

Douglas County Heritage Conservation Council

FINAL DESCRIPTIVE REPORT
2013 Natural & Cultural Heritage Grant Program

Submit the completed Final Descriptive Report within 90 days of the grant period end date. In Part I, describe your project and accomplishments. In Part II, provide project financial information. Include grantee name and grant number on all pages.

Please type responses. You may submit the report via email to jshupertarick@douglas-county.com. Or, submit to: Jan Shupert-Arick, Program Coordinator, Heritage Conservation Council Office, Douglas County Courthouse, 1100 Massachusetts Street, 3rd level loft, Lawrence, KS 66044.

Date: 6/1/2016
Grant #: HCC 2013-07
Grantee: University of Kansas
Contact Person: Bill Busby
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Email: wbusby@ku.edu
Period of Support: 2013-2016

PART I: Project Narrative

Overview

The goal of this project was to protect high-quality hardwood forest at Baldwin Woods, a 3,700-acre area which supports historic forest and a host of rare plant and wildlife species, and is designated a National Natural Landmark. Working with landowners who wished to protect their land in perpetuity, a group of conservation-minded organizations worked together to purchase 254 acres of forest and transfer the property to the University of Kansas and KU Endowment Association. The land will be operated by the Kansas Biological Survey as part of the Baldwin Woods Forest Preserve and used for research and education.

Funding for the \$1.3 million project was provided by the Kansas Forest Service through a Forest Legacy grant from the U.S. Forest Service, The Conservation Fund, which led the project and partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to provide pipeline mitigation funds, and a Douglas County Heritage Conservation grant.

Project Narrative

Baldwin Woods is among Douglas County's most significant ecological features. Containing one of the best examples of original oak-hickory forest in northeast Kansas, the area supports an array of rare and declining plants and animals in a setting of rugged hills and dramatic scenery located at the western border of the Eastern Deciduous Forest.

The project was initiated in 2012 when the Kansas Forest Service chose Baldwin Woods as the conservation site for Kansas's first Forest Legacy grant from the U.S. Forest Service. Forest Legacy is a program that provides support for states to conserve private forest land through conservation easements or land purchase. Baldwin Woods was selected by the Kansas Forest Service because of its high-quality forests, the fact that the Kansas Biological Survey already managed forest properties there and was available as a partner, and conservation-minded landowners. In 2013, the Kansas Biological Survey received a \$72,000 grant from the Douglas County Heritage Conservation Commission to be used towards the 25% match requirement of the Forest Legacy grant. At this point, the project had sufficient funds to purchase conservation easements from the landowners that would provide long-term protection of the properties. However, in 2014, The Conservation Fund became involved with the project, and in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, provided pipeline mitigation funds that were allocated for Kansas. With these additional funds, the option of purchasing the properties from the landowners and transferring them to the KU Field Station became feasible. After considering the option of establishing conservation easements vs. property purchase, all involved parties favored property purchase. So, in 2015, The Conservation Fund purchased all project lands, reconfigured boundaries, and in March 2016 completed title transfer of 246 acres to the University of Kansas and the KU Endowment Association. The land will be managed by The Kansas Biological Survey as part of the Baldwin Woods Forest Preserve. This more than doubled the size of the original Baldwin Woods Forest Preserve, bringing the total to 402 acres.

The Heritage Conservation Commission (HCC) grant was originally intended to be used towards the 25% match requirement of the \$500,000 Forest Legacy grant to purchase a conservation easement or fee title to one tract, the 109-acre "Common Land Farm" located on the north border of the existing KU Field Station. In the end, HCC funds were used for this purpose; specifically fee title purchase of the Common Land Farm and one additional tract of land (see Forest Legacy land in Figure 1). When The Conservation Fund and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service became involved in the project, the additional funding that they brought to the table led to a more ambitious and complex project. This added complexity resulted in the deal taking much longer to put together than originally anticipated. One lesson learned was that cooperative projects involving multiple parties and funding sources can add considerably to the complexity of an undertaking. While the larger scale of the project resulted in a more ambitious and successful outcome, the time required to reach that outcome was also substantially expanded.

The benefits of this project are many and include 1) long-term protection of an outstanding example of Douglas County's natural heritage; 2) adding to a string of protected natural and historic areas in southern Douglas County from the now-expanded Baldwin Woods Forest Preserve north of Baldwin City, to the nearby Douglas County State Lake, and Blackjack Battlefield Park and Ivan Boyd Prairie a few miles east of Baldwin City; and 3) increasing the quality of life for Douglas County citizens (such as watershed protection, outdoor education opportunities, attracting visitors to the area, and likely increased local real estate values). In addition, the benefit of this project to my organization, The Kansas Biological Survey and the University of Kansas, is significant. The larger size of the Baldwin Woods

Forest Preserve increases its value and draw for research and education. For example, the Preserve is now being considered for membership in Forest GEO, a global network of forest research plots.

HCC funding in combination with federal funding (Forest Legacy grant from U.S. Forest Service to Kansas Forest Service) helped secure additional funding through The Conservation Fund from two pipeline mitigation funds administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. See Financial Information for amounts.

Activities for the future include a long-term commitment by Kansas Biological Survey to manage the Baldwin Woods Forest Preserve. We are working on grants to help improve site access, enhance forest condition, restore disturbed areas, and control invasive vegetation. There is also interest in additional forest land protection in the Baldwin Woods area on the part of the Kansas Forest Service, The Conservation Fund, and the Kansas Biological Survey.

Publicity and Links

The Conservation Fund: Baldwin Woods Forest Preserve.

<http://www.conservationfund.org/projects/baldwin-woods-forest-preserve>

A dedication event was held on April 30, 2016, at the Vinland Fairgrounds. Attendance was by invitation and approximately 100 people were at the event. The program is provided as a separate file (Baldwin Woods event program.pdf).

KU Press Release: May 2, 2016. KU Field Station's Baldwin Woods Forest Preserve doubles in size - See more at: <https://news.ku.edu/ku-field-stations-baldwin-wood-forest-preserve-doubles-size-includes-first-forest-legacy-project#sthash.NunKEO4f.dpuf>

KU Press Release: KU Field Station's Baldwin Wood Forest Preserve doubles in size. LJWorld.com May 2, 2016

Part II: Financial Information

Douglas County Heritage Conservation Commission Grant

All HCC funds were spent on land acquisition at Baldwin Woods via a check to The Conservation Fund for \$72,000. The Conservation Fund had previously purchased all the property for this project, and was then reimbursed with funds from the HCC and Forest Legacy for those tracts to be owned by the University of Kansas (Figure 1). The property transferred to KU Endowment Association was paid for separately with pipeline mitigation funds obtained by The Conservation Fund.

Attachments (separate files)

- Map of Baldwin Woods Forest Preserve (Figure 1.pdf)
- Images of Baldwin Woods by Edward A. Robison (CLF-1.jpg, CLF-2b.jpg, CLF-Panos.jpg)
- Program for the dedication event for land conservation at Baldwin Woods (Baldwin Wood event program.pdf)
- A brochure for Baldwin Woods Forest Preserve prepared by Kansas Biological Survey (Baldwin Woods brochure 2016.pdf)