

# THE SAULT NEWS

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## ENVIRONMENT

# Little Traverse Conservancy plans forest management, plover protection

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NORTHERN MICHIGAN — Residents using some of the Little Traverse Conservancy's preserves this spring will notice some tree trimming in Emmet and Charlevoix counties and canine restrictions at Vermilion Point Preserve in Chippewa County.

According to a conservancy release, the removal of non-native and invasive pines or disease-infested trees has been prescribed for several conservancy-owned lands as an effective technique for improving forest health.

Several factors, including COVID-19, created a backlog of work in this area. Preserves in Charlevoix County — including Driggers, Undine and Wisser-Saworski preserves — as well as Emmet County — including Charles Winston, Donnelly and Kusel, MacDonald preserves and the Emmet 6 Working Forest Reserve — have scheduled tree management work this spring.

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According to conservancy officials, several healthy red pine plantations are also in need of thinning. If left alone, the trees compete with each other and grow sickly, easily toppling over in strong winds. Unthinned plantations are also more vulnerable to infestations of forest pests like pine bark beetles.

“We want the public to be assured that we are engaging in a very thorough and conscientious process with the long-term management of our lands,” said Kieran Fleming, the conservancy's executive director. “The goal is to convert these pine plantations to native and more natural habitat. We know it can look rough in the short term, but we take the long view on lands that we protect forever.”

The conservancy does not have an exact timeline on the logging operations. Guests at the affected preserves may see piles of wood, felled trees and ruts left behind until conditions

improve.

Meanwhile, in Chippewa County's Vermilion Point Nature Preserve, it's nesting season for the endangered piping plover.

The 175-acre preserve with 9,240 feet along Lake Superior is home to nesting plovers during the spring and summer. Researchers from Lake Superior State University, The Nature Conservancy and Michigan Audubon use the property to study the piping plovers and other birds.

No dogs are allowed anywhere at the Vermilion Point Nature Preserve from May 1-Aug. 15, as officials said the plovers are already sensitive to human disturbance and dogs have destroyed plover nests and chicks.

"In addition, the preserve is now closed at midnight. Those coming at night disrupt the feeding cycle for the plovers as well," the conservancy posted on Facebook. "If you see the plovers, please keep your distance, and enjoy the unique opportunity to watch a species returning from the brink of extinction."

For more information about local preserves, visit [landtrust.org](http://landtrust.org).

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