



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lysianne Unruh, Communications Manager,  
(800-227-0046, [Lysianne@iceagetrail.org](mailto:Lysianne@iceagetrail.org))

Contact: Mike Wollmer, Executive Director, (608-798-4453, ext. 2224,  
[Mike@iceagetrail.org](mailto:Mike@iceagetrail.org))

Thursday, December 3, 2020

### **Ice Age Trail Alliance Entrusted with the Vision for Swamplovers Preserve**

Cross Plains, WI – On November 24, 2020, the ownership and management responsibilities of the Swamplovers Preserve, a 433-acre property perched on the rolling hills of southwestern Dane County, transferred from the Swamplovers Foundation to the Ice Age Trail Alliance.

“After considerable thought and collaboration, we signed the paperwork with complete confidence,” said Lee Swanson, a founding member of the Swamplovers Preserve. “Gerry, Tom, and I have full faith in the Alliance’s commitment to the land we’ve cared for during the past 33 years.”

The seeds of this historic moment were cast in 1987 when a team of visionaries – Lee Swanson, Gerry Goth, Tom Keuhn, and the late Joe Keuhn (Tom’s brother) – purchased the property, once plotted for development. Acquired initially as hunting grounds for outdoor recreation, these acres became prized for their natural features including presettlement vegetations such bur and white oak savanna interspersed with prairie and marsh.

Ecological restoration quickly became a focus for the landowners. As they employed large-scale management practices, Swamplovers Preserve transformed into a biodiversity hotspot. Situated at the edge of the Driftless region and within the Black Earth Creek watershed, it boasts high-quality habitat areas: open-water waterfowl breeding ponds, faithfully restored prairie, southern sedge meadow, oak savanna, and woodland communities.

“Humans once manipulated the land within the Swamplovers Preserve as a way to sustain their families. Now much human effort has gone to converting it back closer to its original state,” said Kevin Thusius, Director of Land Conservation for the Ice Age Trail Alliance. “It’s a showcase of native plants and animals and a source of continued study and inspiration.”

In rapidly developing Dane County, the desire to preserve this local gem led the owners to seek an agreement with the Ice Age Trail Alliance (then known as the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation). By 2005, a conservation easement was signed with an eye towards the future when the Ice Age Trail Alliance would assume full ownership and

Dane County would hold a conservation easement on it. In the intervening years, the Swamplovers Foundation and the Ice Age Trail Alliance worked in partnership to manage the Preserve. In 2006, the Preserve was bisected by the Table Bluff Segment of the Ice Age Trail and the public got to see this jewel first hand.

"We are honored to have worked closely with the Swamplovers founders to continue their vision for the property," stated Mike Wollmer, Executive Director of the Ice Age Trail Alliance. "As an accredited land trust, we're in a position to be knowledgeable, effective caretakers and ensure the protection of the Preserve past anyone's lifetime – it will be a sanctuary forever."

The Ice Age Trail Alliance will continue to welcome researchers and anticipates embedding their findings into its adaptive restoration management plans for the Swamplovers Preserve. The Preserve will remain host to busloads of students, teachers, and many other individuals and groups who want to immerse themselves in the learning this outdoor classroom offers. The yellow blazes will continue to help hikers navigate the Ice Age Trail's route through the Preserve's woods and prairies. The white or blue blazes will offer additional loops or spurs for the public to walk.

Only a portion of the Preserve is open to the public at this time. The founders continue to live within the property boundaries. We respect their privacy. Please pay attention to signs and stay on the blazed trails when visiting.

If you would like to support the on-going land management and stewardship efforts related to the Swamplovers Preserve, please donate: [iceagetrail.org/swamplovers-fund/](http://iceagetrail.org/swamplovers-fund/)

You may direct questions about the Swamplovers Preserve fund to Luke Kloberdanz, Director of Philanthropy, email: [Luke@iceagetrail.org](mailto:Luke@iceagetrail.org), or phone: 608-798-4453 ext. 226.

\*\*\*

*The Ice Age Trail Alliance is a nonprofit volunteer- and member-based organization established in 1958 that works to create, support and protect the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. One of only 11 National Scenic Trails, the Ice Age Trail is a thousand-mile footpath that highlights Wisconsin's world-renowned Ice Age heritage and natural resources. Visit [www.iceagetrail.org](http://www.iceagetrail.org) to learn more.*