

## Background Information for Board Members of The Ridges Sanctuary, Inc.

### Purpose and Mission

The Ridges was founded in 1937 and is a member supported, 501(3)(c) nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect the Sanctuary and inspire stewardship of natural areas through programs of education, outreach and research.

As stated in the 1937 articles of incorporation, the purpose of The Ridges is to:

1. Acquire by gift, purchase or otherwise, part or all of the real estate in the area in the town of Baileys Harbor, Wisconsin known as "The Ridges" or "The Bog" and to protect the native plant and animal life on the same and to preserve the same in its natural or aboriginal state; to erect fences, place signs, and make other improvements necessary to protect the property of or deemed desirable to advance the purposes of the corporation.
2. Acquire and hold other pieces of real estate in Wisconsin and elsewhere, and to protect and preserve the native plant and animal life found thereon.
3. Carry on educational and scientific activities which will promote the cause of conservation and preservation of wild plant and animal life and natural scenery, and to use and transfer its moneys and properties for these purposes.

### The Formation of the Baileys Harbor Ridge and Swale Complex

The weight of the glaciers pressed down the earth's crust creating a large depression thought to have been 2,000 miles across and up to 2,500 feet deep. When the glaciers receded, the shorelines slowly heaved upward, a phenomenon known as the rebound of the earth's crust. As the water level dropped, the shoreline constantly receded. Sandbars and spits were formed close to the head of the bay as the currents moved. This action combined with the falling water level left a new shoreline behind which was a stagnant marshy pool. As the water level fell this process was repeated, leaving successive shorelines and marshy pools. The first ridge and pool to be formed are now about 1 mile inland. Thirty ridges were built over a 1,400 year period. The Winter Wren ridge was dated to be about 1,000 years old.

### The History of The Ridges Sanctuary

It all begins in 1935 when the US Department of Congress deeded 30 acres of land surrounding the Baileys Harbor Range Lights to Door County. To comply with the condition of the deed requiring the property to be used for public good, Door County decided to build a trailer park and began cutting down trees and filling in swales. Baileys Harbor residents Olivia Traven and Anna McArdle protested the development which caught the attention of Dr. Albert Fuller, Curator of Botany at the Milwaukee Public Museum. Albert Fuller had been coming to Baileys Harbor since the early 1920's to study the native orchids in the area then known as the Baileys Harbor Bog.

Dr. Fuller wrote a letter to the Door County Advocate asking Door County residents to urge the county park commission to make the 30 acres a refuge and promote awareness of the need to preserve the rich botanical area. Fuller laid out a plan designed to protect the plants while providing people the ability to see them. Other strong voices joined the call to preserve the area, including Jens Jensen who was widely known for his urban park designs and who eventually established The Clearing in Ellison Bay, and Emma Toft, who lived at what is today known as Toft Point. Emma was known for her feisty spirit and love of nature.

Having convinced Door County to preserve the area in its natural state, ten people signed the articles of incorporation for the newly-formed Ridges Sanctuary in 1937. The main purpose of the organization was to acquire and preserve the Baileys Harbor Ridges and educate people about natural history topics related in particular to the Ridges area. When the founders asked the County to deed the 30 acres around the range lights to The Ridges Sanctuary, the County

determined the deed prevented them from transferring the property to another party. They instead appointed The Ridges as an agent of Door County with the purpose of developing a wildflower park. Beginning in 1938, the first donation of 40 acres was made to the Ridges Sanctuary and, over time, the property protected by The Ridges Sanctuary steadily increased through additional donations and land purchases.

Today, The Ridges protects more than 1,000 acres of property as part of the Sanctuary. The original 30 acres around the range lights are still owned by the Door County Parks Commission with The Ridges Sanctuary responsible for its care. In 1998, the federal government deeded the range lights and the range line between the lights to Door County. The Ridges Sanctuary holds a 99-year lease with Door County, in effect until December 31, 2089, for the government property north and south of Ridges Road, excluding the county park public beach and associated parking lot area. Additional land acquisitions known as Appel's Bluff, Logan Creek and the Family Discovery Trail increased the amount of land protected by The Ridges to roughly 1,600 acres.

### The Growth of The Ridges Sanctuary

From 1937 to 1963, work on The Ridges property, such as developing trails, building bridges, posting signs, and creating a trail guide, was done by volunteers or board members, some of whom had signed the original articles of incorporation. As more people began to visit The Ridges, the Board decided to hire a summer tour guide. In 1964, Roy Lukes, then a teacher at the Door-Kewaunee County Teacher College in Algoma, was hired as a full time summer naturalist to conduct guided public tours twice daily and present a lecture program on the flora and fauna of The Ridges one evening a week at the Baileys Harbor Town Hall. Roy initially stayed in two small upstairs rooms in the Town Hall until 1966 when The Ridges Board obtained a lease with the US Coast Guard allowing Roy to live in the upper range light.

The first entrance to the Sanctuary was on Ridges Road near the lower range light. As more people visited the Sanctuary, it became necessary to move the entrance and construct a parking lot. By 1973, an entrance on Hwy Q and an associated parking lot were completed. Also in 1973, an old log house on the farm of Orville Kaye in southern Door County was disassembled with the logs delivered to a building site on the corner of Hwy 57 and Hwy Q. The Kaye cabin, as it came to be known, was dedicated as the Nature Center in October 1974 and opened in 1975. Sometime during the mid-1970's, the Door County Historical Society learned the old log house of the Marshall family located in Peninsula State Park was going to be burned or razed. The Historical Society dismantled the house and had it moved. After realizing they had no use for the building, the Historical Society offered it to the Ridges and it was accepted to allow expansion of educational programs. Until funding became available, the logs were stored in an empty barn with the building re-constructed in 1982 and completed in 1983. Today, the cabins are used for various programs and events, such as summer camp and Natural Christmas. The toilet building, which is not used in the winter, was built in 1976. A workshop was constructed in the early 1990's and is used primarily by the Wednesday crew which is a dedicated group of volunteers who help to maintain The Ridges buildings and properties. The northern property and its associated buildings, including the range lights, have come to be known as "The North Campus".

In its more than 85 year history, The Ridges Sanctuary has had 3 managers or executive directors. Roy Lukes was the first chief naturalist and manager from 1964 to 1990. Roy increased the trail system as more land was purchased and developed educational programs, quarterly newsletters, summer tours, early morning bird hikes and Thursday evening nature programs. Paul Regnier was the executive director and naturalist for 15 years from 1990 to 2005. Paul undertook a major restoration of the upper and lower range lights and constructed the current boardwalk between the range lights. The Logan Creek property was acquired during his time. Steve Leonard has been the executive director from 2006 to present. The Appel's Bluff and Family Discovery Trail properties were acquired during Steve's time, as well as the construction of the Cook/Fuller Center and Hidden Brook Boardwalk.

## Properties of The Ridges Sanctuary

The Ridges Sanctuary works closely with other local environmental organizations, such as The Nature Conservancy, The Door County Land Trust and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to preserve critical habitats. The Nature Conservancy has occasionally provided financial assistance by purchasing and holding a property until The Ridges could raise adequate funds to acquire it. The WDNR has provided Knowles Nelson Stewardship funds to assist in the purchase of properties as well as grants to fund various initiatives of the Ridges, such as invasive species control. Each of these organizations has identified target areas for priority land acquisitions. See Attachment 1 for a map of the target area for The Ridges Sanctuary. Properties in the target area are significant for various reasons, such as preserving native or endangered plants and animals, and protecting the watershed of the Sanctuary.

Other properties that have been acquired are considered critical wildlife habitat, diverse ecosystems, important areas for potential research initiatives, or environmental education opportunities where persons can explore and connect with the natural world to inspire a legacy of conservation. Properties such as the Family Discovery Trail and the Hidden Brook Boardwalk are considered disturbed areas given the historical management of the land; people more actively explore nature in these two areas to minimize disturbance in the heart of the Sanctuary allowing its natural state to be preserved.

*Baileys Harbor Range Lights:* The range lights and the Cana Island lighthouse were built in 1869 to replace the old Baileys lighthouse. The red light in the lower range light is 17 feet lower than the white light in the upper range light. If sailors keep the two lights vertically aligned, or 'on range', they will safely approach Baileys Harbor. The upper range light was serviced by lighthouse keepers until 1923 when the range lights were automated. The upper range light was unoccupied until 1930 when it was electrified. It was then leased to the Immanuel Lutheran Church in Baileys Harbor for use as a parsonage and then to a church member until 1962. From 1966 until 2015, the upper range light was the residence of naturalists Roy Lukes and Paul Regnier, and other summer naturalists until it eventually became the offices for The Ridges staff. The lower range light was restored in 2013 and moved an additional 15 feet north of Ridges Road. When The Ridges staff moved into the Cook/Fuller Center in 2015, restoration of the upper range light began and the range lights were once again listed with the U.S. Coast Guard as private aids to navigation. The upper and lower range lights were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1989. The lower range light was 377 feet from the water's edge when it was built in 1869.

*Cook – Fuller Center:* Formerly the Sandpiper Restaurant situated on the corner of Hwy 57 and Ridges Road, the 1 acre property was purchased in 2011. The more visible location has given the Ridges a greater presence in the Baileys Harbor community and resulted in a dramatic increase in visitors. The Center is named for Albert Fuller who was the catalyst in preserving the original 30 acres of the Ridges Sanctuary in 1937 and his assistant, Chester Cook, who donated one million dollars to kick off the building's fundraising campaign launched in 2012. Both men epitomized the research and educational roles of The Ridges Sanctuary. Construction of the Center began in 2014 and staff moved their offices from the upper range light to the Center in March 2015. The exhibits were installed in 2017 with a grant from the Federal Scenic Byways Program.

The Hidden Brook Boardwalk connects the Cook-Fuller Center to the range lights and the heart of the Sanctuary via 10 acres acquired just a few years prior to the Sandpiper Restaurant property. The 8-foot wide fully accessible boardwalk is nearly one third of a mile long and was built in 2015 by volunteers and Peil Construction. The meandering path of the boardwalk allows visitors to experience the environment of the Ridges and takes into account habitat of the dwarf lake iris, a state and federal threatened species, and the Hine's emerald dragonfly, a federal and state endangered species.

*Appel's Bluff:* Known as Jake Appel's Bluff by old-timers, this 68 acre property was acquired in 2015. It contains an egg-shaped outcropping of Niagara dolomite east of Hwy 57 with the south edge of the bluff concealed in the woods to the north of Hwy Q. It is part of several hundred acres of Ridges property north of Hwy Q and has been described as an island in the past glacial Lakes Algonquin and Nipissing. The Nipissing shorelines were about 20 feet above the Michigan shorelines meaning the water in Baileys Harbor was, during the Nipissing stage, about 20 feet deeper than at present. A variety of fossils from the Silurian Period, including honeycomb and chain corals, can be found on the property. Appel's Bluff is open from May through October and closed in the winter as it is part of the Northern Door snowmobile trail system. People can best enjoy this property by taking a Ridges guided hike.

*Family Discovery Trail:* Located on the west side of Highway 57, various properties totaling about 240 acres were acquired around 2005. The property can be accessed by a walking trail located to the north of the Baileys Harbor Fire Station or from the parking lot off of Hwy 57 just north of the upper range light. A hiking trail winds through fields and forests on the property and has been strategically laid out to informally educate children about trees, plants, landscapes and animals. A series of interactive Discovery Stations have been developed to encourage children to play and explore the environment around them. The property is open from May through October and is closed in the winter as it is also part of the Northern Door snowmobile trail system.

*Logan Creek:* Located south of Jacksonport, its parking lot is accessed from Loritz Road off of Hwy 57. The initial purchase of 140 acres was made in 1992 with the assistance of The Nature Conservancy, Ridges members and the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Fund. An additional 30 acres was acquired in 1994, resulting in the protection of 170 acres of wetlands, open fields, mature forests of beech, hemlock and sugar maple, and more than 4,500 feet of Clark Lake shoreline. The property is also known for its spectacular display of spring wildflowers.

Sources:

"The Ridges Sanctuary, Its History, Geology, Plants and Animals" Roy Lukes, 1988.

"The Baileys Harbor Upper Range Light Historic Structure Report", Isthmus Architecture, Inc., April 2016.

The Ridges Sanctuary website at [www.ridgessanctuary.org](http://www.ridgessanctuary.org)

"The Sanctuary, A Newsletter of the Ridges", Fall 2013.

"The Sanctuary, A Newsletter of the Ridges", Spring 2015.

Trail Map of The Ridges

Written by Sandy Miller,  
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# The Ridges Sanctuary Priority Parcels

## Legend

- TRSProper\_ProjectBoundary\_2018
- TRSProper\_PriorityParcels\_2018
- TRSProper\_2018
- County\_Parcels
- Toft\_Point\_SNA
- TNC\_Parcels
- DNR\_Parcels

