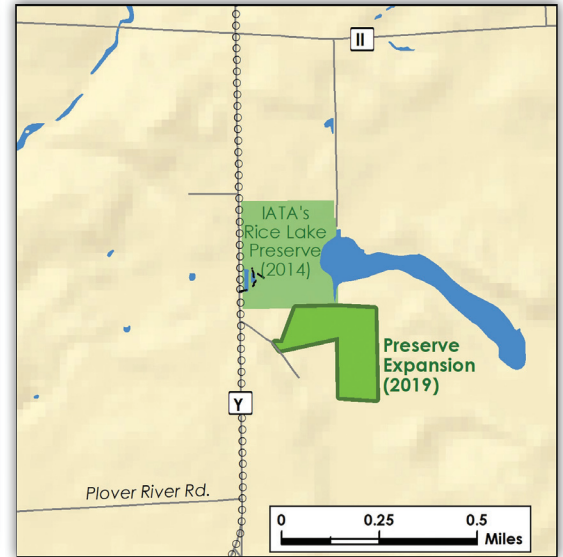


Rice Lake Preserve Expansion

KEVIN THUSIUS, DIRECTOR OF LAND CONSERVATION



A peek into new territory now part of the 22.7-acre Rice Lake Preserve expansion. Photo by Kevin Thusius.



The relatively flat, loamy sand soils of eastern Marathon County are great for growing vegetables such as sweet corn, beans, and potatoes. Amid the crop fields and center-pivot irrigation systems is a hidden natural gem – Rice Lake. This spring-fed, beautiful, undeveloped marl lake is surrounded by a thick white cedar forest. In 2014, the Alliance acquired a 41-acre property from North Central Conservancy Trust (see the Summer 2014 edition of Mammoth Tales for this story) to guide alignment of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail in this area devoid of off-road hiking and camping opportunities.

As intended for in 2014, the Alliance has since been able to expand the size of the Rice Lake Preserve. This opportunity arrived in late 2019 and the Alliance had to move quickly to acquire the adjacent property. This expansion creates a stunning canvas on which a new section of the Ice Age Trail may be built. Not only does the new 22.7-acre acquisition allow for an immediate road-to-road connection for future Trail, it also boasts a beautiful wetland forest along with a high ridge flanking the banks of Rice Lake Creek.

Thanks to our swift actions and ability to use existing capital, within several weeks of the seller contacting the Alliance, we were able to purchase the property using existing assets. As the Alliance increases its role in land protection, it is becoming more and more important to use privately raised funding to acquire these important Trail lands.

In this case, the Alliance purchased the property without having raised the entire amount needed to acquire the property. The Alliance used a combination of cash from general operations, the Robert and Victoria Connors Land Resource Fund (Connors Fund), and borrowing. Now



The view of the high ridge that runs along the banks of the Rice Lake Creek. Photo by Kevin Thusius.

those sources of funding need to be replenished so the Alliance can be ready for the next purchase. We anticipate using the state's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund to retroactively pay for a significant portion of the purchase, but remain approximately \$27,000 short of being able to fully fund the acquisition.

We continue to seek grants from foundations and corporations, but are also seeking donations from individual donors. If you are interested in being part of the Rice Lake Preserve expansion and protecting future Trail corridor, please contact our Director of Philanthropy, Luke Klobberdanz at luke@iceagegetrail.org or 608-798-4453, ext. 226.