



EXPLORE

Summer 2023

Introducing the First-of-Its-Kind Soil Health Conservation Easement

by Tyler Bruck

Whiterock Conservancy is a 5,500 acre non-profit land trust that balances sustainable agriculture, natural resource protection, and public recreation on the landscape. Stretching along a seven-mile section of the Middle Raccoon River valley, the Conservancy offers 40+ miles of hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian trails, paddling opportunities beneath sandstone cliffs, and epic star parties. Spend the night at one of the campsites or Airbnb's and experience Iowa's darkest skies.

Whiterock Conservancy's mission is to improve the condition of our conservation land through appropriate land management, demonstrate sustainable farming methods, and provide educational and recreational opportunities for our visitors.

The soil health conservation easement came to life in August of 2021, with the sale of almost 2,000 acres of Garst farmland, spanning over Carroll, Greene, Guthrie, and Audubon counties. There were eight separate farms that sold, each having their own soil health conservation easement in place. Whiterock Conservancy is the trusted organization that ensures the provisions of the easement are followed.

What makes these easements different from other conservation easements, is that they focus on soil health and are designed to protect and preserve our precious topsoil, especially in an agricultural setting. The core tenants of the soil health conservation easement address the causes of soil degradation by promoting best management practices for healthy topsoil through continuous living roots, mitigation of soil disturbance, and mitigation of soil erosion. Other provisions may include livestock density restrictions, building restrictions, and other special protections for woodlands, riparian buffers, and other natural areas. Some of the best management practices promoted in these easements are no-till, cover crops, and erosion control structures such as terraces, buffers, and waterways.



Director of Land Stewardship: Carissa Shoemaker, Landowner: Mary Kay Dial, Board Member: Butch Niebuhr, Land Programs Manager: Tyler Bruck



Dial Farm

On January 30th, 2023, Whiterock Conservancy accepted another conservation easement! This easement comes from the Mary Katherine Dial Property Management Trust, located in Monona County, Iowa, in the beautiful Loess Hills. Whiterock Conservancy is thrilled to be able to extend our reach in caring for the land by holding this conservation easement.

Mary Kay Dial's love for her family farm was the driving force behind her wish to place a conservation easement on the land. Mary Kay could see the real need for protecting topsoil, especially in her area, with its steep hills and easily erodible loess soil. In addition, the Dial property includes a creek, riparian buffer, and mature timber that Mary Kay wanted to ensure would continue to support wildlife, water quality, and air quality. Whiterock staff even worked with Mary Kay to enhance the conservation values of her property before the easement was put in place, converting nearly 18 acres of highly erodible land to perennial vegetation through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and establishing cover crops with the support of several cost share programs.

Mary Kay sold her farm this spring with the knowledge that the protections she put in place before the sale will ensure her land's responsible stewardship for years and years to come. I'm happy for Mary Kay for seeing this through. As I've told her before, it's hard to say goodbye to something that's been so close to you; this farm was that for Mary Kay. Thank you, Mary Kay, for seeing the bigger picture and taking action. You're helping pave the way and will be an example for many who are choosing to protect the land and invest in a healthier Iowa.

If you or anyone you know is interested in a soil health conservation easement, reach out, we would love to have that conversation with you! You can also check out our website for more information.

<https://www.whiterockconservancy.org/easement>

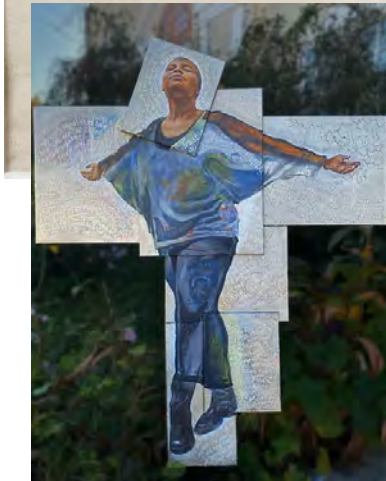
Artist Spotlight

Besides the countless outdoor activities available, Whiterock also offers rich cultural opportunities to the community. Since the fall of 2018, the artist in residence program has been going strong at Whiterock Conservancy. The program began when Liz Garst realized the beautiful River House on property was being under-utilized. While the River House is shared by Liz as a relaxing get-away location for the rest of the family; it was predominantly vacant when family members were unable to visit.

Liz has a passion for the arts and determined since the River House had space to fill, she would invite artists to come share their talents and enjoy the beautiful, peaceful space of Whiterock.

Liz's first guest was Zack Jones, a talented painter from Malvern, Iowa. Zack moved into River House for a few weeks and after carefully placing tarps around the house so he did not damage anything, began his creative process. After producing a thoughtful series of paintings during his stay, Zack and Liz brainstormed ideas to create a more open workspace for artists to practice their individual crafts. Artists are now able to use an incredible light-filled studio space in the basement of the River House. There have been a wide variety of creatives taking advantage of the opportunity to stay at Whiterock over the years. There have been close to 60 painters, photographers, songwriters, writers, sculptors and even 2 New York City ballerinas that have chosen Whiterock for residency. The artists enjoy quiet, serenity and most importantly, uninterrupted time to focus on their individual passions. The artists have been personally invited by Liz to stay or recommended by other artists that enjoyed a previous visit.

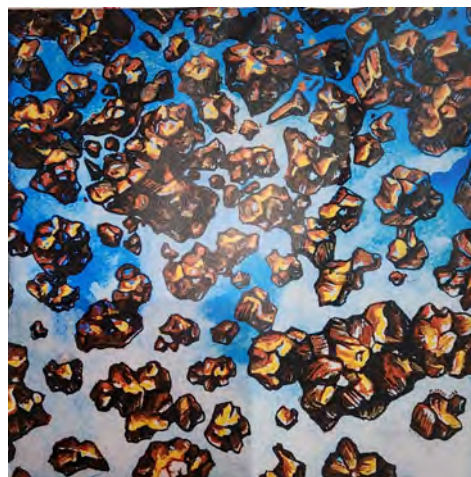
Next time you stay in one of Whiterock's many lodgings or stop by the visitor center, keep your eyes open for some of the pieces the resident artists have graciously donated to Whiterock.



Art By Sabrina Howard



Art by Nancy Thompson



art by K Moss

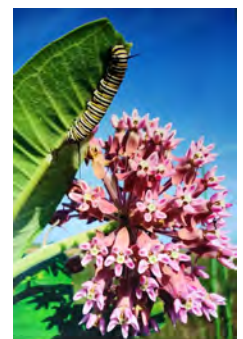


Photo by Scott Schmidt

Summer Equipment Rentals

Whiterock offers a multitude of recreational opportunities! Get outside and explore this summer!



Scan for Equipment Rental



For more information or to make a reservation, contact: guestinfo@whiterockconservancy.org or call (712)-790-8221 Ext. 5

Equipment Rental Fees:

Canoes and Kayaks-Dependant on water levels

First boat: \$50/ Additional Boats: \$30

includes personal flotation devices and paddles.

Mountain Bikes: \$15 day/includes trail pass and helmet

Fishing Equipment: \$10 day/includes poles, tackle boxes and lures

Gator Rental: First hour: \$50/ Additional hours:\$30



"Why I Give" to Whiterock Conservancy

Welcome to the "Why I Give" section of our quarterly newsletter. Each newsletter will feature a new donor and why they support and contribute their time, talent and treasure to Whiterock Conservancy.

Whiterock Conservancy was founded in 2004 thanks to the Garst family donation of a multi-phase gift of 5,500 acres —one of the largest land gifts in Iowa's history — as a way to forever protect the land and keep it in trust for future generations.

Over the past 20 years, Jennifer Garst has contributed numerous land gifts including the Jenny and Phelps Farms, along with multiple collaborated land gifts with her family to create the legacy of Whiterock Conservancy. Along with the land gifts, Jen has contributed over \$3.5 Million in direct gifts for a total of over \$7.8 Million that has benefited Whiterock Conservancy.

Along with land and direct gifts, Jen has been an integral volunteer over the years, helping with prescribed burns, development, donor management, events, taking minutes at every board meeting since inception and more.

Whiterock Conservancy would not be the same without the support and dedication Jen has committed to this organization. Thank you, Jen, for gifting us with all of your incredible talent and generosity. Your strength and compassion for others is unrivaled and our gratitude is infinite for the devotion you have shown to Whiterock Conservancy and the legacy it will leave for generations to come.

*"I support Whiterock because I want to protect the land. Land is so special because of the diversity of it and it's a very special place in Iowa particularly given the transformation Iowa land has seen. It's super cool that we can try 3 innovative approaches to the same piece of land and that future generations get to play on the land to recreate, experiment and research new agricultural practices and learn how best to preserve and protect the land."
-Jen Garst*



Jennifer "Jen" Garst

"I am very proud of my family and the legacy that 7 people (my mom and 6 kids) all 100% agreed to make the original land donation and I want to ensure that legacy continues."



Donate

Your gift is extremely important to our work at Whiterock. Donations provide resources that make an immediate impact - whether you make your commitment annually, as a monthly sustaining gift, or to honor a loved one with a tribute or memorial gift.



Scan to Donate

Online

WhiterockConservancy.org/donate

By Mail

Make your contribution payable to Whiterock Conservancy, and mail to the following address:

Whiterock Conservancy
1436 Highway 141
Coon Rapids, IA 50058

By Phone

(712)-790-8221 ext. 2

Whiterock Conservancy Staff:

Executive Director: Kate Zimmerman
Accountant: LuAnn Carlson
Administrative Assistant: Cassie Wendl

Guest Experience Manager: Misty Conrad
Campground Coordinator: Geoffrey Perkins
Facilities Assistant: Doug Ramsey
Housekeeping: Brandi Perry
Housekeeping: Brenda Meyers
Housekeeping: Debbie Davis

Land Stewardship Director: Carissa Shoemaker
Land Programs Manager: Tyler Bruck
Land Operations Manager: Matt Reiling
Land Facilities Staff: Dave Burmeister
Land Stewardship Technician: Katie Meyer

Upcoming Summer Programs

Please join us at Whiterock for some of our exciting summer programs and events! If you would like to stay up-to-date please visit our Facebook page or visit our online calendar:

WhiterockConservancy.org/event-calendar

July 8th @ 12a.m./Whiterock Ultra 2023 Race; 1313 Fig Ave Coon Rapids

July 21st @ 6:30pm/ Campfire Story; 1313 Fig Ave Coon Rapids

Aug 5th @ 7p.m. / BS and the Liars Band; 1313 Fig Ave; Coon Rapids

Aug 18th @ 7:30p.m. /Star Party Public Night; Starfield Campground

Aug 19th @ 7:30p.m./ Sturtz at the River Barn; 1313 Fig Ave, Coon Rapids

Aug 18th @ 7:30p.m. /Star Party Public Night; Starfield Campground

Sept 17th @ 1p.m./ Slow Sunday Drive; 1390 Hwy 141 Coon Rapids

Oct 8th @ 1p.m./Slow Sunday Drive; 1390 Hwy 141, Coon Rapids

