

Educational Boardwalk opens riverfront

BY MARY FREY
Editorial Director

ELLSWORTH – For the first time since its creation, a wild stretch of Sinclair River marshlands can be viewed in comfort by the general public.

An Earth Day dedication ceremony marked the official opening of a 225-foot Educational Boardwalk on the river's east shore.

The new boardwalk crosses an eight-acre parcel donated to the St. Clair Lake-Six Mile Lake Natural Area by South Arm Township in 1994. It provides visual access to a portion of the natural area's remaining 76 acres across the river along Six Mile Lake

Road.

The entire nature area lies in the northernmost section of the Chain of Lakes.

"Our volunteers met Tuesday evenings and sometimes on other days to work on it," said project activist Jo Anne Beemon. "They kept at it over a period of many months, despite mud, mosquitoes and the occasional down-pour."

The results are an impressive demonstration of grassroots determination. A wood chip parking area is connected to the boardwalk by several hundred feet of wood chip trail. The boardwalk ends in a 12-by-12-foot viewing platform at the river's edge.

Situated about a half-mile east of

the Rowe Inn on Ellsworth Road (C-48) the South Arm Preserve will soon be identified by a seasonal information board. That project is being funded by a \$600 grant from the Charlevoix County Community Foundation.

Money raised by or donated to the SCL-SML Natural Area goes into a land acquisition fund. Already, the project has preserved in perpetuity more than 1,200 feet of St. Clair Lake water frontage and over 2,000 feet along the river that joins it to Six Mile Lake.

Supporters can now also contribute to the natural area by saving Glen's Market grocery receipts. Mail them to SCL-SML, P.O. Box 27, Ellsworth, Mich. 49729.

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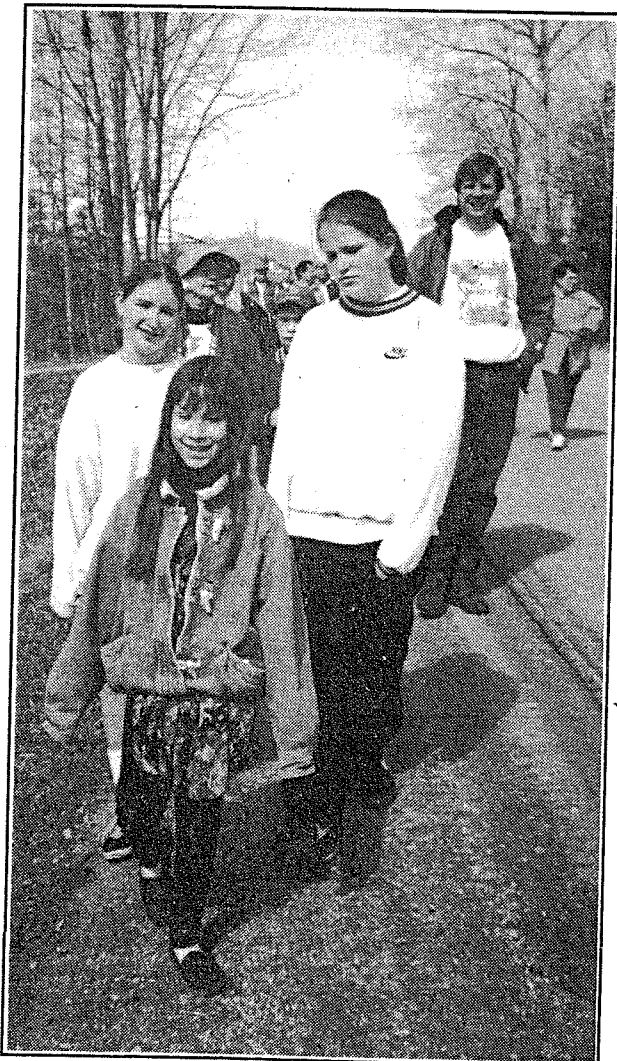
▲ **AMONG THE CROWD** looking on as Ellsworth Mayor Richard Morton cuts the ribbon to dedicate the Educational Boardwalk are Glen Chown, Executive Director of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, and Melissa Hansen of the Little Traverse Conservancy. The SCL-SML Natural Area is a joint project with the larger groups.

Photo by Phil Ohmer



SAVORING A SWEEPING view of Sinclair River marshlands opened by the new boardwalk was just one of the Earth Day activities pursued by the group. They also planted over 800 trees and took tours of the other two preserves that form the 86-acre SCL-SML Natural Area.

Photo by Phil Ohmer



"Rowing a boat in an early morning fog, I came upon two otter pups wrestling with each other on a floating log. I watched from about 50 feet away, until a parent came out from shore and coughed a warning to them."

Phil Ohmer in
SCL-SML newsletter

EN ROUTE TO the St. Clair Lake-Six Mile Lake Natural Area's newest acquisition, nature and conservation enthusiasts walked 1.5 miles from Ellsworth's Wooden Shoe Park to the South Arm Preserve for Earth Day dedication ceremonies.

Photo by Jo Anne Beemon

A positive sign for conservationists

Visitors to the St. Clair Lake - Six Mile Lake Natural Area will now have an eye-catching marker to provide them with an overview of the pristine spot east of Ellsworth. Members of the natural area's steering committee dedicated the sign July 29.

