



Leo Creek Preserve Development Plan 2017

The Leo Creek Preserve is a nonprofit organization that owns a nine-acre parcel alongside the Leelanau Trail in the Village of Suttons Bay in northern Michigan. It is being developed as an outdoor ecological and agricultural education center for the community and its visitors.

Leo Creek Preserve is a beautiful garden space designed for learning about

sustainability, stream and creek ecology, and food production. In addition, it will serve as a convening space for community gatherings and offer quiet spaces for tranquility and reflection.

About Leo Creek Preserve

The Leo Creek Preserve property was acquired early in 2016 and is forever protected by a conservation easement agreement with the Leelanau Conservancy.

Leo Creek, beautiful and wide, flows swiftly through the woods. A half-mile trail follows the creek through the woods and emerges through the Preserve's 1.5-acre agricultural area, which is dotted by over 90 heritage blueberry bushes that were a commercial enterprise over 40 years ago and are still producing fruit. We have plans to extend the Leo Creek trail by another half mile.

Much of the parcel is covered in cedar, birch, pine, and oak trees. It is one of the premier birding spots in Leelanau County; sounds of chattering and singing birds fill the air. The long, eastern side of the property runs directly alongside the Leelanau Trail, which is open to the public and used by cyclists, walkers, cross-country skiers, runners, and others.

Programs and workshops at Leo Creek

The educational programs at Leo Creek will focus on sustainable and practical green living practices as well as our natural world ecosystems and how they are connected to our daily lives. We have planned the following programs and workshops for 2017, the first year in which we will be offering programming:

- 1) Installing a **solar drip irrigation system**, including hand-pounding the water well.
- 2) Launching a **children's permaculture garden**, in partnership with the Leelanau Montessori Public School Academy. Students will build and maintain the gardens, and will harvest edible vegetables, herbs, and flowers.
- 3) Building **large vegetable, fruit, and flower gardens**, using permaculture as a foundation. The gardens will be constructed in the 1.25-acre agricultural area on the Preserve around the 90 heritage highbush blueberry shrubs that are still productive. Four separate **permaculture workshops** will be held during

the gardens' development on the following topics:

- a. Hügelkultur beds
 - b. Keyhole beds
 - c. Spiral herb and greens bed
 - d. Fruit and nut guilds
- 4) Partnering with the Inland Seas Education Association, a local nonprofit dedicated to hands-on learning about the Great Lakes and their stewardship, in June to **provide teachers with professional development** on how to incorporate place- and ecological-based programs into their curriculums.
 - 5) Hosting a **children's summer program** to teach children gardening skills and connect them with members of the community. Throughout the summer, children 10 years or younger can spend a half hour in the Leo Creek garden, learning how to cut flowers for bouquets and arrange them in vases. The children will deliver the bouquets to patients at Tendercare Health Center of Leelanau, a long-term nursing care and short-term rehabilitation facility only a few hundreds yards down the Leelanau Trail.
 - 6) Serving as the **land base for students taking classes on the Inland Seas vessel Schoolship**. Once the 2017-2018 school year begins, we will offer a half day of programming at the Preserve for the students across Michigan who visit the *Schoolship* in Leelanau County. Students in this program will study creek ecology, conduct soil investigations, and learn about the magic of compost in a hands-on school environment at Leo Creek.
 - 7) Hosting a **Seed Saving Workshop** with the Crosshatch Center for Arts and Ecology, a local organization focused on "art, farming, ecology, and economy," in late September.
 - 8) **Cultivating and donating food** grown on the property. Volunteers will tend the garden during the food production season; the harvest will be donated.

Progress and plans

2016 was largely spent clearing the land of invasive plants (a labor-intensive project). We made a lot of progress and have areas cleared and ready to make productive in 2017.

Signs, benches, picnic tables, an outhouse, and a garden shed have been built and will be installed in early April. Another goal for the year is to construct a bridge to cross the creek near the stick teepees, which are shelters built by Montessori students who used the property years ago. Future plans include installing a shelter/pavilion for visitors, expanding the perennial fruit and nut gardens, and making the property accessible for people with disabilities.

We recently launched a Facebook page to provide the community with updates on our work, as well as fundraising and volunteer opportunities: www.facebook.com/leocreekinsuttonsbay. We aim to have a separate website for sharing information about our programs and fundraising by the end of the summer.

Community support

Leo Creek Preserve is proud to be supported (not financially) by the following organizations:

Leelanau Conservancy
Inland Seas Educational Association
Crosshatch Center for the Arts and Ecology
Traverse Area Recreational Trails (TART)
Leelanau Montessori
Suttons Bay Public Schools

We would greatly appreciate the support of everyone who has helped to develop our educational programming and the Preserve as a learning and community gathering space for all to enjoy.