



# OZAUKEE WASHINGTON Land Trust

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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Tom Stolp

March 31, 2022

Dear Chairman Schlenvogt and County Board Supervisors,

Thank you for your consideration to commit additional funds to support our partnership to create a new County park and permanently conserve Cedar Gorge Clay Bluffs. So many of our fellow County residents have shared their enthusiasm with me at the prospect of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a beautiful asset, which I call Lion's Den 2.0. Because of your leadership, residents and tourists will enjoy free and open access to the outdoors, forever.

Like many of you, I am dismayed that a lawmaker continues to impede our community's project by anonymously objecting to the \$1.6 million Wisconsin DNR Knowles Nelson Stewardship grant we were awarded. Let me reassure you, we are not giving up on our Knowles Nelson grant. We are grateful for the bipartisan coalition of legislators who support this grant and this project. We simply don't know when or if our Knowles Nelson grant will be released.

We do know the competitive grants Ozaukee County has secured will begin expiring in three short months.

The time to act is now.

This month, the Board of Directors of Ozaukee Washington Land Trust committed to funding an additional \$500,000 towards this nature preserve acquisition, bringing our total commitment to \$1.5 million cash, plus in-kind acquisition-related expenses. As the President and member of Ozaukee Washington Land Trust, my family and I were proud to be one of the almost 500 households to give to this campaign.

As a business leader, I was proud when the charitable foundation of West Bend Mutual Insurance, my employer, contributed \$125,000 to this project. Like many employers that support this effort, we know our associates, customers and agents value access to the outdoors and celebrating Wisconsin's outdoor traditions.

As an Ozaukee County resident, I am grateful for your leadership in already committing \$200,000 to this project and the determined and amazingly successful efforts of Ozaukee County Planning and Parks Department to secure over \$2.4 million in competitive grants.

I understand there has been a last-minute effort to derail the project by a secretive developer who is dangling an alternate vision for the land. Reportedly this effort has included hiring a Madison lobbyist to influence legislators to stop our Knowles-Nelson grant.

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West Bend, WI 53095  
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While it is nice to hear the secret developer says the land will be developed in an environmentally considerate manner, the fact that no plans can be produced to hold the owner accountable makes it hard to believe this will be the case. Once a project starts, good intentions are often left by the wayside. And it is a far cry from open public access. Moreover, this is not new – we all know the alternative to this new park and nature preserve was always private development and ownership.

Through two years of transparent collaboration, Ozaukee County, Ozaukee Washington Land Trust, and the City of Port Washington approved the permanent conservation of the 131-acre Cedar Gorge Clay Bluffs as part of a balanced approach for public space, conservation, and residential development.

Our community has agreed to create a County park and conserve 131 acres of Cedar Gorge Clay Bluffs and we are 80% of the way towards completing that goal. This is a well thought out plan with economic benefits for the County, including:

- Promoting open spaces and recreation opportunities in a nature preserve almost twice the size of the popular Lion's Den Gorge.
- Creating a park that will allow residents and visitors opportunities for recreation that are part of Wisconsin's \$7.8 billion outdoor recreation industry.
- Enhancing adjacent real estate property values by creating a park that protects the rural character and scenic views of Ozaukee County and Lake Michigan.

Our community has spoken clearly and wants to see 131 acres of Cedar Gorge Clay Bluffs conserved, forever. Our community has put their donations where their values are and because of that support we are 80% of the way towards completing this once-in-a-life-time community project.

I ask you to please support allocating up to an additional \$1 million in funding to complete this community project.

Sincerely,

Rick Fox  
President

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