM DIRECTOR

Embracing the outdoors in every gloriously turbid season in the U.P. I like to remember the Scandinavian saying "there's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes". With the arrival of consistent, warmer weather, our stewardship team has extended that mantra to "there's no such thing as bad mosquitos, black flies, or ticks...only bad clothes". Donned in what can only be described as the summer collection of Yooper-haute couture—complete with head nets, pants tucked-into-socks, and bug dope perfume—we're gearing up for another field season packed with stewardship projects. This year we have more folks than ever before on our UPLC crew as we excitedly welcome John as Director & two seasonal staff!

With their arrival, we've been working on upgrading our field-technology to enhance data collection for annual monitoring and outlining objectives to update management plans for older conservation lands. Spring will see us seeding native plants as we continue our pollinator habitat improvement project which was initiated in 2022 with an award from the Pollinator Partnership Project. By June, we're early morning risers, joining forces with volunteers from the Laughing Whitefish Bird Alliance to conduct breeding bird surveys at our preserves. In the later summer, you'll find us on the trails at Vielmetti-Peters and Tory's Woods, constructing bridges and boardwalks aimed at protecting water resources and enhancing visitor experiences.

As I move back into our lands program full time, I'm excited to focus on learning more about & from the lands we protect. I am eager to take next steps with partners and landowners toward new protection projects that have been developing over the years, including land in the Mulligan Creek-Dead River watershed and inland lakeshores in the Michigamme Highlands. Thank you for your incredible support, encouragement, and unwavering dedication to our mission, especially during my interim role as director. Our growing canopy of members and staff is not only motivating, but is also vital to UPLC's next chapter, as we need the extra capacity and support to take action now in protecting land in the beloved Upper Peninsula.

*See you in the northwoods!  
-Clare Fastiggi*

## DEAD RIVER COMMUNITY FOREST UPDATES

We're chipping away at Phase One goals for the Dead River Community Forest. This summer, we're continuing multiple projects that will allow us to make informed decisions about the land as we progress with trail design at the Bridges and Bayous parcels. Most notably, we are working to install a new footbridge over Midway Creek. The old bridge spanned a sharp bend in the river that regularly experiences significant natural erosion during high-water flow in spring. Staff from EGLE's office joined us for a site visit to share their knowledge on reading the river characteristics to determine a suitable location for a water crossing. They helped us select a site slightly upstream on a straighter section of the creek, providing an ideal spot for a sustainable bridge placement that works with the water's flow. A short section of trail will be also be

added to guide visitors upstream. We plan to have this section of trail repaired in time for snowshoers to enjoy the expanding northern loop of VPR's trail network. Additionally, UPLC has partnered with the American Bird Conservancy and will be working with a U of M graduate student to design a restoration planting site along on the Bayous parcel focused on habitat for native bird species in decline. UPLC continues to collaborate with local landowners, organizations, and stakeholders to conduct ecological and historic surveys of the land. We want to ensure we're doing our due diligence before inviting the public out on the trails— stay tuned for further updates!



## ACCREDITATION NEWS

After nearly 12 months and 700 hours of effort, we are excited to report that we have been re-accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission! This recognition demonstrates our commitment to excellence across all of our practices, ensuring that the conservation work we do is defensible and permanent. Achieving this goal isn't a stopping point but rather a launchpad for implementing more rigorous and efficient practices.





## CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF CONSERVATION

Once upon a time (well, more like 1999), a group of conservation minded people with a love of the land decided to start our organization in response to the pressures of development and land fragmentation across the U.P. Initially known as the Central Upper Peninsula Conservancy, we operated as a volunteer-based entity without any formal staff or office space. Fast forward to this summer, and we are proud to announce a team of six dedicated staff members serving nearly every county in the U.P.

Throughout the years, our organization has undergone numerous changes - from our physical address to the composition of our board and staff. However, amidst these transformations, our unwavering promise and commitment to conservation have remained steadfast, grounded in the principle of "forever." Through our ongoing Accreditation compliance and implementation of enhanced conservation practices, we are ensuring our longevity well beyond the next 25 years.



From our early focus on riparian conservation easements to our involvement in monitoring piping plover nests, as well as engaging in sustainable forestry initiatives and fostering inclusive natural areas for our community, our mission has attracted individuals with diverse interests and passions. Thank you for being a part of this journey together in conservation!



## JOIN US AT OUR 25TH ANNUAL MEETING

We welcome each and every one of you who have been a part of UPLC's journey, whether at its founding or here today, to join us for an evening of storytelling, celebration, and gratitude as we look back on the first 25 years and chart a course for even greater impact together in the years ahead!

**WHEN: WEDNESDAY, MAY 22ND FROM 5PM-8PM**

**WHERE: ORE DOCK BREWING CO., MARQUETTE**

**WHAT: STORIES, UPLC UPDATES, PHOTOS, FOOD & MUSIC**

**WELCOMING LOCAL MUSICAL GUESTS —THE MAKE BELIEVE SPURS**





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## ROOTING FOR LAND PRESERVATION- BRANCH OUT AND JOIN UPLC'S BOARD

To maintain and enhance our capacity to protect the UP's natural heritage, we need a diversity of skills and perspectives on our Board of Directors. Working with us is not just any board experience; it's a unique opportunity to roll up your sleeves, get your hands dirty, and combine your professional expertise with your love for the environment.

If you're interested in making an impact on the landscape of the U.P. (without leaving a trace), submit an application today at [uplandconservancy.org/join-our-team](https://uplandconservancy.org/join-our-team)

OR SCAN HERE 

