

# Voluntary Protection of Lake Ann Shoreline is "On Point"

## Landowner Donates Conservation Easement to Preserve Water Quality and Scenic Views



Lake Ann is a peaceful oasis located barely 20 minutes from Traverse City's bustling downtown core. This quiet lake community has experienced tremendous growth over the past decade. Almira Township, in which the Village of Lake Ann is located, doubled in population from 1990 to 2006. This growth rate made it one of the fastest growing communities in the State by percentage according to US Census statistics. The Conservancy was honored to work recently with a lakeside property owner, Jack Harris, to protect his family's Harris Point property.

Harris Point boasts 1,632 feet of undeveloped scenic frontage on Lake Ann, whose shoreline areas have been almost completely developed. In addition to its scenic values, the Harris Point property is important to the local community as the location of one of the first - and only remaining - historical structures on Lake Ann. The property is visible from nearly everywhere on Lake Ann, as well as from the State Forest Campground.

Jack Harris generously shared his memories of the property and the reasons he decided to permanently protect his family's land by donating the value of a conservation easement.

### Conservancy: "When and how did your connection to this property begin?"

**Jack Harris:** "My connection to Harris Point, Lake Ann, began before I was born. My grandfather had bought the place in 1928 and offered my dad the place if he would farm it. "Grampy" had already bought a house three miles north on Herendeere Lake, a stucco house that is now a popular resort, but The Point on Lake Ann was too good to miss and "Grampy" bought that as it had a tremendous popularity (and still has) as a good fishing spot. We were all from Chicago and my mother had to wait until I was born before leaving for "up north". Mom had one three year old son already and had to wait until I was six weeks old to make the long train ride up to Bendon, about six miles south. Dad must have found someone to go and collect the three of us, because we were met by a Stutz Bearcat open touring car, and soon we were on our way north along the east side of Lake Ann that was known then as the Sandhills. Mom described the ride as somewhat rough, as you can imagine, with the leafless branches hitting us as we sped through the Sandhills toward the village of Lake Ann. Then we traveled west through the village to the west side of the lake, and turned south along a two-rut road that soon curved slightly eastward toward The Point. It was the same house that is there now, except Grampy was in the process of building a room for our homemade electric system, a bathroom and a washroom, all one, now our kitchen.

Grampy had bought the place from another Chicago couple named Hans and Elsa Yeager and they had already planted a large orchard, at least large for that time. I still have some of Hans's books on "the ideal place for an orchard in the country." When the Yeagers arrived, I believe the place was just a large room and a porch covered in board and batton that was used by a five-party group known as the Lake Ann Fishing Club and the room was used as the Club's clubroom. Mrs. Yeager, however, was determined to expand the place, so at least she would have a kitchen and two bedrooms. Later, she had a fourth room added onto her first addition which would be her dining room with traditional chair rail around it built onto the northeast side overlooking the lake; and behind that, she made Hans build a large room for his tools with six-over-six windows.

Incidentally, practically, if not all, the lumber was sent up from Chicago, with every piece marked "Hans Yeager, Lake Ann, MI": windows, doors, boards, etc. (We talk about "conservation" a lot now, but then . . .) It was on the west end of this that Grampy put his "Pump House" for his homemade electric system to be installed: it had simple bath and washing facilities. This is now the kitchen that in the fifties I had installed as my mother's new kitchen. In the books Hans had, there is a description of the "ideal place for a country house setting" and part of it is the airflow from west to east. Grampy had bought the ideal place for that: it still is."

**C: "What do you love most about the property? What are your favorite features or special memories of this place?"**

**JH:** "What I love most about the property is that it has always meant 'home' to me. So many people don't have that lifetime connection with a single place, but when we drive down that rut road and descend towards 'The Point' and the old house, it's 'coming home' that touches me most.

The second thing I love most is the topography of the place. The minute you dip down and open the cattle gate, you get a sense that you're really there, for there are levels of land, mainly three: first, there is that embankment at the gate; then you traverse through the woods; then you dip down again where the cabin is and the cottage. Actually, there you are on a site that is THE Point itself, like a finger pointing southward toward the shoreline. Off to the west is what I call "the smaller lower meadow", where there was once an orchard, so

that from the screened porch you're looking at a hollow to the west. And beyond what's left of grandfather's barn, the land rises along the very top steep embankment that has Yeagers' Norway Spruce windbreak fully grown, although damaged in the spring of 1955 in a severely destructive tornado. Cedar Run was almost wiped out and the vulnerable windbreak took a beating, but it has survived better than we thought it would. Now we have my favorite walk along the inside of the windbreak. You see the lake, but you are hidden behind the windbreak. I'm going to be looking for benches to put along this beautiful walkway that climbs to the top to the west of the place, and directly across the lake is the mouth of the Platte River.

My favorite memory is of people coming, especially from Chicago, relatives and friends. You would see them come round the bend and down through the woods, after waiting all day, someone would always say, 'Here they come,' and it was a pleasure to have visitors. In fact, that is still true, with later generations."

## J. A. Woollam Foundation Issues \$100,000 Challenge Grant for Elberta Dunes South, a Potential Public Natural Area along the Lake Michigan Coast

Imagine a place where you can stroll along a sandy shore, witness a bald eagle soaring, kayak along a perfect coast, and enjoy a majestic view of Lake Michigan and the Betsie Valley. The Elberta Dunes South property is a 58-acre parcel with 1/4 mile of sandy Lake Michigan beach frontage. It is located within the Village of Elberta in Benzie County. The property is one of the highest quality privately-owned dune parcels along Lake Michigan. Majestic glacial moraines, towering dunes, and untouched forests offer sweeping views of Lake Michigan and the Betsie Valley. Globally-rare species such as the Pitcher's thistle and Lake Huron locust call it home. Piping Plovers have also nested along this portion of the Lake Michigan shoreline.

Last year, the Conservancy entered into an option with the landowner to purchase the property with the intention of creating a public recreation and natural area. The Village of Elberta has signed on as a local government partner, and will become the park's owner once funds have been secured to protect the property. Once protected, the park will afford residents and visitors a range of recreational opportunities including swimming, fishing, hiking, birding, wildlife viewing, and hunting.



The Elberta Dunes South property is within the Village of Elberta. The proposed Elberta Dunes South park is supported by the goals of the Village of Elberta's master plan. The project reflects the community's recreational and natural resource protection interests.

### Project Cost

The total cost to protect the property is a little over \$2 million.

### Breakdown of Costs

Land value	\$1,515 million
Acquisition costs	\$116,250
Organizational costs	\$242,400
Land management (immediate)	\$6,500
Land management (endowment)	\$150,000

### Funding Sources

The owners of the property generously donated \$315,000 in land value. In April 2008 the Village of Elberta, with technical assistance from the Conservancy, will apply for a competitive Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant in the amount of \$1,151,589. The Conservancy, in partnership with local community leaders, will fundraise for the remaining costs of \$578,500. December 31, 2008 is the deadline for the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy to exercise the option to purchase the Elberta Dunes South property.

### Your Support Can Help Match a \$100,000 Challenge Grant from the Woollam Foundation

The Woollam Foundation has offered a generous 1:1 challenge grant of \$100,000. That means that your immediate gift of support will be doubled to protect this incredible dune and shoreline natural area! If you have questions about the challenge grant, or want to learn about other ways to support this unique conservation effort, please contact the Conservancy's Major Gift Officer, Kate Pearson at 231-929-7911 or by email at [kpearson@gtlrc.org](mailto:kpearson@gtlrc.org).

### March 17th is "Elberta Dunes South Night" at Giovanni's Roadhouse restaurant in Interlochen.

Half the proceeds from food receipts from 6-10pm that evening will be donated to the Conservancy to protect this dramatic Lake Michigan dune. Giovanni's menu features creative pizzas like the "Idaho" with potatoes, bacon, scallions, alfredo sauce, and smoked provolone; plus comforting classics like prime rib, ravioli, and a roasted chicken dinner, and great wines. Located at 9205 U.S. 31, Interlochen. 231-276-6244