

Ken and Maxine Leenhouts

Ken and Maxine Leenhouts were the founders, with Jerri Osenga, of the Waukesha County Environmental Action League on September 11, 1978. Its first focus was generally on "land use." This was in response to the increasing expansion of sprawling large-lot subdivisions where there had been farms.

Ken was the initial president from 1978 to 1981. During that time the name (abbreviated WEAL) was decided on and an array of topics were addressed by various committees: land use, wetlands, farm preservation, rustic roads, political action, and others. Open WEAL meetings featured local and state leaders, but with an emphasis on County officials and committees.

WEAL has continued pressing on the same issues since those early years. County government has increasingly favored development over preservation of natural resources. (In recent years state government has joined in.) Lately WEAL has attempted to slow highway expansions as well as continuing all of its initial areas of involvement. The Leenhouts family led WEAL as it started and the group has been agitating on environmental issues ever since.

We were saddened by Ken's death in March 2006 and Maxine's in July of 2017. We are grateful to them for their vision in helping to start a local, grassroots organization that can take on local challenges that affect the environment around us and our quality of life. Thank you, Ken and Maxine! The beauty of the natural world that you helped to preserve is a fitting tribute to you both.