

Land Use Committee Spring 2026 Membership Update

Hello from the Land Use Committee of Christyl Burnett, Meryl Domina, Bryan Heystek, Lisa Phillips, Mariah Scott, and Steve Wester;

We are excited to talk to you all about the Land Use Committee and Circle Pines Center's work to uphold our mission. While each committee's role is difficult to define, we in the Land Use Committee consider, suggest, and enact policy of how Circle Pines can environmentally steward the landscape it encompasses, through cooperation. If you would like to join or know more, please reach out to the chair, Mariah Scott. Circle Pines is also a community of caring, hardworking individuals. So, land use work at Circle Pines happens as a result of both collaborative and self-guided efforts of the Land Use Committee, staff of Circle Pines, members, volunteers, guests, and the larger community! If you are interested in getting involved, we are also working on ways to help make everyone who visits Circle Pines feel like valued Stewards of the land. If you have any ideas to help us in this effort to promote environmental stewardship, please share them with us.

We would love to give a special mention to Noah Silver-Mathews, sawmill volunteers, Tera John, Gerardo Reyes, Danielle Hoskins, Ethan Avery, and Eddie DeGraw for all the work they have done for the Circle Pines environment!

CPC Events

Circle Pines events all work to be environmentally conscious, from the food we source to the connections fostered with the land we inhabit. Thank you also to Gerardo for sourcing so much of the event food, especially Buttermilk Jamboree and Summer Camp meals, from local producers and growers.

Before our next Buttermilk Jamboree, we will be roping off the prairie restoration areas even more, to inform our visitors on what areas we are especially trying to protect.

In addition, many events are specifically focused on connecting people with their surrounding environment. Thank you to Danielle for organizing Buttermilk Jamboree and Mushroom Camps, along with the communities of volunteers and attendees making those events so successful. It is so lovely seeing so many people connect with nature at Circle Pines.

Land Stewardship Plan, Recertification, and Implementation

Circle Pines and the [Land Stewardship Plan](#) was awarded the Michigan Agriculture and Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) Recertification. This certification was initially started to inform our environmental stewardship goals, as well as our sawmill and invasive species removal practices. We are hoping to use this plan to specifically inform our invasive species removal.

The Land Use Committee worked with the MAEAP representatives, as well as the CPC Board and Executive Director to develop a cut-stump, aka cut and dab, [herbicide treatment of invasive species policy](#). We have begun using those guidelines to [treat invasive species this winter](#). Before the Fall Membership Meeting, we will only be treating poison ivy, which is easier to identify in the spring and summer.

Sawmill

An excited group of volunteers has been using the sawmill to remove dead trees from the Juniors Units. While increasing the available lumber useful for construction projects, we are also hoping to do sawmilling to reduce the cost of a needed repair.

There was an accidental fire in the sauna, where no one was hurt and people quickly and effectively responded to the emergency. The structure is mostly ok and the damage has been assessed. To reduce the cost of repairs, the sawmill will be used to harvest the necessary lumber to repair the building. We plan to have this repaired before the coolness of fall makes us miss sauna time.

North Country Trail

The North Country Trail organization approached CPC to gauge our interest in helping expand the North Country Trail. **All ideas are preliminary and no changes are happening at this time.** The initial idea is that the North Country Trail would help Circle Pines acquire land, set up as a permanent conservation easement for the North Country Trail to run through. A conservation easement is a promise by the land owner to not develop a piece of land and can qualify us for grants to offset the cost of the reduction in the land's resale value. In this idea, Circle Pines would take a conservation easement on a section of our property, to connect us to the funds to fully pay for the additional property. The new property would then be owned and stewarded by Circle Pines. On the new property we could set up something useful to us, such as an auxiliary camping area. Here are [the meeting minutes](#) from that meeting. The board has been updated. There are no current plans and Circle Pines has only expressed a potential interest, contingent on knowing more if a more detailed plan is developed.