



# KinniKeeper

A Publication of the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust

## Conservation Easements and Preserves

To protect the waters, we protect the land. The Kinnickinnic River Land Trust (KRLT) focuses on the lands and waters of the Kinni River, which hold class 1 trout waters, home to both brown and brook trout. The KRLT owns four preserves for community enjoyment, be it for fishing, hiking, bird watching, or just for viewing a flowering landscape and meditating in thought. As in the photo, KRLT preserves are visited throughout the year.



The trails at Kelly Creek and the other KRLT preserves are used year round.

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The KRLT does not succeed on its own. The people who live in the communities of the Kinni River Watershed (which is more than 170 square miles) help us achieve our mission. We greatly thank the landowners who have opted for conservation easements to protect the health and beauty of our lands. If you have land in the watershed that you would like to conserve for perpetuity, please contact our office for more information on how we can help you attain your land conservation goals.



## President's Message

The Kinnickinnic River is a special place to us all. For many it is home and for others it is a place to find peace and enjoyment in the outdoors. As a community, we all come together to protect this vital resource and with changes in the ecosystem our continued work is of the utmost

importance. Recently increased intensity of rain events has become a major challenge and the scientific evidence indicates that this is the new normal. The preservation and restoration of natural landscapes within the watershed are the best tools that we have for mitigating impacts on the riverway. Work specifically on the maintenance, protection and improvement along the floodplain provide the means for dealing with flooding, improvement in water quality (including clarity and temperature), maintaining wildlife habitat and creating recreational opportunities. The KRLT has resolved to be proactive in meeting the challenges of climate change.

Our work continued despite the challenges of COVID. Our preserves have seen a marked increase in use as we have all needed to find a relief from the stresses of the pandemic. We have focused on beginning development of The Community Forest and working with the School District of River Falls on access to the School Forest and opportunities for enhanced educational activities.

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## President's Message (continued from p. 1)

We also experienced transition this year. The board completed a review and revision of the strategic plan to include a commitment to meeting the challenges of climate change. At the end of September, our director for the past three years, Charlene Brooks Simonson, took a job with The Nature Conservancy to direct their Central Great Plains Grassland initiative. In October, we relocated our office to 710 North Main Street which also precipitated a necessary cleanout and reorganization. We are very fortunate to welcome Julie Smith as our new Executive Director.

The KRLT has begun significant work on updating and funding the management plans for our four preserves (Headwaters, Kelly Creek, The Community Forest and Drewiske). We are working on improved access, signage, maintenance and restoration of the preserves. Furthermore, we worked with landowners on a new conservation easement and expansion of an existing easement to further protect another 40 acres on tributaries to the Kinni River.

This past summer, we celebrated a river fundraiser featuring comedian Charlie Berens. The community support of this event has made it possible for us to be better stewards of the watershed by allowing direct investment in our preserves. Thank you all who attended! For nearly 30 years, the KRLT has worked on the protection of the Kinni. Our commitment continues to work with the community to protect the Kinni and keep it cold, clean and free, forever.



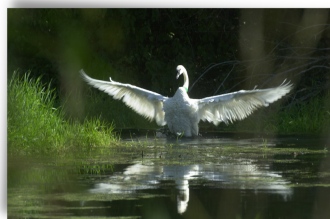
Charlie Rader, KRLT President

## Welcome Julie!

Julie Smith  
Executive Director  
[julie@kinniriver.org](mailto:julie@kinniriver.org)

Greetings to Julie Smith, our new KRLT Executive Director. Julie comes from across the rivers and through the woods, literally. She spent half of her

life in Cottage Grove, MN, and the other half mostly in Duluth, MN, and will soon become a Wisconsin resident in River Falls. Julie has a bachelor of science in natural resources and environmental sciences, an MBA, doctorate in business information systems and a doctorate in education. Her first professional role after her two-year conservation AmeriCorps program was as Executive Director of the Laurentian Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council.



After this position and before coming to the KRLT, she spent her career in project and programmatic activities inclusive of marketing, fundraising, grants and contracts at the University of Minnesota Duluth and various 501(c)(3) nonprofits.



## Save the Date!

- March Forth to Earth Day through April 22, River Falls Veterans Park  
5pm, Fridays
- Honoring Earth Day  
Bag trash in your own surroundings  
or pick a KRLT preserve to hike and clean
- Earth Fest 2022  
Hosted by Hope for Creation and other  
organizations - HOPE4CREATIONRF.ORG
- KRLT Annual Meeting

April 23, KRLT Clean-up

April 24, Glen Park

May 20, Glen Park



## From the Managers...

Molly Barritt  
Donor and Community  
Relations Manager,  
[molly@kinniriver.org](mailto:molly@kinniriver.org)



I am excited to be celebrating my third year with the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust. It has been an absolute pleasure getting to know the wonderful people who call the watershed home. The community's passion for protecting this incredible resource is as clear as the waters of the Kinni. Last year I stepped into the role of donor and community relations manager, which has allowed me to focus on engaging with the community while improving ways to connect people to the watershed. An area that brings me joy is connecting younger generations to the outdoors and getting them excited about the idea of conservation. There is something truly magical

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Marty Engel  
Land Stewardship  
Manager  
[marty@kinniriver.org](mailto:marty@kinniriver.org)



During this past winter, KRLT set special funds aside to provide for general maintenance of our four preserves. These funds will be used to maintain parking lots, trails and signage. Trails will be mowed on a regular basis three to four times per year throughout the growing season.

We greatly thank all who have helped with the work parties on the preserves too!

Most recently, KRLT staff and volunteers have been busy removing and treating invasive buckthorn, amur maple and boxelder from the prairie fringes at Kelly Creek.

Another point of interest is that KRLT staff and the Conservation Committee are updating preserve management plans for the next five years. Updated plans will help set the stage for future infrastructure and habitat management on the preserves. Projects to be completed in 2022 include

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## Land Stewardship (continued from p. 2)

signage of the Community Forest and the Headwaters preserves, a prescribed burn of the prairie at Kelly Creek and invasive species control on the Headwaters property. There is also exciting information on new KRLT land purchases and conservation easements:

- Since the last newsletter we were successful securing permanent access to the Headwaters Preserve (formerly Trumpeter Swan) and built a parking lot and kiosk at the entrance.
- KRLT completed the purchase of the Community Forest last January and developed a parking lot and trail system over the spring and summer. This 44 acre, old-growth forest on the lower Kinnickinnic River connects the City of River Falls River Hills parkland to the School District of River Falls School Forest and the Town of River Falls parkland along Rocky Branch. A gravel parking lot and access trail is now available off CTH FF just past Birch Cliff Subdivision. The access trail provides hike-in access to both The Community Forest and the School Forest. Securing this access was a critical component for the School District to develop the School Forest for educational purposes. Plans for the School Forest currently are underway. The Community Forest is now open to the public for outdoor recreation, such as hiking, biking and wildlife observation.
- The KRLT staff has also secured two new conservation easements during 2021. Both lie in the headwaters of the South Fork of the Kinnickinnic River. These new easements protect 40 acres of important headwater wetlands, oak savanna and prairie. Overall, the KRLT has protected more than 2,890 acres of land in the watershed. A total of 1,948 acres were protected through our conservation easement program, 205 acres as land trust preserves and 737 acres through land transfers to partners within the watershed including Kinnickinnic River State Park, City of River Falls and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) fisheries and habitat management programs.

## Donor and Community Relations (continued from p. 2)

in watching a child immerse themselves in a natural setting. Their viewpoint and questions provide a perspective and hope for continued environmental efforts.

A few projects that I am currently working on behind the scenes are updating and developing signage at KRLT's nature preserves, strengthening the organization's internal operations by improving day-to-day systems and planning KRLT spring and summer events. I am also working with our new Executive Director, Julie Smith, as she learns the "ins and outs" of the organization and community. We are overjoyed to have her join the KRLT team!

I am greatly inspired by hearing about people's experiences on the river and look forward to hearing your story about the Kinni. If you have a story you would like to share, email me at [molly@kinniriver.org](mailto:molly@kinniriver.org).







## Spotlight on the Community

### Jadinak and Foster Land Legacy



"We are fortunate to live on a beautiful piece of land containing a large wetland and a little high ground. While planning for a prairie installation on some of the high ground, we were approached by a KRLT board member who suggested that we consider putting the land in a conservancy. We had been discussing how to protect the land after we're gone because the spring-fed wetlands are an important drainage buffer for the South Fork of the Kinnickinnic River, and we are only two miles from the city limits of River Falls. Both of us have lived in River Falls most of our lives and we wished to leave a legacy to our community. The conservancy is our legacy."

– Nick Jadinak and Màry Foster



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Contact us if you would like to leave a land legacy.

Kinnickinnic River Land Trust (KRLT)  
710 North Main Street, Suite 205  
River Falls, WI 54022  
715-425-5738  
[info@kinniriver.org](mailto:info@kinniriver.org)

**Keeping the Kinni cold, clean and free forever!**





A bluebird. Many thanks goes to Jim Higgins for his bluebird boxes at Kelly Creek! Photo credit, KRLT resident birder and Board Treasurer, Mark Ritzinger.

## Spring Volunteer Sign-up

Opportunities include:

Prairie burns

Path care

Invasives control

Debris removal

Parking lot maintenance

GIS mapping

River monitoring

Garbage collecting

Bird identifying and counting

...and of course, spreading the word

**Let's keep the Kinni cold, clean and free forever!**



## Wish List Focus

In addition to seeking conservation easements, volunteer hours and donations, our preserves have some hardscape in need of replacement and repair. We are wishing for an accessible pathway and bridge to meet ADA requirements at Kelly Creek. Contact [info@kinniriver.org](mailto:info@kinniriver.org) if you can help.



Kelly Creek Preserve Bridge in need of an upgrade.

## Did you know?

The Land Trust Alliance (LTA) reports there are **61,072,596 acres** protected in conservation in the **United States!**

<https://findalandtrust.org/land-trusts/gaining-ground/united-states>

## Board of Directors

Charlie Rader  
President  
River Falls, WI

David Gregg  
Vice President  
River Falls, WI

Mark Ritzinger  
Treasurer  
River Falls, WI

Deb Wulf  
Secretary  
Troy Township, WI

Chris Bye  
River Falls, WI

Holly Dolliver  
River Falls, WI

Kevyn Juneau  
River Falls, WI

Aleisha Miller  
River Falls, WI

David Sienko  
River Falls, WI

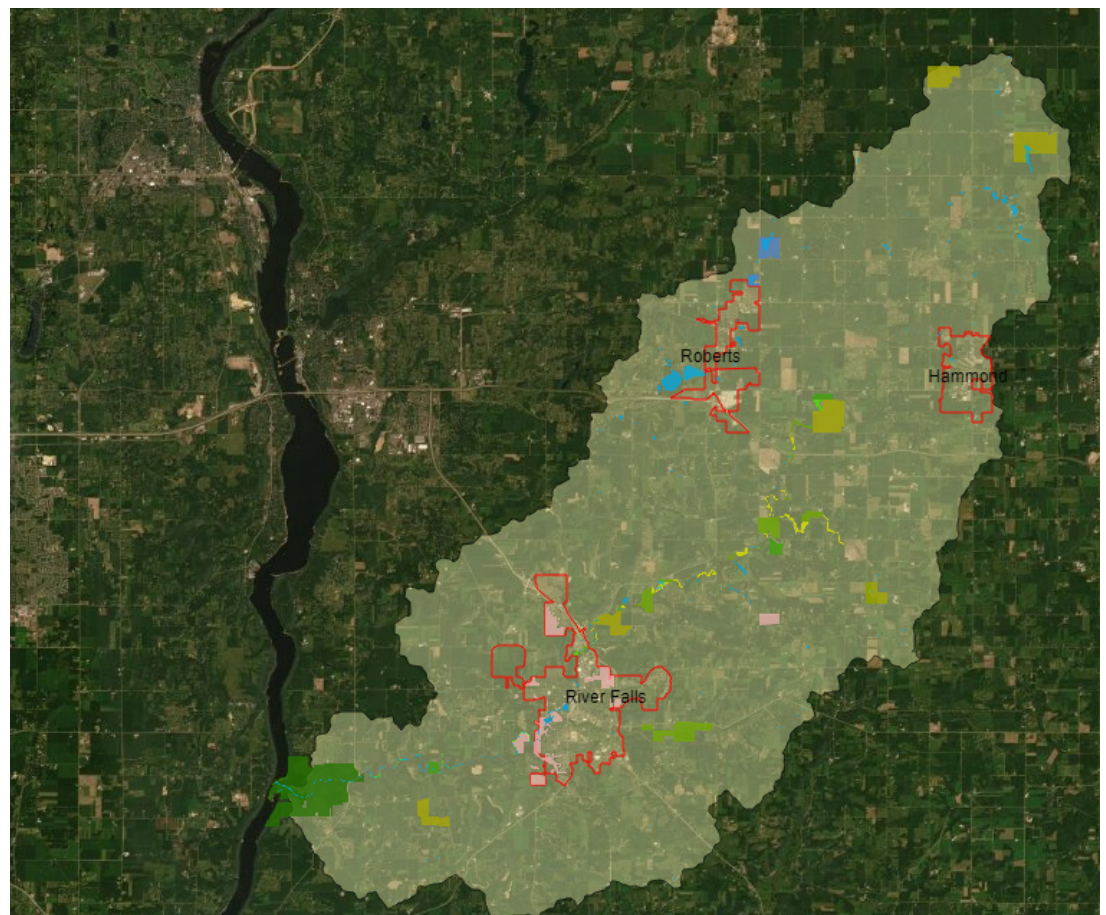


KRLT Board  
Member and  
Secretary,  
Deb Wulf,  
staffs the  
KRLT booth at  
the River Falls  
Fly Fishing  
Festival.

Have a passion for the Kinni? Help us protect and conserve this wonderful river by joining our Board of Directors. We seek additional members who represent diverse interests, ages and cultures including those with experience in land sales, land management, conservation, agriculture, recreation, education, mental health and/or who are property owners with a conservation easement on their land. Please contact the KRLT office by phone or email to express your interest and a board member will be in touch to answer your questions.

## Snapshot of the Kinni Watershed

(from Kinni River  
Recreation Map,  
[www.KinniRiver.org](http://www.KinniRiver.org))





## Giving Corner

Many ways you can leave a legacy!

- Memberships
- Conservation easements
- Donations through our appeals
- Estate gifts
- Memorial benches
- In-kind donations:
  - conservation equipment & supplies
  - donations of your time



**Thank you for your support of the Kinni!**

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