

VISTAS

A publication of Allegheny Land Trust

Winter/Spring 2006



ROY KRAYNYK

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Reflections

First, I'd like to once again **Thank You** for your generous support in 2005. Whether as volunteer or a donor, you have increased our capacity to achieve our mutual goal of protecting local land.

This issue of VISTAS gives you a sampling of the success that your support has made possible in 2005 and what's in store for 2006. I hope that you are as pleased as we are about our accomplishments. With your support, we can make 2006 another successful year for local land conservation. Thanks!

As I write this, Allegheny Land Trust is deeply engaged in strategic planning. Through this intensive process, we will create a strategic plan and vision for the next three to five years, and develop an action plan on how to get there. A few topics that we will address are – How will we respond to the increasing demand for our services from Washington County? How will we fund the increase in staff to accelerate our conservation work? Should our land protection efforts be revised to target the region's signature steep hillsides and scenic ridgelines?

As the title of this column implies, we want to invite your reflections about Allegheny Land Trust. Please take a minute to complete an online survey designed to capture your feedback and ideas about how we might move forward. The link to the survey is on our website.

City Council Votes to Protect Hillsides

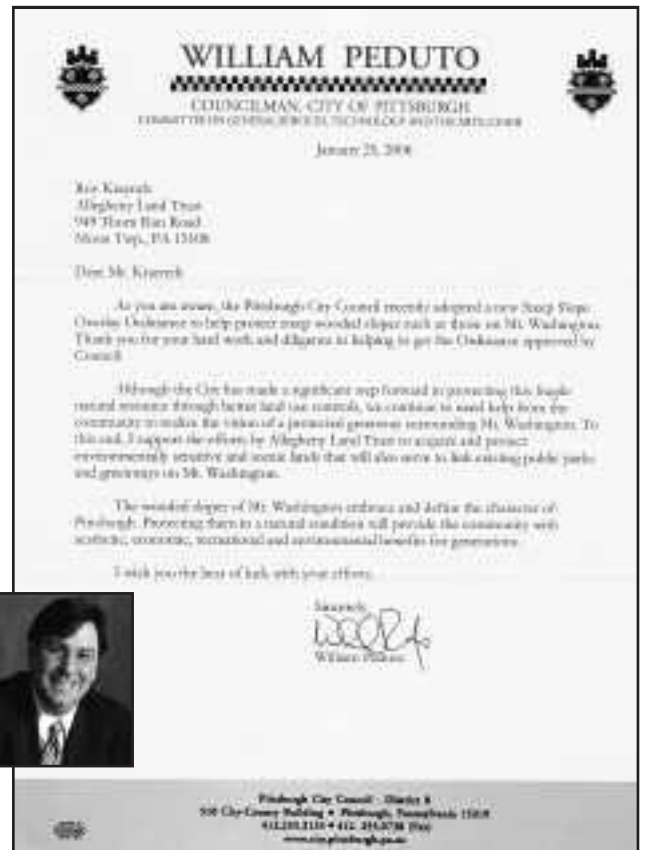
Three years of work came to a successful end when the Pittsburgh City Council passed a Steep Slope Overlay ordinance to help protect the city's slopes. Approximately 11% of the city's landscape is in slopes exceeding 25%. Such steep slopes are frequently slide prone, geologically unstable, or difficult to access with public services.

Allegheny Land Trust's Executive Director Roy Kraynyk represented Allegheny Land Trust on the City Planning Department's Hillside Committee. He also appeared at press conferences, public hearings, and radio interviews. Roy also managed the team of consultants from Carnegie Mellon University's Studio for Creative Inquiry and Perkins Eastman that created a report titled, *The Physical and Ecological Investigation of Pittsburgh's Hillsides*.

The report was instrumental in the passage of the ordinance because it documents the economic, ecological, and environmental benefits of protecting steep hillsides. This gave City Council the information necessary to adopt the ordinance with confidence.

Special thanks to the Heinz Endowments, Steve Quick of Perkins Eastman, Tim Collins of the Studio of Creative Inquiry, Cyril Fox, City Planning Director, Susan Golumb, City Planning staff, Dan Sentz and Bob Reppe, and finally to Councilman William Peduto for his sustained championship of this effort.

The report is available on our website.



Councilman Peduto provided this letter of endorsement to use in fundraising efforts for the Emerald Link Greenway Project.

Creating a Strategy for the Future

Letter from Steve Schott, President

As our 14th anniversary appears on the horizon, Allegheny Land Trust finds itself a leader among the region's conservation organizations. However, as we peer beyond the horizon, we see a confluence of challenges and opportunities coming up. Therefore, our Board of Directors has committed to engaging in an intense comprehensive strategic planning process in 2006 to position Allegheny Land Trust for the future.

The strategic planning project, made possible with support from the Heinz Endowments, will be managed by a steering committee composed of board members Bram Johnson, Ann Morrison, Dave Myron, Tim Stanny, Lynn Heckman, and Jack Ubinger and facilitated by a professional consulting team composed of Unbridled Performance and Strategy Solutions.

As we work to build and define the image of Allegheny Land Trust and improve our effectiveness, we will be seeking your input. After all, it is your support that has empowered us to come this far.

Be assured, however, that we are not resting from our primary task of protecting land. In 2005, we acquired an additional 30 acres in Plum Borough along the Allegheny Riverfront at our Barking Slopes Conservation Area now totaling 230 acres. In 2006, we look forward to raising the final funds necessary to protect another 51 acres in our Audubon Greenway project in the Little Sewickley Creek Watershed, protect land in the Emerald Link project on Mount Washington, and continue pre-acquisition due diligence on several other tracts of land that have been offered.

2006 looks to be one of the most exciting years of my service on the board. As a supporter of Allegheny Land Trust, I hope you share my excitement and the satisfaction that comes from making a permanent difference in our communities. Together we can accomplish great things.



New Acquisitions

Spring brought great news of a \$250,000 grant from the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to purchase 51 acres in the Little Sewickley Creek Watershed (Audubon Greenway project Phase II). We have raised \$1 million for this project, including public grants and contributions from local individuals. Several grants are pending for this project that we hope to close on in the third or fourth quarter of 2006.

We added 30 acres to our 200-acre Barking Slopes project area in Plum Borough along the Allegheny Riverfront.

Featured Member

Wow!! My Daddy's service on the Allegheny Land Trust Board is helping them save land for me when I grow up!!" Congratulations to Director Ron Schipani and his wife Donna.



Caden James Schipani

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We have made every effort to be accurate with these lists. If you notice an omission or other error, please let us know. Thanks.

*Donations marked with an asterisk came via the Holiday Hunt described in this issue of VISTAS.

Notes from the Field by Diane Meister

Volunteer Site Steward at Audubon Greenway, Sewickley

How clean everything looks when covered with snow! The trees are bare, the ground white and the sky is either grey or brilliant blue.

For the longest time, snow was piled high along the roads, covering the trash discarded by people driving by. Even though I don't like snow, it covers the litter. I really don't understand people who throw trash out of their vehicle windows. (Pardon my little rant.)

How grateful I am, however, to know there are places in Western Pennsylvania where people care about the land and take care of it. The Allegheny Land Trust works hard to obtain land to protect, knowing that it will be there forever for people to enjoy. The land is appreciated as well as the plants and animals that reside there. In winter, everything is covered with snow and you can easily follow the tracks of the various animals. The plants are dormant, soaking up the drainage from the snow to get ready for spring growth.



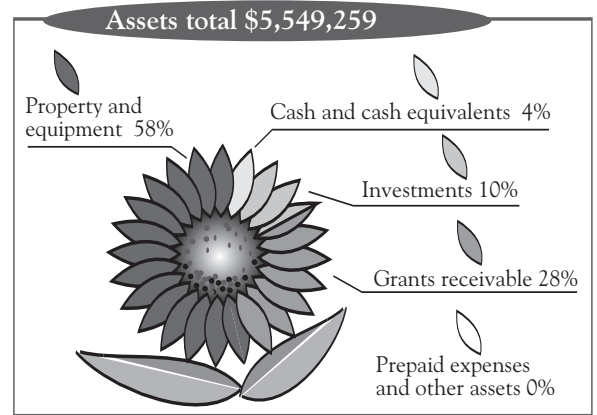
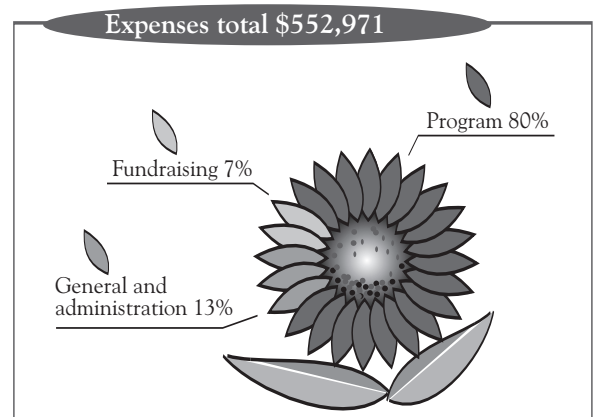
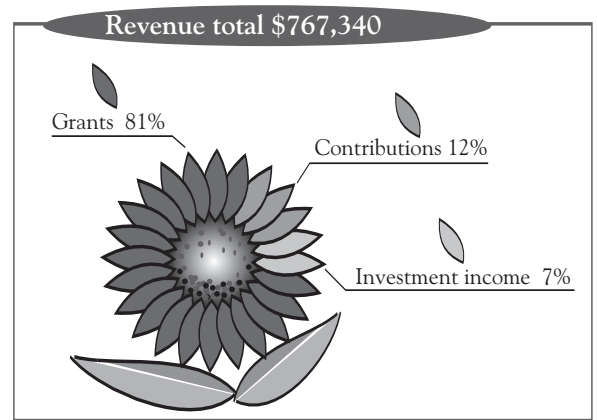
Trainers Lisa Smith (on fence) and Marcia Brissett with Site Steward Diane Meister (with hat).

You should take the time to walk the trails and notice the new growth and the re-birth of the trees. Really look at everything around you.... how many different trees can you identify? Or does it not matter what kind of trees they are as long as you can walk among them, use them for shade, and appreciate the varieties of bark and leaves? Can you notice the differences from one year to the next or maybe just from season to season? How much larger the trees have become or how much overgrowth has taken possession of the trails? Are there new animals in residence? When was the last time you saw a fox or a pheasant? When walking through the woods, do you notice the trees that have recently fallen? Is there anything more beautiful than a piece of wood? Paying attention to the various shadings of color, the swirls, texture and shapes that result from years of weathering is something that you must make a conscious effort to notice. Don't rush through the pathways just to get exercise. Take the time to appreciate the landscape.

As a volunteer Site Steward, I get great sense of satisfaction knowing that I'm helping Allegheny Land Trust to care for land and protect it into perpetuity. You can too, by volunteering to help maintain trails, assist with festival booths or perform office help. Give the office a call. Oh ...and let's keep as much land as litter free as possible!

Annual Report

Period covered – July 1, 2004, to June 30, 2005



"Eagle" at Audubon Greenway

Shawn Nickholds, his father Bill, and Patrick Joyce. Shawn earned his Eagle Badge for erecting two benches and clearing trails at Audubon Greenway.



Holiday Hunt Benefits Allegheny Land Trust

In mid-December Allegheny Land Trust was invited again to David and Belinda Thompson's beautifully decorated property to celebrate Sewickley Hunt's Stirrup Cup Christmas Hunt. Posters of our Audubon Greenway project were displayed for the more than 200 people who were treated to great food, a visit by the Sewickley Hunt Club (dogs and horses included, of course), and a surprise cameo appearance by Santa Claus himself. It was a wonderful festive time among friends in a snowy landscape under crystal blue skies.

In lieu of gifts, David and Belinda asked their guests to contribute to Allegheny Land Trust, and more than \$1,000 was collected. **Thanks** to everyone for your contribution! A very special thank you to David and Belinda and their sons for all the hard work preparing for the guests and for their generosity and thoughtfulness.

"It was such a wonderful winter's day, the sky was blue, the trees were coated in ice, and the horses and their riders stood out against the soft white snow. How fortunate we were to have so many guests here to enjoy the beauty of the land. They huddled around the bonfires to stay warm, and children roasted marshmallows and hot dogs as the Sewickley Hunt gathered for their Christmas Hunt. We appreciate that many of our friends generously donated to Allegheny Land Trust, thus helping to preserve the clean water in Little Sewickley Creek and the open space on Audubon and Magee Roads. As the riders departed up over the hills of Sewickley, we were

reminded of the precious natural gifts we all have to share: clean water, clean air, and the land and forests that help to keep it that way!"

... Belinda Thompson



Phyllis Semple prefers her horseless carriage while her daughter Heather Semple roughs it. The Semple family is committed to sustaining the Sewickley Hunt and to Allegheny Land Trust. Their other daughter, Cherry White, is on our Board of Directors.



Guests enjoyed great food, friends, and weather at the beautifully decorated property.



Riders and guests begin to arrive.



Meg Guilot and Ann Metcalf join the hunt.

Rivers Conservation Proposal

In October, Allegheny Land Trust worked with the environmental consulting company, Environmental Planning and Design (EPD), to develop a grant proposal submitted to DCNR by Sewickley and Osborne Boroughs to fund a rivers conservation plan for all of the watersheds in the geographic area encompassed by the Quaker Valley School District. This includes 11 municipalities and about 13 separate watersheds.

The study will address land use, stormwater management, and water quality and will provide recommendations for better management of water resources. EPD was the consultant that drafted the recently published Sewickley Valley Visioning and Economic Impact Study for the 741 Group. Allegheny Land Trust will be consulting with EPD on the rivers conservation project in 2006 if the proposal is funded.

Trail Grant

In July, we submitted a grant proposal to the Allegheny Regional Asset District (ARAD) on behalf of four trail organizations – Montour Trail Council, Rachel Carson Trail Association, Friends of the Riverfront, and Steel Valley Trail Council. This was the ninth year that Allegheny Land Trust has served as the umbrella organization convening the trail groups and preparing a single grant proposal for trail construction projects in Allegheny County. The proposal resulted in a \$100,000 grant of which \$15,000 covers our time providing this service for ARAD and the trail groups.

Over the past nine years, Allegheny Land Trust has raised over \$1 million from ARAD that has been distributed to other organizations for trail projects. More than 60 miles of safe and practically level trails are now available throughout the county 365 days a year free of charge.

Looking Ahead

Audubon Greenway - Sewickley

A local foundation has invited us to submit a proposal for a grant of \$138,000 to help buy a wonderful 51-acre addition to our Audubon Greenway project. We will continue working hard to raise the remaining funds necessary to close on the property. Acquiring this property along Audubon and Magee Roads in Sewickley Heights is a top priority in 2006. 86% of the money has been raised to date.. For more information about how you can help, please contact the office at 412-604-0422.

Emerald Link – Mt. Washington

A \$100,000 DCNR grant will need to be matched to begin serious negotiations with landowners. Several properties have been identified. Work to raise the money to protect them will continue with the Mt. Washington Community Development Corporation.

Strategic Planning

Developing a strategic plan is a significant commitment for any organization. Our schedule is to roll out the strategic plan in June and complete the action plan over the summer. The Plan is being funded by a special grant from the Heinz Endowments.

Wingfield Pines – Upper St. Clair

We will be involved with a significant special project at our Wingfield Pines Conservation Area in Upper St. Clair to stop abandoned mine drainage from impairing the water quality of Chartiers Creek. We recently received a \$650,000 grant from the PA Department of Environmental Protection to construct an Abandoned Mine Passive Treatment System. We could be



University of Michigan Landscape Architecture graduate students Joel Perkovich, Mary Walton, and Brian Chilcot conducted their initial site analysis of Wingfield Pines, Upper St. Clair.

breaking ground by fall 2006. Visit our website for illustrations and details about our creative passive system design.

In addition, former Allegheny Land Trust intern and current University of Michigan graduate student Joel Perkovich will be helping us create a master plan for Wingfield Pines. Joel, along with a team of fellow graduate students, will craft a plan that addresses public access, vegetation management and restoration, and other programs.

Committee Pushes New Projects while Monitoring Existing Ones

Tim Stanny, Project Development Committee

The Allegheny Land Trust Project Development Committee works closely with staff and fellow board members to ensure that current projects in the pipeline are completed, while at the same time pursuing new prospects that match Allegheny Land Trust's mission.

Three projects of special note that we hope to complete are:

- The Emerald Link - where Allegheny Land Trust is working with others to protect our unique Mt. Washington hillsides.
- Audubon Greenway Phase II – where Allegheny Land Trust is pursuing funding to acquire a magnificent 51-acre site of meadows and woods in western Allegheny County.
- Wingfield Pines in Upper St. Clair – where Allegheny Land Trust hopes to help clean the polluted waters of Chartiers Creek.

Besides trying to “close the deal” with projects such as these, a lot of our time is spent considering offers of property from landowners. We visit the properties and evaluate whether their acquisition fits in with our mission and finances. We have been working quietly on one transaction involving a 100-acre wooded parcel in a heavily developed area for over a year. And we will continue to do so until we are successful or have exhausted ways to save this beautiful area.

And finally, we are exploring ways to expand our existing properties. This includes canvassing our neighboring property owners to see if there is interest in contributing their vacant lands.

Allegheny Land Trust will soon go through a strategic planning process. And at that time, we will examine our criteria for acquisitions. Do we continue what we have been doing? Do we focus more on preserving our unique hillsides and riverfront? Do we expand beyond Allegheny and Washington Counties into bordering counties where there has been interest in contributing land? If any readers of this newsletter have suggestions, please share them on our website.

Stewardship is Vital

By Lisa Smith, Vice President Land Stewardship

The Allegheny Land Trust Stewardship Committee is looking forward to 2006 being a productive year for management and monitoring activities on our conservation properties and easements. We now have ten trained Site Steward Volunteers assisting Allegheny Land Trust with these efforts.

Some of our ongoing and anticipated stewardship activities for 2006 include:

- Increasing on-site communication with visitors and users of our lands through the development of signage, interpretive materials, and hands-on management activities.
- Conducting boundary surveys for our Deadman's Hollow and Lowries Run properties so that we can better manage our resources at these sites.
- Developing a management plan for our Wingfield Pines property.
- Beginning construction of a mine drainage treatment system at Wingfield Pines.
- Identifying additional management needs at each of our conservation properties and easements via our Site Stewards' monitoring efforts.
- Conducting a stewardship volunteer program for our partner, the Mt. Washington Community Development Corporation.

We have a lot of work ahead to protect the natural and cultural resources of our properties. Long-term protection doesn't end once the land is owned by a conservation organization...it only just begins.



Lisa Smith is shown here on the right with fellow board members Tim Stanny (left) and Kevin Garber (center).



Correction: Thanks to a sharp-eyed (and mathematically astute) reader, we realize that the last issue of VISTAS showed a four square mile graphic instead of a two square mile graphic overlaying the city of Pittsburgh, indicating the amount of land we have protected. We apologize for the error. —editor



A walk along one of the trails at our Audubon Greenway property helped the volunteers understand their Site Steward responsibilities. Training participants were Dave and Marian Crossman, Pine Creek Conservancy; John Inserra, Allegheny Land Trust Board; Peter Kohnke, landowner; Jeff Murphy and Janet Thorne, Hollow Oak Land Trust; Jan Ridenour, Pine Creek Land Conservation Trust; Kostoula Vallianos, Earth Force; William B. Waddell, City of Pittsburgh Real Estate.



Once land is acquired, it is our responsibility to ensure that it is kept in a safe condition and not disturbed. In November, Allegheny Land Trust provided training for volunteers interested in helping care for and monitor protected lands. People from other land trusts also participated. The training was made possible with support from the Heinz Endowments and Laurel Foundation.

PLEASE FILL OUT THE FEEDBACK SURVEY. SEE OUR WEBSITE.

Member Comments

Following are some responses on our member survey. Thanks to everyone who participated. Your responses gave us insights into how well you think we are doing and how we can better serve you.

“Keep doing what they’re doing. I have complete confidence in Allegheny Land Trust.”

“The board and Roy are doing a good job, but it would be nice to have outings because people would be more likely to get out and see the lands. If more people would make use of some of these places and enjoy them, it might encourage others to become involved in the organization.”

“They’re doing a great job.”

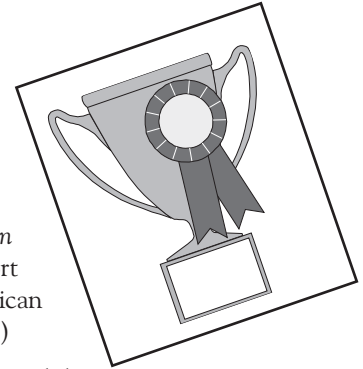
“I loved talking about Allegheny Land Trust during this survey. I want to see more PR because I don’t feel as though people know enough about the great things Allegheny Land Trust is doing.”

“Keep up the good work, but it wouldn’t hurt to get bigger. There’s lots of land that needs to be preserved and people don’t generally know about it. More press is needed to spread the word.”

Awards

Allegheny Land Trust was a finalist in the Dominion Western Pennsylvania Environmental Award for *The Physical and Ecological Investigation of Pittsburgh’s Hillsides*. (The report also won an award from the American Institute of Architects in October.)

Also, the Sewickley Village Garden Club, which is the local chapter of the Garden Club of America, presented Roy Kraynyk an award for his commitment to land conservation and stewardship of natural resources.



French and Indian War prints

Beautiful signed prints by famed Pittsburgh artist Nat Youngblood are still available for sale. All proceeds benefit Allegheny Land Trust. Details are on our website.

Upcoming events

April 22 - Earth Day Stewardship Day at Wingfield Pines, Upper St. Clair. Wear your work boots and gloves and join us for a “Spring Cleaning” of your favorite natural area followed by a bar-b-que.

April 29 - Trillium Hike at Barking Slopes, Plum Borough, 10:00 AM. Meet at Veltri’s Restaurant on Route 909.

May 6 - Bird Walk in the Audubon Greenway, Sewickley Heights, 8:00 AM. Park at the trailhead on Audubon Rd.

May 13 - May Mart, Sewickley, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Visit our booth to learn about our Audubon Greenway Project.

June 10 - Wingfield Pines, Upper St. Clair. Visit Wingfield Pines to learn more about the property and the mine drainage treatment system we have funds to construct. Or plan a canoe trip on the Upper Chartiers Creek to end at Wingfield.

July 22 - Bluegrass for Green Space, Robin Hill Park in Moon Township, 949 Thorn Run Rd., afternoon/evening—details to come.

See our website for details on these events and others.



Helping local people save local land

Allegheny Land Trust
Robin Hill Park
949 Thorn Run Road
Moon Township, PA 15108-2828

www.alleghenylantrust.org

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