

10# Save the Woods!

Ever wonder what the dedication of a few like-minded citizens can achieve? Wally Bauman Woods is a great example of a land conservation campaign. Were it not for the work of a devoted group of students, faculty, elected officials and Madison residents, this parcel of land might be just another building site.

This stretch of shoreline was still undeveloped in the 1980s when the owner decided he would build condominiums here. Opposition to the plan was immediate, and quite passionate.

Soon people were writing angry letters to the editor and attending public hearings. Both the city newspapers took stands in favoring a public land conservancy for this tract.

But while there was growing consensus that the woods should be saved, raising the money to purchase the 3 and half acre parcel —nearly half a million dollars—seemed a daunting challenge, especially given all the public agencies and private groups that were involved.

An innovative approach to preserving open space was needed. A new group known as the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation was formed to act as an agent for acquiring the land, and in 1984, the group was able to pull together public and private funds to save the woods.

After the land was purchased the new group, which now goes by the name Natural Heritage Land Trust, transferred the property over to the university, but retained the development rights. This type of land conservation easment has now been used all over the state to preserve open space.

So enjoy the lake view, the native wildflowers, and abundant wildlife here. And be sure to take a moment to appreciate what citizen action can do to preserve a little piece of unspoiled nature for everyone.

For more stories about the cultural and natural history of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve check out our website and interactive map. And be sure to look for other audio tour signposts throughout the Preserve. Happy trails!