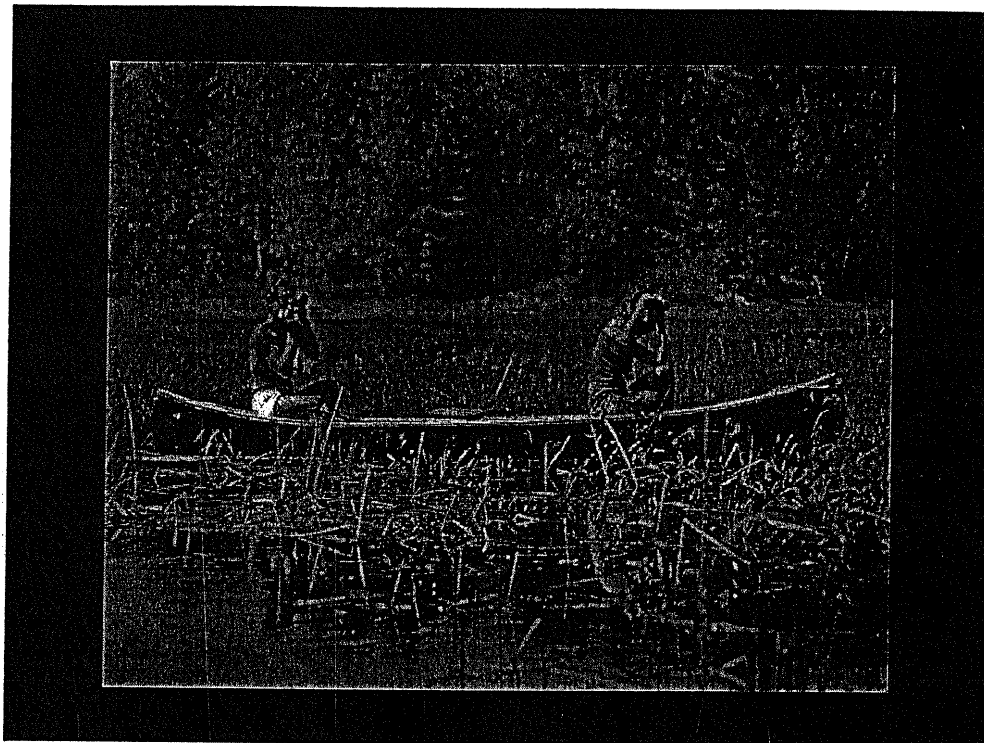




Working to provide and sustain environmental areas in the Balsam Branch Watershed where educational and recreational opportunities are promoted for all ages through all seasons.

My name is _____ and it is my pleasure to be her tonight to introduce you to the Balsam Branch Partnership by first briefly describing what we do. I also will provide a brief overview of the history of land use in this area. In the end I hope to make clear the need to provide opportunities for people of all ages to enjoy and learn about our natural world.



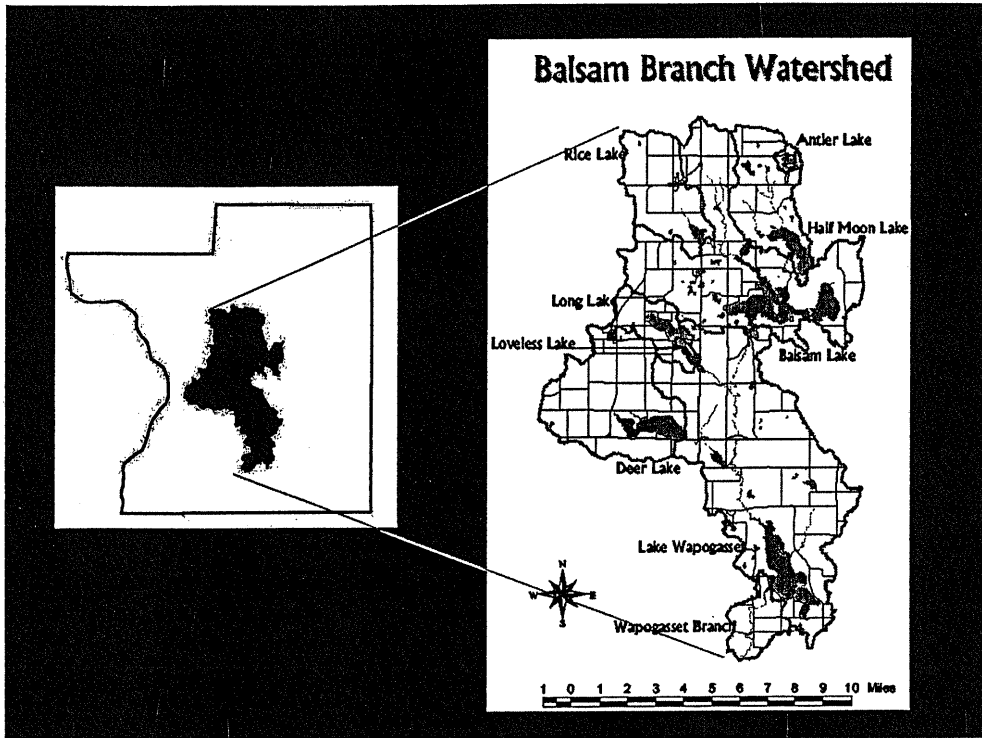
The Balsam Branch Partnership is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing and sustaining environmental education areas in the Balsam Branch Watershed. To carry out this purpose, the Partnership supports the following activities:

Programs

- Sponsor environmental educational programs
- Support nonmotorized recreational activities
- Preserve natural areas for the above activities



- a) Sponsoring environmental educational programs directed at all ages;
- b) Supporting nonmotorized recreational activities; and,
- c) Preserving natural areas for these activities using a variety of land protection and acquisition tools.



As the name implies, the Balsam Branch Partnership is primarily concerned with The Balsam Branch Watershed. This watershed is located wholly within Polk County and is drained by the Balsam Branch. This stream begins at Balsam Lake and flows south through woodland, farmland, marsh, and tamarack swamp. The watershed contains the villages of Milltown, Centuria and Balsam Lake. Eight major lakes lie within the watershed as well as several tributaries, ponds, springs, and wetlands. ~~These lakes are...~~

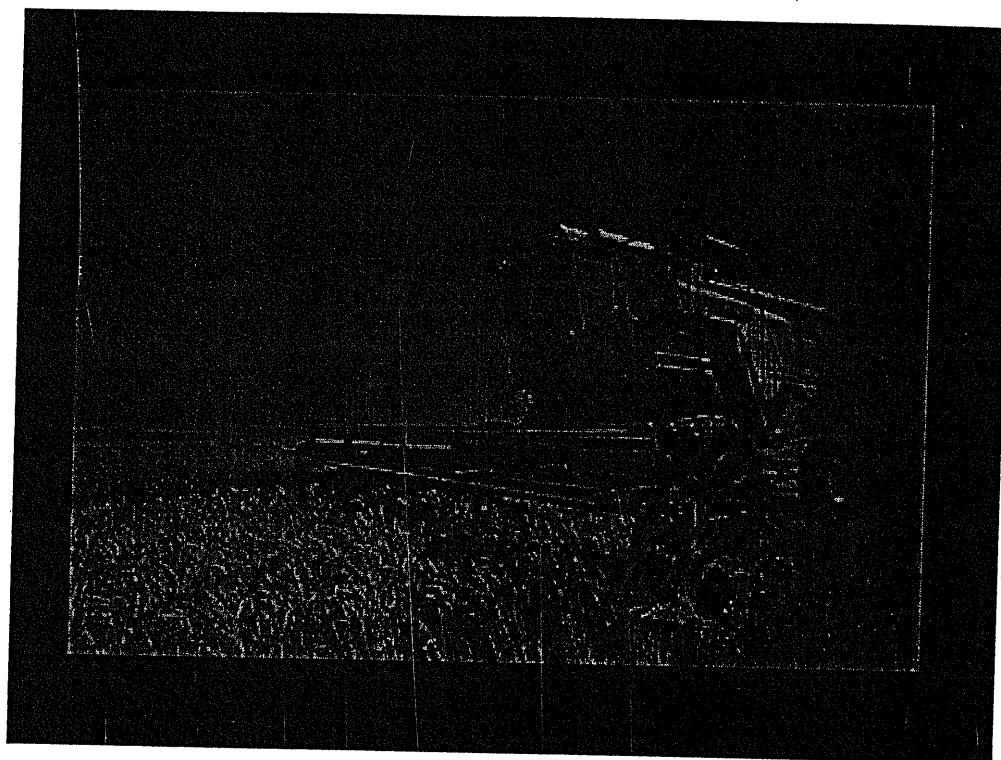
TO PAGE 13



The landscape of Polk County has undergone considerable change since European descendants made their way here in the mid-1800's primarily in search of lumber. ~~White pine was the first regional commodity to be exploited.~~ The rivers provided a mode of transportation to get logs from the forests to the mills.



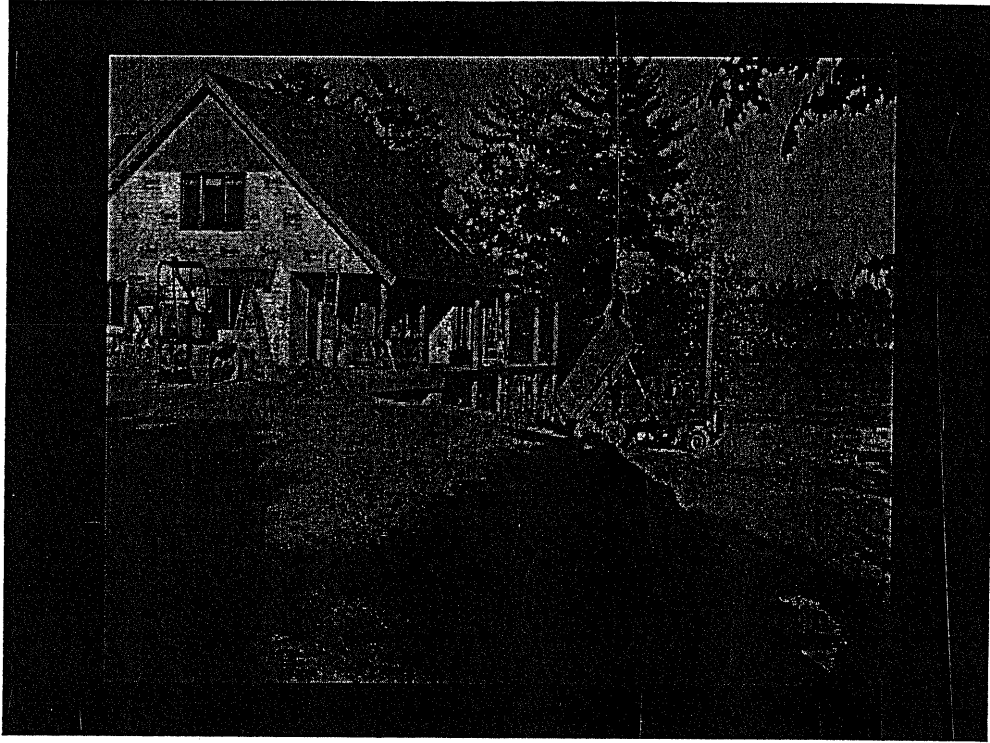
Logging had a profound affect on the landscape changing dense, old growth forest to a relative moonscape of shrubs and stumps. The industry also had a profound affect on lakes and streams. Soil that was once covered by a variety of vegetation and held in place by a dense network of roots was now subject to the erosive forces of rain and wind. Tons of soil was washed into nearby waterbodies filling wetlands and choking lakes.



Farming was the second wave of development ~~felt~~ in Polk County. Originally farms were small and diverse. Due to the fragile nature of their tools and techniques early settlers generally worked with the land, ~~instead of against it.~~ But mechanization soon changed the way people farmed. Larger machines required larger fields and larger fields required more chemical inputs to control weeds and insects. Wetlands and flood-prone areas were drained and cultivated. In general, farming opened up the fertile but fragile soils to the erosive forces of wind and rain thereby compromising the health of both land and water.

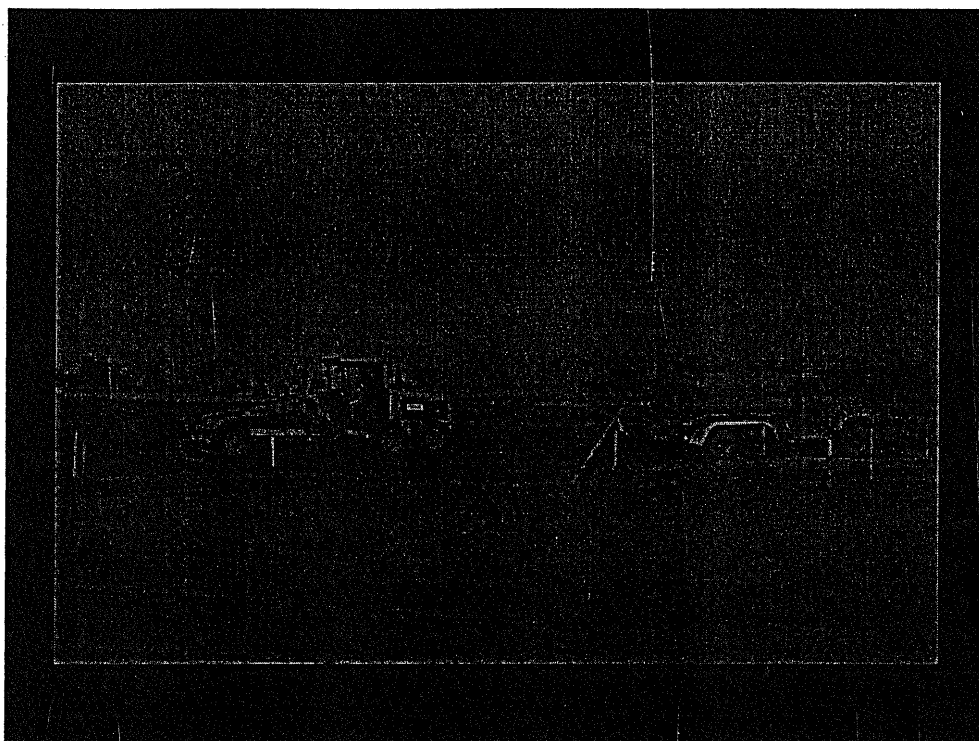


Many farmers and livestock producers are excellent stewards of the land and have taken advantage of programs and techniques that reduce the negative effects that farming may have on the land and water. Utilizing these techniques is helping this county's land and waters heal themselves.



But a third wave of major human influence is ^{occurring} upon us: residential development. ~~The landscape is quickly being carved up from vast fields into relatively tiny lots complete with driveways and sod lawns.~~ ~~The University of Wisconsin Extension Service offers the following statistics:~~

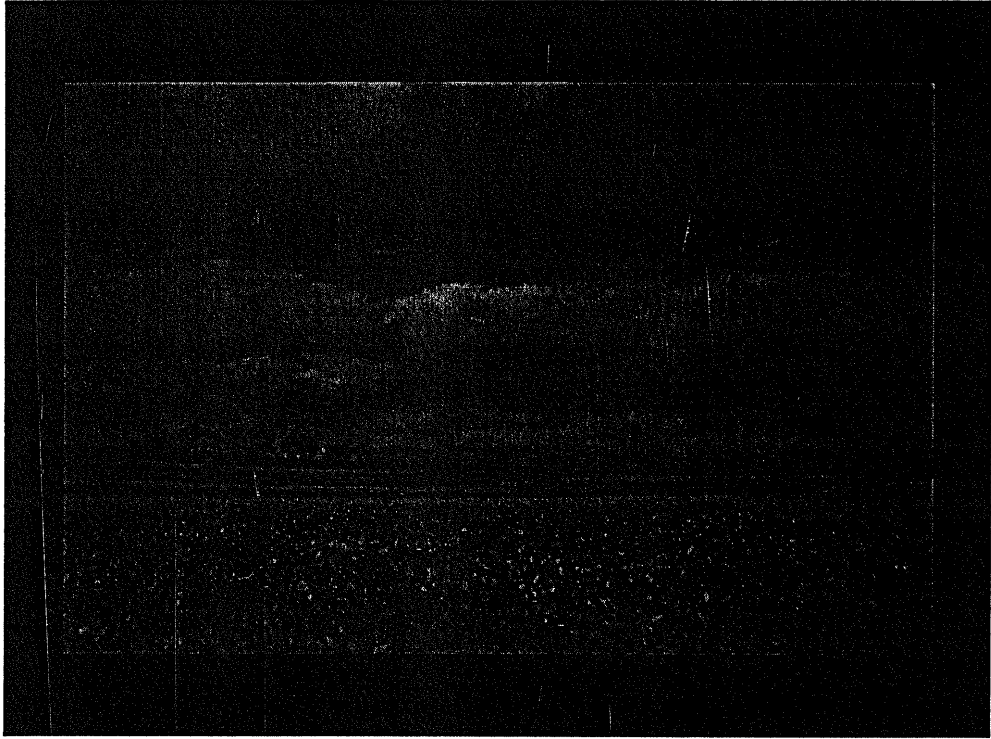
- a) Polk County farmland declined by 82,630 acres between 1978 and 1992 – a 22.6% decrease.
- b) Residential land use increased by 93% since 1973.
- c) The population has grown 46% since 1979 and it is expected to increase another 20% by 2020.



Increasing populations, more residential land use, less family farms...this all adds up to:

- a) Habitat fragmentation;
- b) Erosion;
- c) Water pollution,
- d) Increased traffic; and,
- e) Interrupted scenery and vistas.

Currently there are few ordinances or codes that address these negative impacts of impulsive residential and commercial development known as urban sprawl.



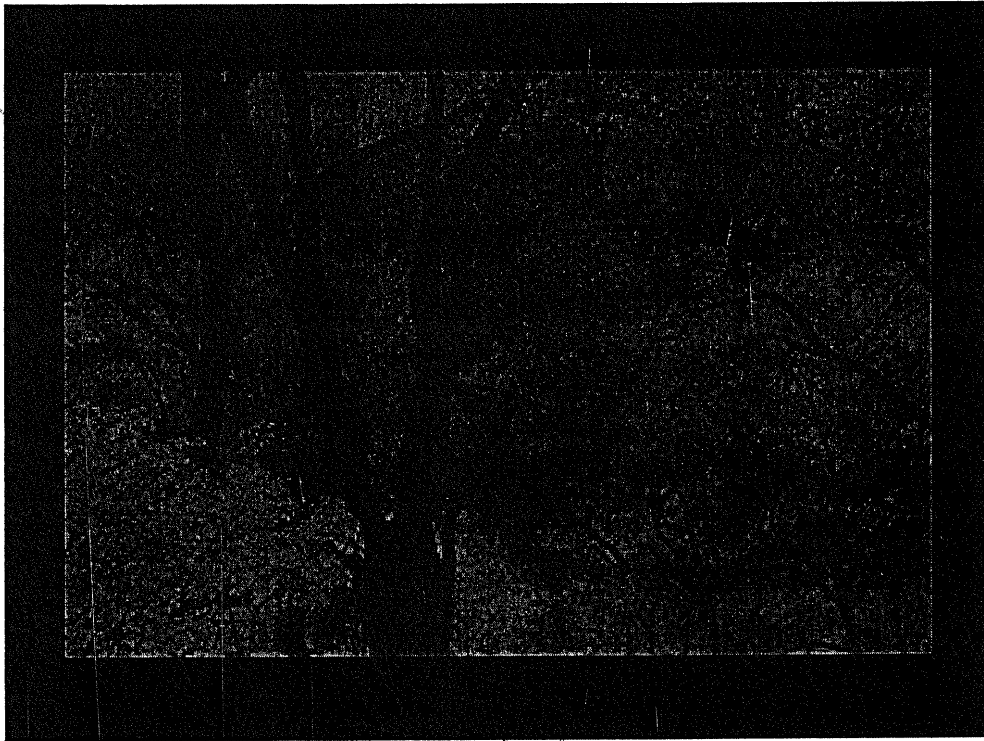
~~we know great changes are coming~~
 The situation in Polk County is changing. Our natural heritage is disappearing ~~at an alarming rate~~ simply because it is not adequately protected or maintained. We must consider what sort of legacy we will leave for future generations. Will they enjoy the same quality of life we do or will we leave environmental problems for our descendants to address?

Due to growth
 of growth on our land
 will be

the impact

Due to growth, we know great changes are coming. We must consider what the impact of growth will be on our natural heritage. What sort of legacy we will leave for future generations? Will they enjoy the same quality of life we do or will we leave environmental problems for our descendants to address?

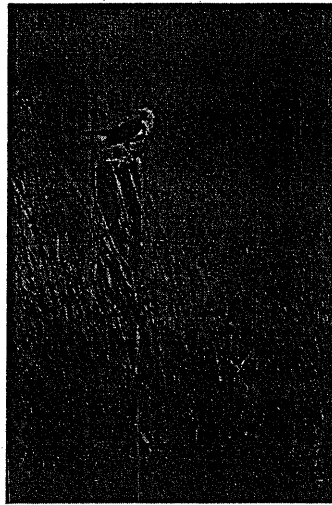
not protected or maintained



The goal of the Balsam Branch Partnership is to establish a variety of environmentally significant protected areas that will allow for environmental education, recreation, habitat protection, livable communities, healthy lakes and rivers, and heritage preservation.

Partners

- Friends of DD Kennedy
- Lake Wapogasset
Lutheran Camp
- YMCA Camp Icagowan
- County Government
- Norska Ski Club
- Lake associations
- Local businesses
- Polk County citizens
- Local municipalities



Currently the Balsam Branch Partnership has a supporting membership base that includes:

- a) Friends of DD Kennedy Environmental Area
- b) Lake Wapogasset Lutheran Bible Camp;
- c) YMCA Camp Icagowan
- d) Polk County Land and Water Resources Department;
- e) Norska Ski Club
- f) Local lake associations and lake districts;
- g) Local business owners *Deer Lake Conservancy*
- h) Several Polk County citizens.
- i) And, Local municipalities within the watershed.

Back to page 5

The following slides show

highly non-motorized recreation educational activities



Photo courtesy of www.skinnyski.com

The Partnership has been working with the Sons of Norway, Friends of DD Kennedy Environmental Area, the Amery Lions Club, and the Boy Scouts to sponsor the Balsam Vinter Fest: a cross country ski race held at DD Kennedy. Over 150 racers from as far away as Missouri have competed in this annual event that offers races for children, high school students, and adults. The picturesque wooded trails are one of the primary reasons that people return year after year to race.

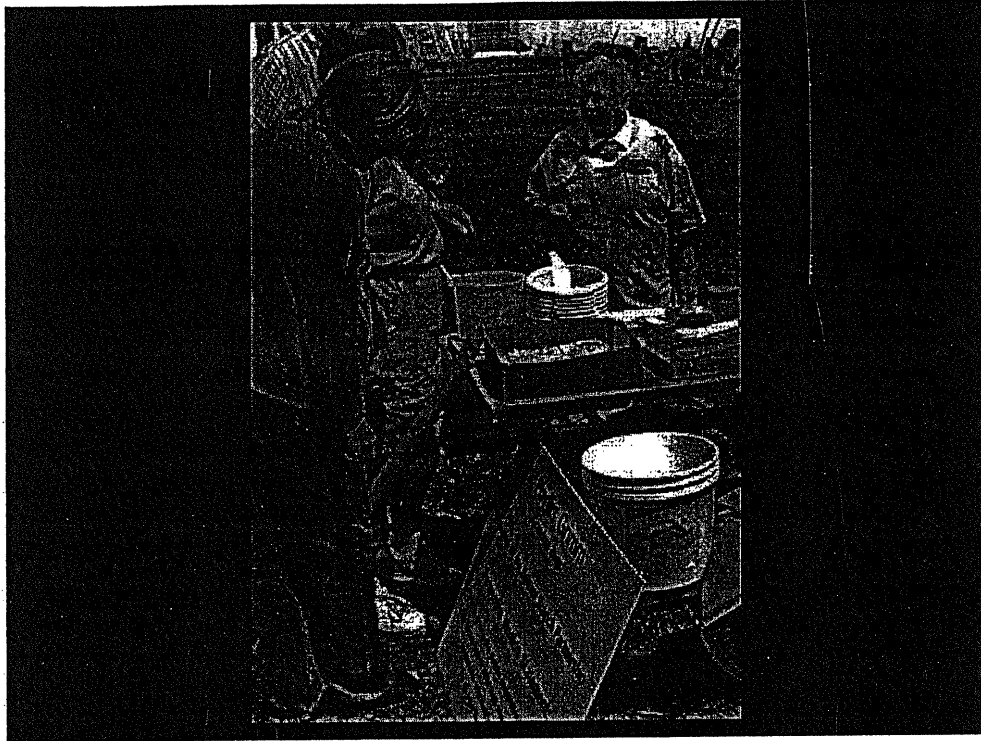
through the efforts of the Vinter Fest Committee + the Sons of Norway Club, SEF

through the efforts of the Sons of Norway Club, SEF

which

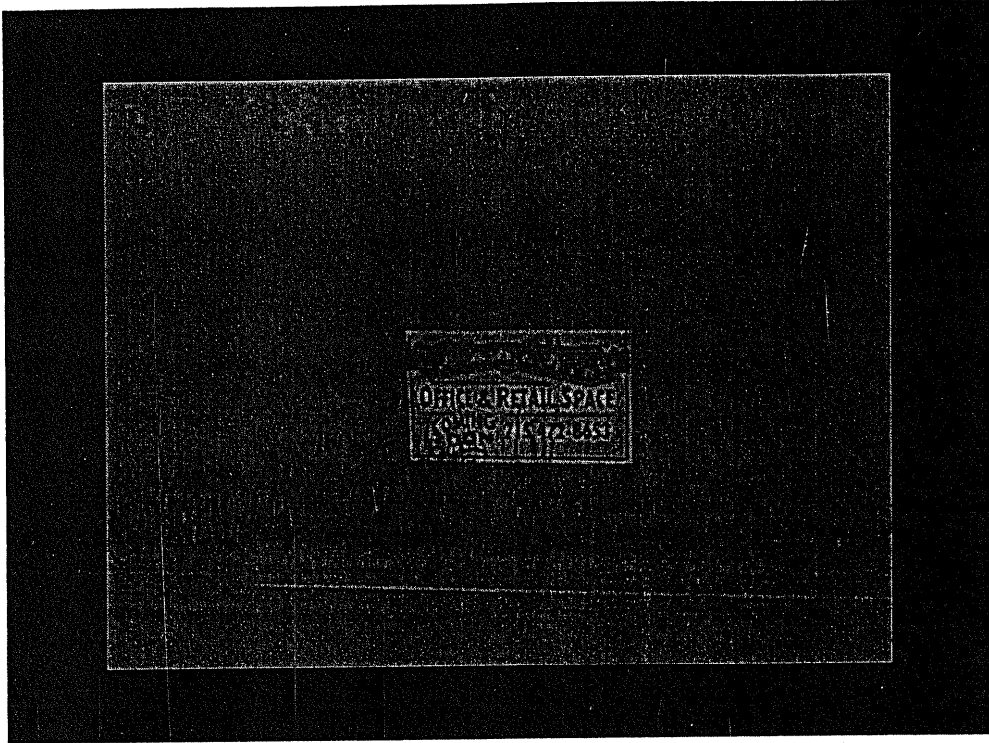


We are active sponsors of county-wide environmental education initiatives such as the annual Muskie Event at DD Kennedy Environmental Area. Hundreds of people come to see muskies congregate below the dam in the spring. The Partnership takes advantage of this springtime ritual by hosting this event complete with natural history information about the fish and the river.



The Partnership sponsors several environmentally related courses through community education. Representatives from BBP speak to youth and community groups and participate in environmental education programs at community events like the Cat Tail Trail Days in Amery.

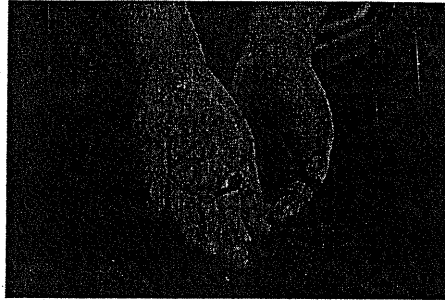
classroom
slide



The Balsam Branch Partnership is concerned with protecting land that provides opportunities for environmental education and non-motorized recreation. Protecting land also means that we will provide open space, preserves unique habitat, and protects natural resources.

Protection tools

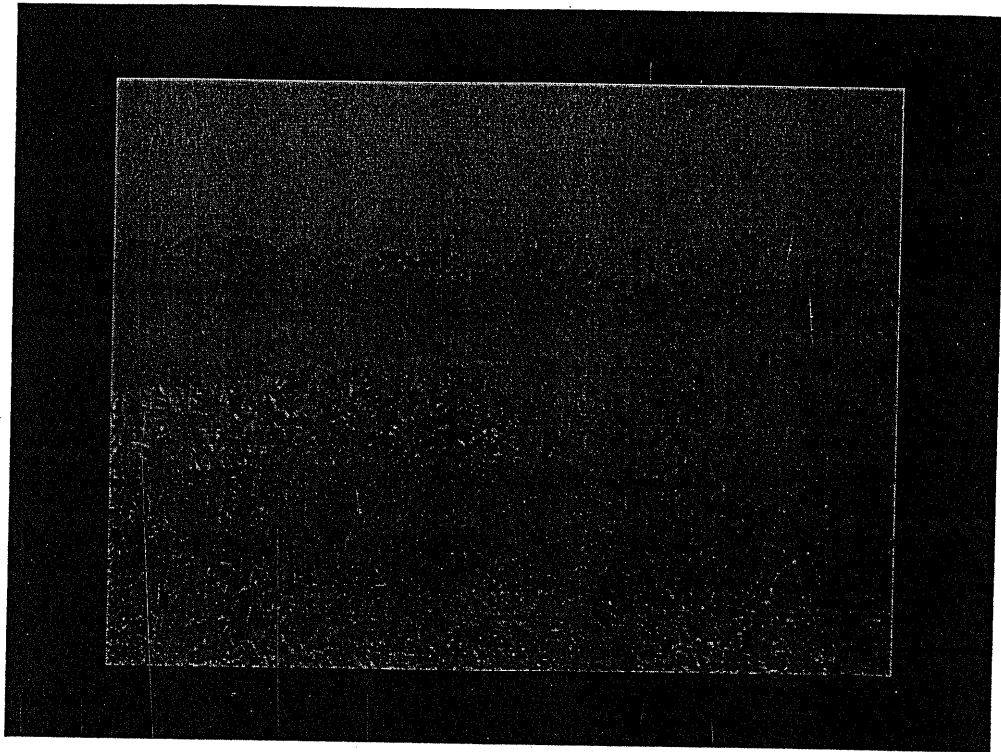
- Easements
- Donations
- Purchases
- "Bargain" sales
- Limited development
- Registry programs



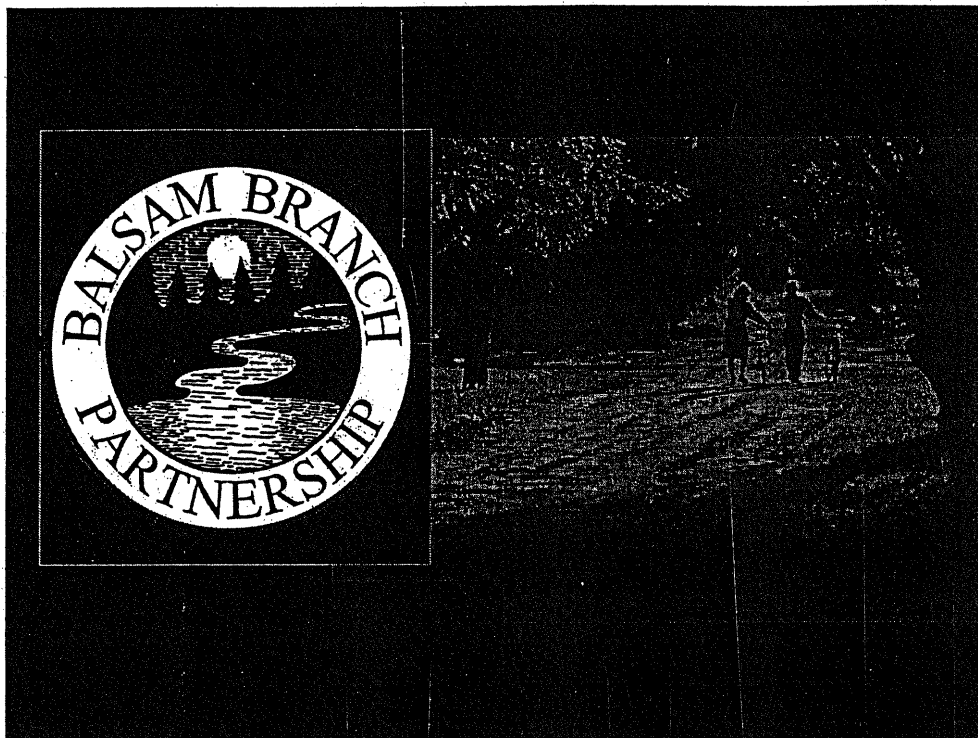
We cannot expect government to address these issues alone

As a land trust we can offer landowners several options that protect their property investment in an environmental sense as well as in economic terms. These tools include: easements, donations, purchases, "bargain" sales, limited development, and registry programs.

People of the community through the Balsam Branch Partnership and other land trusts, can focus public & private resources to assure that open space & natural areas will always exist for our children.



We cannot expect government to address these issues alone. People of the community, through the Balsam Branch Partnership and other land trusts, can focus public and private resources to assure that open space and natural areas will always exist for our children.



If you would like to learn more about the Balsam Branch Partnership, I invite you to talk with me afterwards. Or you may contact a representative at a later date. Our brochure contains numbers and addresses. Thank you.