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Door County Land Trust: Hilltop conservation easement near Mink River Estuary

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Ellison Bay, WI – Door County Land Trust is excited to announce a newly protected property in Northern Door County. Working with Door County Land Trust, landowner Lisa Barker voluntarily donated a conservation easement on her property, protecting it from future development and contributing to nearby protected lands within an important wildlife corridor.

Landowner Lisa Barker purchased the property in 2017. Historically the land had been farmed, but in recent years the natural succession of reforestation has begun with sumac and young saplings. Barker chose to donate the easement saying, “I like the idea of this property staying natural. I love going for walks on the land and appreciate the history and open space. With so much development, it is reassuring to know there will always be some natural land.” Over time, the land will return to forest.

Door County Land Trust Conservation Easement Program Manager Drew Reinke began working with the Barker family over the summer of 2020. Conservation easements are legal agreements that forever protect land and wildlife habitat while allowing land to remain in private ownership and on the tax rolls. This conservation easement prohibits future development outside of the property’s building area, protecting the property’s ecological value for future generations.

The 31-acre property straddles the border of the Three Springs Creek and Mink River sub-watersheds. The Mink River Estuary is one of the most pristine freshwater estuaries in the country. Dogwood and alder shrubs fill the scenic meadow. The woodlands support a diversity of native plants including white pine and sugar maple. As they flow out to Lake Michigan, these watersheds provide significant habitat for native plants and wildlife.

Reinke says, “Conservation easements like this one at the Barker property can help

to maintain the look and feel of Door County's rural landscape while protecting critical habitat in perpetuity."

The Barker conservation easement is an important step for land protection efforts in Door County. This new conservation easement, plus three other nearby conservation easement properties, are the beginning of efforts to protect more of the land surrounding the Mink River Estuary. It is the hope of Ms. Barker that her conservation easement will inspire additional conservation easements in the Upper Door watershed and become part of a larger buffer of private open space, land, and wildlife habitat.

Door County Land Trust encourages landowners countywide to consider using conservation easements as a tool to protect their natural areas and open space from development while maintaining their private ownership. Conservation easement donations may provide tax incentives while protecting the natural and scenic character of Door County. To learn more about conservation easements and protecting the ecological values of private land, please visit www.DoorCountyLandTrust.org/easement or call us at (920)746-1359.