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For immediate release

“Father of Conservation” Aldo Leopold’s Little Known Summer Retreat Recognized, Celebrated in New Weekend Festival and Historical Marker Dedication at Les Cheneaux Islands June 19-21, 2015

Informational Contacts:

Rebecca Bolen: - wheresaldolci@gmail.com or 906.748.0150

Les Cheneaux Historical Association - lchistorical.org or lcha@cedarville.net

Les Cheneaux Chamber of Commerce & Tourist Association - lcichamber@lescheneaux.net; 906.484.3935

Les Cheneaux welcomes you to celebrate the legacy of Aldo Leopold—one of America’s most influential naturalists— during a new festival being launched the weekend of June 19-21, 2015. A weekend of activities, including a ferry boat cruise, hiking trips, an island boat race and picnic, birding trip, kayak excursions, a bicycle trip, scavenger hunt, a showing of the Leopold bio-pic *Green Fire*, and other Leopold-related activities are being planned for Friday through Sunday. The weekend’s events will culminate in the unveiling of the new Aldo Leopold historical marker—the first official Michigan historical marker in Les Cheneaux.

The weekend will feature another exciting highlight: the first Les Cheneaux Raid weekend—a sailing, paddling and rowing race, picnic on Government Island, a show of non-motorized boats, tour of the Great Lakes Boat Building School, and the opportunity to try out locally-built wooden boats. This event is being hosted by Les Cheneaux Row and the Traditional Small Craft Association in conjunction with the Aldo Leopold weekend events.

Board the Arnold Line ferry for a trip around Marquette Island and see Les Cheneaux’s beautiful Aldo Leopold Preserve— nearly 1,700 acres of protected land on Marquette Island— where Leopold once roamed in his youth. Marquette Island is part of the 36-island Les Cheneaux archipelago along Lake Huron’s north shore. Passengers of the cruise will meet Ed Zahniser, wilderness scholar and son of Howard Zahniser, chief lobbyist for the National Wilderness Preservation System Act of 1964.

Aldo Leopold and his family spent several months a year in Les Cheneaux at their cottage on Marquette Island. There, young Leopold spent his days in the woods and on the water, where he developed an appreciation for the environment and wildlife on the island while mapping trails and listing the flora and fauna he found. Beginning in the early 1890s, the Leopold family made annual treks from their Burlington, Iowa home to their cottage, first by steam ferry from Chicago to Mackinac Island, and later by rail. As a young adult, Leopold continued to visit the Les Cheneaux area until about 1919, according to family photographs of Leopold in the area.

If one believes that our love of the land begins in childhood, it can be said that those summers spent roaming the islands, by foot or by canoe, were instrumental in helping to shape Leopold’s own land ethic. His brother, Frederick, wrote of their summers on Marquette describing Aldo’s explorations:

“Aldo knew most of the island intimately. He produced several handmade maps artistically decorated and illustrated with typical trees, animals, and birds in appropriate places. All of the trails were shown including some newer trails which he himself created.”

While in the Les Cheneaux Islands, Leopold met the headmaster of the Lawrenceville School, a preparatory school that eventually took him to Yale, the only school in the country at that time that offered a forestry degree. Graduating from the Yale Forest School in 1909, he eagerly pursued a career with the newly established U.S. Forest Service in Arizona and New Mexico. By the age of 24, he had been promoted to the post of Supervisor for the Carson National Forest in New Mexico. In 1922, he was instrumental in developing the proposal to manage the Gila National Forest as a wilderness area, which became the first such official designation in 1924.

Following a transfer to Madison, Wisconsin in 1924, Leopold continued his investigations into ecology and the philosophy of conservation, and in 1933 published the first textbook in the field of wildlife management. Later that year he accepted a new chair in game management – a first for the University of Wisconsin and the nation. In 1935, he and his family initiated their own ecological restoration experiment on a worn-out farm along the Wisconsin River outside of Baraboo, Wisconsin. Planting thousands of pine trees, restoring prairies, and documenting the ensuing changes in the flora and fauna further informed and inspired Leopold.

When Aldo Leopold wrote about considering the natural world “as a community to which we belong,” the world was a different place than it is now. The simple idea of leaving a few trees behind to seed the next generation of forest was a wild idea in a time when it was thought the American landscape offered unlimited resources that were ripe for the taking. Leopold’s influence on modern land ethics, land and wildlife conservation, and on American love of the land, is still felt today.

Leopold’s legacy is celebrated in Les Cheneaux by the establishment of a nearly 1,700-acre nature preserve on Marquette Island that bears his name. A historical marker celebrating Leopold’s time in Les Cheneaux has been approved by the Michigan Historical Commission, and will be unveiled Sunday, June 21, along M-134 between Cedarville and Hessel, where the public is encouraged to gather and mark this important event with the community. Following the unveiling of the marker, everyone is invited to a picnic at the Snows Heritage Park in Cedarville.

Book your lodging now by visiting lescheneaux.org or lescheneaux.net to find rustic cottages or comfy motel rooms. We offer a variety of affordable places to stay.

For more information on the Les Cheneaux area and Aldo Leopold, please visit the Aldo Leopold page on the Les Cheneaux Islands Area Tourist Association site, or visit the Aldo Leopold Foundation site aldoleopold.org.

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