

Coolbough Natural Areas Dedication - October 6, 2001



The acquisition of 320 acres in the north-central part of Brooks Township has been a long and exciting journey, and the dedication of the property - the **Coolbough Natural Areas** - was a meaningful event for all who have worked on this project. The dedication began with a welcome by Dale Black, Brooks Township supervisor.

Coolbough Natural Areas Dedication - October 6, 2001



Brooks Township received the bulk of the funding needed to purchase the property through a grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund. However, there was a requirement that the township provide 25% of the cost needed to complete the project. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) provided tremendous help in acquiring the property by donating their 80-acre Ore-Ida Prairie Preserve as well as additional funding needed to meet the match. TNC Michigan Chapter director Helen Taylor (left) spoke at the dedication about the successful partnership with Brooks Township on this project.

Coolbough Natural Areas Dedication - October 6, 2001



Bill McCort of The Nature Conservancy (left), was instrumental in this project. Dale Black thanked Bill on behalf of the township, and presented Bill with a small token of the township's appreciation.

Coolbough Natural Areas Dedication - October 6, 2001



John Legge of The Nature Conservancy (right) has become a familiar face at Brooks Township. John's hard work and input was crucial in acquiring the Coolbough Natural Area. During the dedication ceremony, Dale thanked John for all of his efforts. We all look forward to a continued partnership with John and TNC as we work together to manage the property.

Coolbough Natural Areas Dedication - October 6, 2001



The dedication ceremony included the unveiling of the sign at the east entrance to the property. The sign states that the Coolbough Natural Areas (CNA) is a partnership between Brooks Township and the Michigan Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, with support from the Michigan DNR.

Coolbough Natural Areas Dedication - October 6, 2001



Posing with the sign are Brooks Township Board members (l-r) Lora Jones, Bob Wood, Dale Black, Christina Haynor and Bob Henning. Collectively these board members spent many hours working to acquire the property for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

Coolbough Natural Areas Dedication - October 6, 2001



Brooks Township Board members and TNC staff officially opened the CNA to the public with a short, yet meaningful, ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Coolbough Natural Areas Dedication - October 6, 2001



Following the ribbon-cutting, TNC's John Legge led everyone on a field trip through the CNA.

Coolbough Natural Areas Dedication - October 6, 2001



Three ponds, joined by cattail marshes, comprise a 10-acre wetland system on the CNA. This is a view from the east end of the wetland system. Visible in the foreground is the east pond.

Coolbough Natural Areas Dedication - October 6, 2001



Walking along the north side of the wetland system, visitors hike through a regenerating white pine - white oak forest system. Although not uncommon here, this forest type is considered rare on a global scale.

Coolbough Natural Areas Dedication - October 6, 2001



After a stroll through the white pine - white oak forest system (seen in the background) we reached the pond at the west side of the wetland complex. The west pond was created many years ago when a previous property owner constructed a small earthen dike at the west end of the wetland system.

Coolbough Natural Areas Dedication - October 6, 2001



Approximately 3-acres in size, the west pond is the largest on the property. Many animals, including Great Blue Heron, call this pond and adjoining wetland home.

Coolbough Natural Areas Dedication - October 6, 2001



Although not included on our tour, the CNA also includes the 80-acre Ore-Ida Prairie Preserve, donated by The Nature Conservancy. The prairie preserve is west of the wetland system and is home to many unique plant and animal species, including the federally endangered Karner Blue butterfly. Restoration efforts will include the protection and improvement of this rare ecosystem.

Coolbough Natural Areas Dedication - October 6, 2001



Now that Brooks Township has acquired the CNA, the real work begins. A property management board will be organized to direct the ecological and recreational management of the property. Volunteers will be needed to implement many of the recommendations of the management board, such as trail construction and ecological restoration activities.

Coolbough Natural Areas Dedication - October 6, 2001

We hope that you enjoyed your virtual tour of the Coolbough Natural Areas and are able to visit the property in person. Keep in mind that the property is open for low-impact recreation. Motor vehicles are prohibited on the property. “Take only pictures and leave only footprints” when you visit the CNA.

For more information on allowed and prohibited activities on the Coolbough Natural Areas, or for directions to the CNA, please contact Brooks Township at 231-652-6763. In the near future, this information should be posted at each entrance to the property.