

A PUBLICATION OF ALLEGHENY LAND TRUST

# VISTAS

CELEBRATING OVER 20 YEARS OF CONSERVATION EXCELLENCE

## Thank You Donors!

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# Allegheny County Protects 3,000 Acres Through Preservation Program

by Christine Goswick, Allegheny County Economic Development

As of February 12, 2015, Allegheny County has preserved 3,000 acres of farmland on 28 farms through the PA Easement Purchase Program.

Developed by the PA Department of Agriculture in 1988, the program allows participating counties, currently 57 in PA, to receive state funds for the purchase of agricultural conservation easements. Since 2001, Allegheny County has allocated an average of \$1.29 million per year at the current average cost per acre of \$3,200-4,600. ALT managed the preservation program for several years.

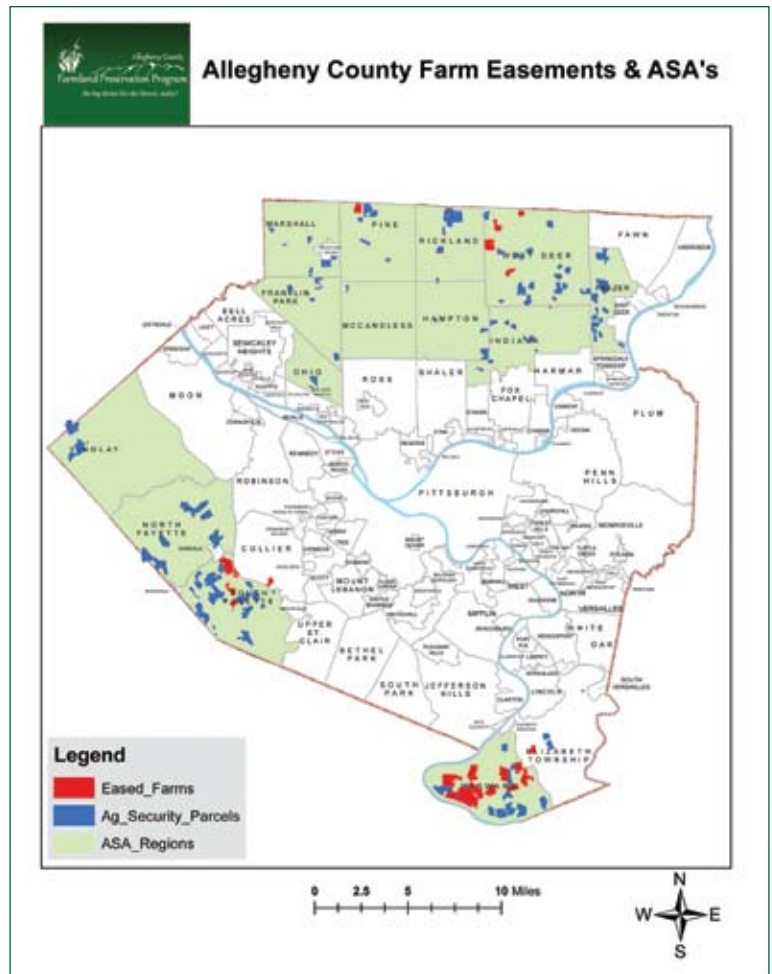
As the public's preference for eating locally grown vegetables, fruits, beef and other farm products grows each year, so does the support of this program as it aims to help slow the loss of prime farmland to non-agricultural use.

Eligible farmers submit an application to the county that is evaluated and ranked based on the following criteria:

- The productivity of the soils
- The development potential, such as the availability of public water and sanitary sewer and amount of road frontage
- The farmland potential, including size of tract (at least 50 acres); percent used for crop and pasture (at least 50%); stewardship of land; historic, scenic, and environmental qualities of the tract; and certified organic production
- "Clustering potential", such as the location relevant to "Important Agricultural Areas", proximity to eased land, and percentage of adjoining land in an Agricultural Security Area (ASA)

Typically, there are three to five farms in the queue at any one time, and currently the preserved farms in Allegheny County are in the following townships: Forward, Elizabeth, Pine, South Fayette, Collier, and West Deer (see map).

Program administration is currently handled by the Allegheny County Department of Economic Development/Planning Division. For more information, please contact Chris Goswick, Program Administrator at 412-350-1025.

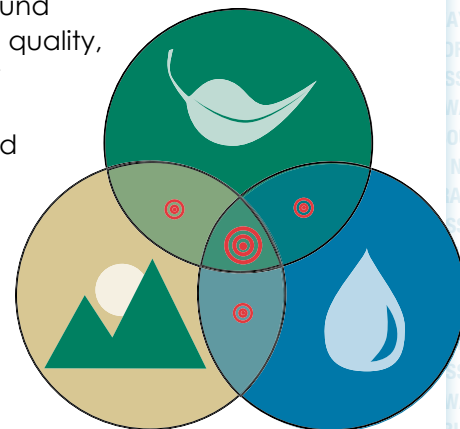


# Land Conservation Takes Many Forms

by Roy Kraynyk, Land Protection Director

In 2006, ALT created its Greenprint, a map of conservation priorities around primarily suburban Allegheny County that met the criteria of having scenic quality, biological significance and the ability to absorb water and maintain water quality.

Since then, ALT has been invited by a number of partner non-profits and citizen groups to help with community-driven projects. By involving ALT in these projects—such as community gardens—ALT is able to have land control to preserve the hard work and dedication of the people involved in those projects. Without ALT's easement, the hard work could be lost when the landowner or developers sell or secure the vacant lot from the Urban Redevelopment Authority. We've been doing a number of things to help improve our region through land conservation.



- We've been working with the Hilltop Alliance to acquire more than 100 acres of neglected land and transform it into 70 acres of greenspace, 20 acres of agriculture, and 10 acres of market-rate housing where public housing previously existed.
- Grow Pittsburgh wants our help to protect neighborhood vegetable gardens from being lost to new development once the community starts to rebound after years of blight and new investment begins to occur.
- GTECH and others want to transform vacant lots into thirsty rain gardens that absorb rain and storm water before it gets into sanitary sewers causing them to discharge into local waterways.

To approach these challenges in a methodical and logical way, ALT is beginning to create an Urban Greenprint to determine where these land protection opportunities exist and, more importantly, which ones will provide the greatest public benefit. For example, priority should be given to protecting green space in the most flood-prone watersheds so new development doesn't exacerbate an existing serious flooding problem. Green space can absorb up to 75% of the annual precipitation before it becomes storm water runoff. In our region where we get about 40" of precipitation annually, 75% amounts to 30". Conversely, if the green space was developed the runoff could increase by up to 300%.

Urban green space creates attractive and healthy living opportunities, which can reduce the development stress on green space in the more suburban and rural areas of the region. Up-and-coming hip places like Regent Square, Lawrenceville and the Mexican War Streets on the North Side are desirable for folks who like the urban vibe and the convenience of public transportation, bikeways and walking access to cultural events. There is a national trend where people are migrating back to the cities, leaving behind the vehicle-dependent suburban lifestyle. ALT is addressing this trend by implementing land conservation in innovative ways to keep our region beautiful, healthy and green.

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 2014 By The Numbers



532 Volunteers  
 DONATED



5,172  
 Hours



118,956  
 In-Kind Labor

& REMOVED



940 lbs  
 of garbage

SEVERAL  
 HUNDRED  
 SUPPORTERS  
 GIFTED &  
 GRANTED



1.6 Million  
 Dollars

AND A FEW  
 DONATED



\$400,000  
 Worth of Land

Enabling the land trust to

Acquire 5 New Green Spaces  
 totalling



67 acres of land

Protecting  
 20,000 Trees



Absorbing



60 Million  
 Gallons of  
 Water Annually

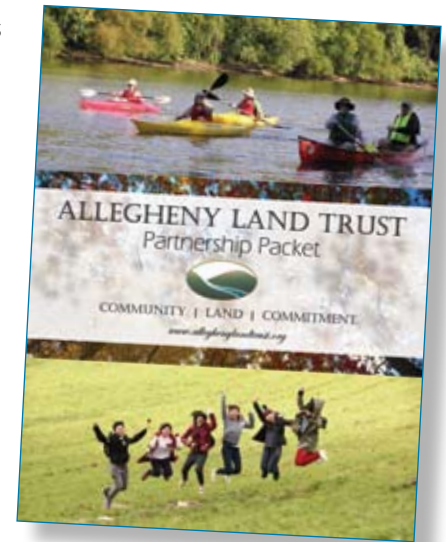
## ALT: Promoting Partnerships

*"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature -- the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter." — Rachel Carson, Silent Spring*

As ALT protects and stewards over 1,700 acres every year, our staff looks for new ways to reach out to new and existing individual neighbors and neighbor organizations. We know that strong, lasting partnerships create an atmosphere of nature appreciation and stewardship that will endure for generations to come.

We're always looking for partnerships with local companies, organizations, clubs and enthusiastic groups of people. A few examples of ways to partner with us include: organizing a volunteer/teambuilding day with your company/organization on one of our conservation areas; connecting with us to use your or your organization's skills, tools, or services to tend to our conservation areas; working with us to increase the visibility both of ALT conservation areas as well as your organization's support of them.

To learn more about our current partnership opportunities or propose your own partnership idea, contact Marketing & Outreach Coordinator, Lindsay Dill at [ldill@alleghenylantrust.org](mailto:ldill@alleghenylantrust.org).



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## Are you volunteering for us and we don't know?

As we acknowledge those who have helped Allegheny Land Trust protect and steward local land in 2014, we want to say a special thank you to all of our volunteers. This past year you've given us your time at cleanups, Urban EcoSteward events, corporate work days, projects, and more. But for all the work we know you are doing, there are individuals who spend time helping us that we cannot acknowledge because they haven't shared their activity with us.

ALT works to keep track of how many volunteers contribute to our organization and how many hours are spent. It not only allows us to acknowledge your hard work, but we can also share your efforts with potential funders as a match when working to acquire funds.

Last year volunteers provided nearly \$119,000 of in-kind investment through volunteer hours, which can be used to acquire funding for projects such as trail building at Dead Man's Hollow. If you are out there doing work for ALT, please let us know. Whether it's picking up trash during your walk at Calfish Pond, pulling purple loosestrife at Wingfield Pines, or helping to populate our iNaturalist site, every minute counts.

We need volunteers to help us in the upcoming 2015 season, specifically we are looking for:

**Gatekeepers** at Dead Man's Hollow and Audubon to regularly visit the trailhead, keep the entrance neat and clean, add handouts to the information boxes.

**Tree Monitors** who can use their own boat or the ALT canoe to visit Sycamore Island and monitor our recently planted restoration trees.

**Boundary Markers** to visit properties and help ALT staff identify and mark the boundary lines.

**Wildlife and Plant Species Identifiers** to populate baseline species lists for properties.

**Invasive Plant Removers** are needed at almost every ALT property and spring is the ideal time for removal of many species.

Contact ALT's Stewardship Coordinator Caitlin Seiler at [cseiler@alleghenylantrust.org](mailto:cseiler@alleghenylantrust.org) or 412-471-2750 x 207 if you have information to share, or are interested in volunteering with us.





Helping local people save local land.

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[www.alleghenylandtrust.org](http://www.alleghenylandtrust.org)

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**PADDLE WITHOUT POLLUTION AT CHARTIERS CREEK**  
April 18  
Register with Paddle Without Pollution

**URBAN ECOSTEWARD TRAIL CLEANING SWEEP AT DEAD MAN'S HOLLOW**  
April 28 5-7pm  
Dead Man's Hollow, Catfish Pond

**URBAN ECOSTEWARD MUSHROOM WALK AT SYCAMORE ISLAND**  
May 16 10am-2pm

Visit [www.alleghenylandtrust.org](http://www.alleghenylandtrust.org) for details.

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Donate to Allegheny Land Trust!



EFP's Combined Federal Code is 62348.

## Stewardship Truck Campaign

As many of our supporters know, ALT Stewardship staff works hard to steward our existing conservation areas not only on their own, but also with the assistance of our individual stewards and volunteer groups.

In our 20 year history, we've managed to transport all of the equipment needed for our work and planned work days in our personal cars. As we protect more green space, however, the capacity of our cars seems much smaller. Thus, we've now launched our Stewardship Truck Campaign in hopes of raising \$12,000 to purchase a work-truck for ALT staff to transport the needed tools to our conservation areas throughout the Pittsburgh region.

Supported in part by Bobby Rahal Automotive Group, donors can take part in the campaign via our online giving page at [alleghenylandtrust.org](http://alleghenylandtrust.org), or by sending in a check with the remittance envelope enclosed in our Vistas. Please indicate on the envelope the donation is for the steward's truck.

