

GREENSEAMS®

Kosterman Preserve

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Honoring a Family Legacy

When the Kosterman family bought their farm in the early 1800s—along what is now US Highway 41 in the Village of Germantown, Wisconsin—the 15-acre forested swamp came with it. For more than a century, the swamp has been a valuable resource for generations of the family and neighboring farms: its wood provides fuel for fireplaces and lumber for building homes and barns, and its surrounding area offers recreation such as deer and rabbit hunting. Jean Wagenknecht, one of the remaining owners of the family property, remembers exploring the swamp during the winters of her childhood when the area was frozen over. It holds a special place in the hearts of the Kosterman family for all that it has provided them.

Our Role

Then the family learned from the Greenseams program, which is implemented by The Conservation Fund, about another important role the swamp plays: its absorbent soils capture and retain rainwater and help prevent flooding downstream in the Milwaukee area. It is also an important part of a valuable wooded wetland complex which the Greenseams program has been working to protect since 2001.

When the Kosterman family decided it was time to sell, they knew that they wanted the property to go to Greenseams. It was important to the family that they honored their strong connection to the land by conserving it and opening it to the public rather than running the risk of it being developed.

In January of 2018, the Kosterman Preserve's 15 acres was added to the already protected 66 acres in this wooded corridor, which has been designated by the Southeastern Regional Planning Commission as a Regional Natural Area. Wooded corridors receive these Natural Area designations when they contain the most significant remaining natural areas vital to maintaining endangered, threatened and rare animal species of the region.

Greenseams acquired the Kosterman Preserve and adjacent parcels for their natural ability to capture and retain rainwater before it flows downstream. By purchasing these properties and preserving them in their natural condition, Greenseams ensures the sites continue to act as a natural sponge while providing wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities for the public.



Jean's father, Joseph "Sep" Kosterman, along with other generations of the family, used the land as a source of timber and firewood.

"It was so important to us that the swamp stays conserved in its current state. We are a family of hunters and we appreciate the land. We just felt it was so important to maintain it—for other people to be able to enjoy and to help prevent flooding in Milwaukee."

—Jean Wagenknecht
landowner, Kosterman family

Our Impact

3,689
acres protected

111
properties preserved



About Greenseams

Greenseams® is an innovative flood management program that permanently protects key lands containing water absorbing soils. By storing and draining water into the ground naturally, Greenseams® helps prevent future flooding and water pollution while supporting and protecting MMSD’s structural flood management projects- infrastructure investments worth hundreds of millions of dollars. The program has protected more than 3,400 acres of land in the greater Milwaukee area. The program makes voluntary purchases of undeveloped properties in areas expected to have major growth in the next 20 years and open space along streams, shorelines and wetlands.

About The Conservation Fund

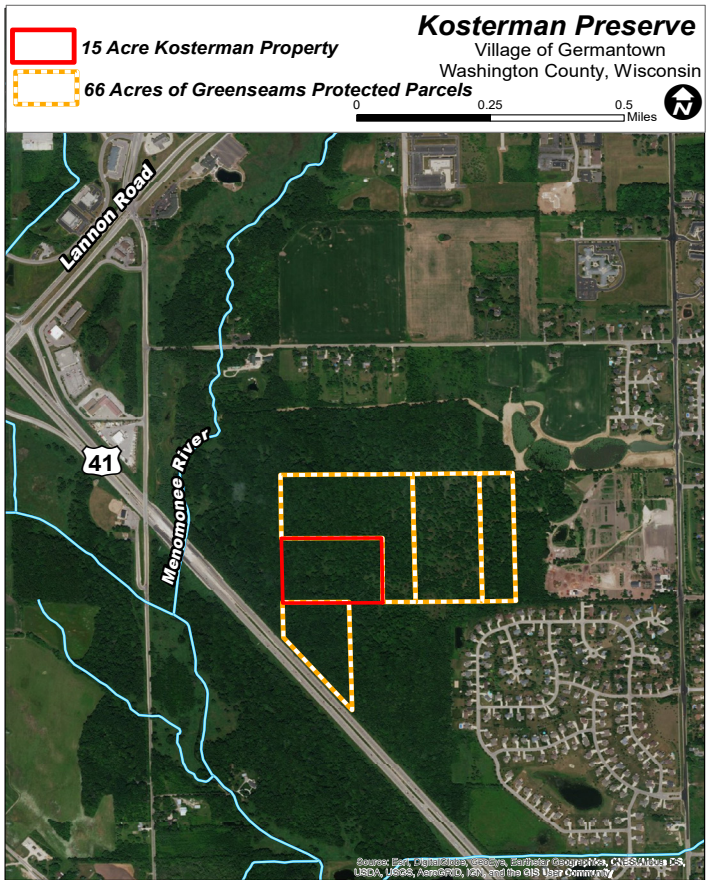
At The Conservation Fund, we make conservation work for America. By creating solutions that make environmental and economic sense, we are redefining conservation to demonstrate its essential role in our future prosperity. Top-ranked for efficiency and effectiveness, we have worked in all 50 states since 1985 to protect nearly eight million acres of land.

“Greenseams and The Conservation Fund were a wonderful team to work with. We had 11 family members involved in the sale, and they made a complicated process manageable.”

—Jean Wagenknecht
landowner, Kosterman family



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Contact Us:

David Grusznski
Program Director
414-225-2272
dgrusznski@conservationfund.org

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THE CONSERVATION FUND | www.conservationfund.org

260 West Seeboth Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53204, phone: 414-225-2124