

# VISTAS

A publication of Allegheny Land Trust

Winter 2002

## From the President

Dear Friends and Supporters,

An enterprise is as strong as its members, and Allegheny Land Trust is fortunate to have solid support. Our supporters are the Allegheny Land Trust, and the members quoted in this issue confirm that we are a diverse group.

What unites us is our appreciation for natural land. We appreciate its scenic beauty and its contributions to the health of humans and wildlife.

Perhaps above all, we appreciate its availability.

The desire to maintain the nature in our midst has always been the purpose of the Trust's efforts. To keep that focus, the Board of Directors met to identify the upcoming year's goals and the best means to reach these goals. It inspired great confidence in me to see these many motivated professionals putting their know-how to work for the organization's challenges.

As you will see in 2003 Strategic Planning Highlights, the organization has several key needs. Most of these are common among all non-profits; several are magnified by our "youth" as an independent organization. But, again, we are a strong and diverse organization. Your continued support is critical to keep our strategy on track and our local lands preserved. Thank you.

Tom Schmidt

## 2003 Strategic Planning Highlights

Allegheny Land Trust is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving regional quality of life by conserving, restoring, and sustaining lands of natural scenic, ecological and educational significance. The Trust currently has 950 acres under conservation.

With these certainties in mind, the Board of Directors convened on Saturday, October 19, to talk about the future and develop strategic ideas for the coming year.

### Stewardship

High on the list of priorities was the development of a more formal Stewardship Program. The Trust's current challenge is the absence of a program to cover all the properties. The Dead Man's Hollow property in Lincoln and Liberty boroughs has had a dedicated steward in Dave Pencoske. Profiled in the summer VISTAS, Pencoske has monitored and cared for these 400 acres since 1994. But other properties, as well as future protected areas, are in need of similar stewardship.

The strategy is to create a program, supported by a dedicated staff Stewardship Manager, who will train and support volunteer stewards. Given the Trust's current holdings, the support would

be part-time through the next three years. In our model, Board Members will each "adopt" a specific property. This will give the volunteer stewards an additional contact within the organization, and will ensure that each property has equal representation.

Continued on page 2

## Highlights *Continued from page 1*

### Partnerships

The many nature-focused organizations in Western Pennsylvania do outstanding work. Where their missions and services mesh with the Trust's, we will propose working partnerships in the following sectors: professional organizations; government (all levels); public and private funding sources; outdoor recreation groups; scouts; hunters; Game Commission; nonprofits; corporations and businesses; conservation and educational institutions; community, senior citizen, garden, and social clubs; Welcome Wagon; and land owners.

Already, Allegheny Land Trust has formal and informal partnerships with a broad range of private, government and nonprofit organizations: Fern Hollow Nature Center, Penn Future, DCNR, Bradford Woods Conservancy, and USC Citizens for Land Stewardship, to name a few. The Trust will call upon all its resources, through the Board and members, to ensure that our efforts to protect our natural heritage and improve quality of life are more than the sum of the parts.



Partnering was the topic. The goal: to increase the Land Trust's efficiency and avoid redundancy among local conservation organizations. Furthering the concept were (L to R), Steve Schott, Henry Ewalt, Bill Kirk, and Tom Schmidt.

#### **Tom Headley**

Forward Township

*"In the face of the opening of the new expressway, the Trust is helping us preserve a wooded hillside that serves as the viewscape for the town of Monongahela. As a township commissioner, I consider the region's physical beauty and recreation opportunities as our edge when it comes to attracting workers."*

### Communication

Our early years were spent under the wing of Allegheny County, but our growth has spawned an immediate need for us to reach everyone in the region who values our natural areas — and to educate many who do not.

A Communications Committee will implement the strategy. Tactics will include establishing an ensemble of trained spokespersons and pursuing suitable speaking opportunities. These could include regional TV, radio and magazines; community meetings; and public service messages.

E. Steve Bland, facilitator of the communication workgroup, noted, "ALT currently uses many traditional means of communicating. Our strategy for the coming year is to focus on the vehicles that allow us to tell our story — what we do and why it's important to people." ALT



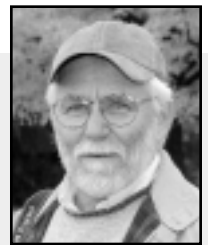
With the goal of 2006 Acres by 2006, there is an immediate need to formalize a comprehensive Stewardship Program. (L to R) Lisa Smith, Bill Lawrence, Jerry DeRosa, and Dan Sentz discuss a strategy that will seek state funding and community volunteers to develop tools and provide training for a corps of land stewards.

#### **Paul Wiegman**

Shaler

*"I've worked for 30-some years as a biologist, ecologist and photographer, protecting significant natural resources.*

*It's my belief that the best way to control a piece of land is simply to own it, and land trusts make it feasible for communities to protect land and steward it in an ecologically sound way."*

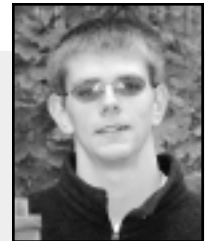


## State Grants \$70,000 for Wingfield Pines

Continuing our commitment to good stewardship of properties we own, several grant proposals were submitted over the summer for our latest acquisition, Wingfield Pines. Thanks to Senator Tim Murphy, Representatives John Maher, John Pippy and David Levdansky and their hard work, we secured \$70,000 in state funds.

A \$25,000 Department of Community and Economic Development grant was received for the demolition of existing buildings. However, with the current interest in the buildings from several nonprofit organizations, the board has decided to delay their removal. "We'd prefer to see the buildings rehabilitated and used for purposes compatible with the restoration and preservation of the property," states Board Member and Wingfield Planning Committee Chair Jack Ubinger.

Earlier this year, the Trust was awarded a \$45,000 Growing Greener Grant from the Department of Environmental Protection to design a system of ponds that will purify abandoned mine drainage flowing across the property. "We're looking for an engaging design with an educational theme, trails, and perhaps industrial artifacts or sculpture," comments Ron Schipani, a Board Member and professional landscape architect. Five firms responded to a recent Request for Proposal, and a consultant will be selected before yearend. ALT



### **Paul Rushofsky**

Heidelberg

*"For my Eagle Scout project, I organized the construction of 20 nesting boxes for ducks and bluebirds and sited them on the Wingfield Pines property. I wanted to support nature close to home because this is where I live and where I'll probably come back to after college."*

## Mary Louise Fowkes

Emsworth



"I support Allegheny Land Trust because I see more and more of our land in Allegheny County being eaten up by development, and that's a threat to one of this area's most valuable features.

"I think the Trust's biggest challenge in their work is making people aware of what can be

done. Pennsylvania has many small communities and not enough regional planning, so residents don't always find out about projects involving land use. When folks do finally become aware, they are upset, but it's often too late to do anything."

Fowkes, husband Doug and sons Barret and Calder live in the Ohio River community of Emsworth.

"Although I have had an interest in the environment and ecological concerns since the Seventies, I really felt the impact on myself and my family when our school district announced it was considering a TIF."

Avonworth School District officials have proposed a TIF (tax increment financing) for an Ohio developer. The developer wants over \$5 million of local tax money to pay for the infrastructure costs needed to turn 80 acres of open space and natural land into a retail/office complex.

"Preserving natural land in the community enhances the atmosphere and, for our family, it means not having to travel to a National or State Forest to hike or have a picnic. Some of the Trust's land is ten minutes from our home, so we don't have to plan on our calendar to make a date with nature; we drive by it every day and can go there when we want to."

Although each generation has to consider its own needs and impacts on the planet, Fowkes thinks the time to act on this issue is now.

"If we don't preserve more land, people will have to start making a conscious effort to get to the outdoors. That distance from nature — and I think our culture is more removed from nature than many — seems to be the cause of a lot of the physical and even social problems in the country, and anything we can do to get back to that will help us all as individuals." ALT

**Kathy Brandt**

Sewickley

*"I am pleased that someone is focusing on land preservation in southwestern Pennsylvania. It's become clear to me as a real estate professional that this is necessary to prevent unmitigated urban and suburban sprawl."*



**Special Offer!**

Donate \$100 or more *before January 31* and receive a free CD from our **Bluegrass for Green Space** music festival. Thanks to the musicians for making this offer possible.

A **"Doggie Hike"** and skating or cross-country skiing are two events that Allegheny Land Trust and Western Pennsylvania Field Institute will host at Wingfield Pines.

**Check [alleghenylandtrust.org](http://alleghenylandtrust.org) for dates.**



**Joel Perkovich**

Edgeworth

*"We have a responsibility to maintain the integrity of the planet's natural systems. I am serving my internship with Allegheny Land Trust because my work has an impact on things right here in Allegheny County."*



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