

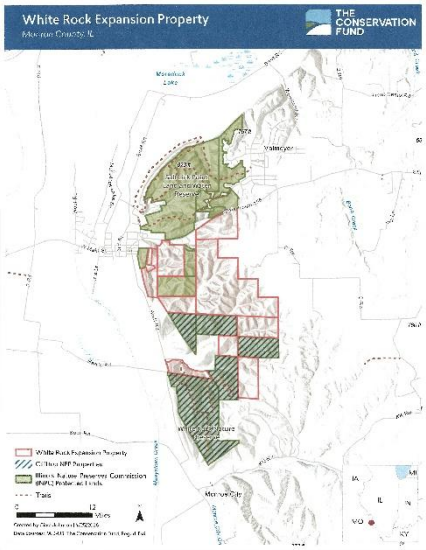
Bluffviews

a quarterly newsletter by Clifftop

October 2026 Vol. 16, No. 4

Fundraising Can Be Fun!

In over 20 years, Clifftop had never tried to raise funds publicly, until now. Over two years ago, we learned that a property we'd been dreaming of owning for the whole of our existence was available for purchase, but how could we possibly afford to buy 969 acres? A few conservation folks got together to discuss the situation and the gears started turning. Then The Conservation Fund got wind of this potential acquisition. The Conservation Fund (TCF) is a national, accredited conservation land trust with a dual mission of land conservation and sustainable economic development. TCF works with local partners, both public and private, to achieve local conservation goals. TCF jumps in whenever a project is too big, too expensive, too risky or simply too complicated for local partners to tackle on their own.



After much consideration, suddenly all the puzzle pieces were falling into place: a landowner willing to sell, a local land trust willing to own and steward the land in perpetuity (Clifftop), a statewide conservation organization willing to make a major financial contribution toward the purchase (Illinois Audubon Society, IAS) and a national conservation organization that can move fast, help fundraise and pull it all together (The Conservation Fund).

In April 2026, The Conservation Fund purchased the 969-acre White Rock Legacy Expansion property, with IAS providing the lead funding contribution, and additional funding provided by the Mysun Charitable Foundation, Prairie State Conservation Coalition, Clifftop and South Bow Cares. To complete this acquisition on schedule, short-term bridge funding was provided by TCF from their national revolving fund, which decreased the amount of funding required from IAS to complete the purchase and bought the partners more time to raise additional funds.

Over the next two years, TCF and Clifftop will continue to fundraise for this property to repay the bridge funding borrowed from TCF's revolving fund. And once that bridge funding is repaid, TCF will donate the property to Clifftop for long-term ownership, stewardship and safekeeping.

Here's where the "fun" comes in. Clifftop set our fundraising goal at $200,000-$10,000 for each year of our existence-and announced this at a "Dine Out for Clifftop" event at Hopskeller Brewery in early May. Over $20,000 was raised that first night. And less than a week later a $20,000 check arrived from an individual that was not a Clifftop member or an Illinois Audubon Society member. Fun!

To maximize the possibility of raising funds from non-members and Facebook users, we ventured into the world of PayPal and Venmo. We had resisted for years because we didn't want our donors to have to pay a fee, but PayPal has what is called a Giving Fund. As a non-profit, we were eligible to enroll in the PayPal Giving Fund, which takes no fee but only disburses money once a month—a small price in our opinion.

Being new to public fundraising, we've had several meetings as to how best to go about this. Do we offer hats, can cozies, T-shirts, re-usable bags, etc. as incentives? Finally, we settled on offering T-shirts for a donation of $50 or more. See below for an example of the T-shirt. This offer began on September 1st and runs through October 31st. It has been very popular. Donors will be able to pick up their T-shirts at the Monroe County Annex Building, 901 Illinois Avenue, Waterloo on December 6, time TBD. If you live out of town and wish to have your T-shirt mailed, an extra $10 will be expected to cover mailing charges. So far, 39 donations have been recorded to receive a commemorative, limited edition T-shirt. Over all, as of October 18th, we have raised over $128,000 toward our $200,000 goal. That's 64% in less than 6 months! Fun!



You have until October 31st to participate in this limited time offer. (Please see the donation form on page 3.) We will be fundraising all through 2027 even if we reach our goal. Each dollar raised will either go toward replenishing TCF's bridge loan or to stewarding the new property.

Editor's note: Parts of this article were excerpted from Illinois State Director of TCF, Jim Johannsen's article in the Summer 2026 issue of Illinois Audubon Magazine.



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Clifftop

Dedicated to preserving and protecting the Mississippi River bluff lands in Monroe, Randolph and St. Clair Counties

Donate to the White Rock Legacy Expansion Project

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

_____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____ Phone #: _____

Donation of $_____*is: ___ enclosed or ___ made via PayPal

_____I'd also like to volunteer with Clifftop

For a donation of $50 or more from September 1 through October 31, you can receive a T-shirt.
Please indicate size:_____S _____M _____L _____XL

If you choose to send a check, please send completed form and the check, payable to Clifftop to:

Clifftop
P. O. Box 131
Maeystown, IL 62256

*Clifftop is a 501(c)(3) non profit organization incorporated in the State of Illinois. Donations in support of Clifftop's activities are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. With a donation of $25 or more you will receive a one year membership to Clifftop.

But wait, there's more! If you don't want a T-shirt or you are reading this after the T-shirt deadline, you can still donate to the White Rock Expansion Project by clicking this link, filling out and printing the form to send with a check or donating via PayPal: https://bit.ly/3WiGqor Or, simply print this page and follow the directions. If you use PayPal you can email this form to cliffmbr@htc.net.



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Planned Giving

Clifftop's motto is "Local Faces Protecting Great Places." We plan to protect and steward great places for many years to come, but that takes more than just a motto. It takes dollars, lots of dollars. You can help with that through planned giving. What is planned giving? Planned giving allows you to make a lasting impact on conservation through thoughtful, strategic contributions. Whether you choose to include Clifftop in your will, establish a charitable gift annuity or name us as the beneficiary of your retirement account or life insurance policy, your future gift will help protect your natural heritage.

Please consult with your financial advisor or estate planner to help determine which choice of planned giving suits you best.

Bequests-Include a gift to Clifftop in your will or trust. You can designate a specific dollar amount, a percentage of your estate or even a particular asset. This is one of the simplest way to leave a lasting legacy.

Sample bequest language: "I give Clifftop, a nonprofit corporation, incorporated in Illinois, Federal Tax ID #26-1882018, the sum of $_____(or alternately ____ percent of the residuary of my estate), for its general purposes to protect Illinois' high quality natural areas.

Retirement Assets-Name Clifftop as a beneficiary of your IRA, 401(k) or other retirement accounts. This option can offer tax benefits to your heirs while supporting conservation.

Charitable Gift Annuity-A charitable gift annuity is a popular way to give and, in return, receive income and tax benefits that can help preserve and even enhance your current and future well-being. An IRS-defined charitable gift annuity is an irrevocable contract where a donor transfers cash, securities, or other property to a qualified 501(c)(3) charity in exchange for fixed, periodic lifetime income payments for one or two beneficiaries, with a portion of the transfer qualifying as a charitable income tax deduction. After funding the annuity with a gift of cash or stock, you and/or others receive generous fixed payments for life. The frequency and amount of payments are determined at the time the gift annuity is created. Once funded, the payment rate never changes regardless of how long the recipients live. Upon the recipient(s) death, the remaining funds go to the charity's mission.

Donor-Advised Funds-Make direct distributions from your donor-advised fund to Clifftop. Under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 4966(d)(2), the IRS defines a donor-advised fund (DAF) as a separately identified fund or account owned and controlled by a sponsoring organization, where a donor (or someone appointed by the donor) has, or reasonably expects to have, advisory privileges regarding the distribution or investment of the assets. When you contribute cash, securities, or other assets to a donor-advised fund like Fidelity Charitable, you are generally eligible to take an immediate tax deduction. Then those funds can be invested for tax-free growth, and you can recommend grants to any eligible IRS-qualified public charity. You want your charitable donations to be as effective as possible when you give. Donor-advised funds are the fastest-growing charitable giving vehicle in the United States because they are one of the easiest and most tax-advantageous ways to give to charity.

Life Insurance-You can name Clifftop as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy or transfer ownership of a policy you no longer need. This is a simple way to make a significant contribution.

Editor's note: Some of the information contained herein was taken directly from the Internal Revenue Service. Other information was obtained from Fidelity Charitable. Consulting with your financial advisor or estate planner can help you determine the best choice for you.











Upcoming Events...

Seed Collecting Walk, Sunday, October 25, 10:00 a.m. Paul Wightman Subterranean Nature Preserve, 3325 G Road, Fults. Interested in growing your own native plants? Join us for the once-a-year opportunity to collect seeds from the prairie at Paul Wightman Subterranean Nature Preserve. We will meet under the pavilion for a brief overview of when to collect, how to store, how to prepare, and how and when to sow the seed. Next, board member Laura Schaefer will lead the group on a 1-mile collecting walk on an ADA accessible trail through the prairie. *What to bring: paper lunch bags (and marker) if you want to keep each species separate or a large paper grocery bag or bucket if you want to create a mix of seeds. Optional: garden gloves and pruners. **If it rains before or during the event, it will be rescheduled or cancelled as we will only collect dry seed. Photo by S. Kellogg





Members' Day 2026, Saturday, November 14, 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Paul Wightman Subterranean Nature Preserve, 3325 G Road, Fults. Refreshments will be served at the pavilion, and site stewards from each of our nature preserves will give brief presentations on what has happened over the past year, what's new, and future plans and challenges. Watch your inboxes for a formal invitation in the very near future.

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Photo Album...



September AmeriCorps work team at White Rock LWR
Left & Right
Far right is the rattlesnake they found on their first work day!
Photos by Joann Fricke













October 13 State Legislators' tour of Clifftop Nature Preserves
Photo by Kerry Warren-Couch

October AmeriCorps work team at White Rock LWR
Photos by Joann Fricke