

WISTAS

A publication of Allegheny Land Trust

Winter 2006



From the Executive Director

Addressing Water Issues with Land Conservation

Our region is blessed with an abundance of water from the skies but by the time it reaches the creeks and rivers it is often polluted with chemicals, mine drainage, raw sewage or silt. The combined sewer overflow problem alone is estimated to cost billions to resolve. Brief cloud bursts create flash floods that damage homes and businesses. This is an environmental, economic and public health issue for which land conservation can play a critical role in the solution.

Let's take a look at the effects and public cost of siltation and flooding and how land conservation can help to reduce both consequence and taxpayer expenditure. For years each time it rains soil eroded from upstream land disturbance has been accumulating in North Park Lake, even though the law requires silt fences and sediment ponds at development sites to trap silt and prevent soil erosion. Approximately 400,000 tons of silt has accumulated in the lake in part because silt fences and sedimentation ponds simply can't replace the soil stabilization and filtering function of displaced trees, shrubs and ground cover.

Dredging North Park Lake is estimated at \$11 million. That's about \$27.50 per ton of silt. Unfortunately, this money will not prevent or reduce more silt entering the lake. Therefore, the County and Army Corps of Engineers can anticipate a similar

See "Addressing water issues", page 2

Back for Round Two Ubinger accepts Board position

"There is no better time to protect open space—open space in the right places," said John (Jack) W. Ubinger, Jr. reasoning why he's returned to the Allegheny Land Trust Board of Directors after a two-year hiatus. "We honestly can do something valuable for a community where protecting open space becomes a revitalization and community development issue," he explained.

After a recent retreat with Board members and the subsequent development of a new strategic plan, the "ALT Greenprint", the organization has enhanced and more clearly defined its goals, and Ubinger is ready to get back to work helping to build the organization and protect land with a more detailed mission as Chair and President of the Board of Directors.

Because he was actually on the founding Board, Ubinger has a unique perspective on ALT, serving a full nine years, or three terms of three years each, the limit for Board members, leaving the Board in 2004. Ubinger was invited to be a part of the initial planning meetings and to be a member of the fledgling organization's Board—"I'm guessing probably because I was on the Board of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council at the time"—but it might also have been because of his immense experience as an attorney in environmental law.

A partner in the Jones Day law firm, Ubinger coordinates the environmental, health and safety practice in Pittsburgh. The Jones Day website quotes of Ubinger, "...since 1974, he has had extensive experience in environmental law

matters, including the application of environmental laws and regulations to routine business operations; the evaluation of environmental considerations in the purchase, sale or financing of business assets and real property; the assessment and remediation of contaminated property; alternative dispute resolution strategies; and the litigation of environmental issues

John W. (Jack) Ubinger, Jr. Esq.

**ALT Board
President and Chair**

**Partner,
Jones Day
Law Firm**



See "Ubinger accepts Board position", page 2

Also in this issue...

After studies, public surveys, brainstorming sessions and preliminary conclusions, ALT finds its bearings for the future in its developing conservation agenda, "ALT Greenprint". On pages 4 and 5, read about the agenda, study and survey results and important conclusions drawn by Board members at a recent retreat.



Addressing water issues, continued from page 1

expenditure of taxpayer dollars in 10 to 15 years, or perhaps sooner as more upstream property is developed increasing the volume of stormwater runoff, erosion and siltation.

North Park Lake is just one example of significant amounts of public funds allocated to remove silt from regional waterways. Chartiers Creek is another where the Army Corps of Engineers will be spending upwards of \$10 million to dredge silt from the creek to restore its capacity to handle flow. Six-million dollars alone is needed to haul and deposit the silt in a landfill because it is considered contaminated by raw sewage from overflow events.

According to the consultant team working on the Allegheny County Comprehensive Plan, 55,000 new housing units are predicted for the northwest and southwest quadrants of the county where these watersheds are located. Because development increases the volume of runoff as impervious surfaces replace pervious ones, accelerated siltation, increased flooding and increased demand on public funds to mitigate these problems is unavoidable.

We need to think prevention. Strategic land conservation is an economical solution to avoid the recurring demand for public funds needed to repair flood-damaged communities and to dredge streams and lakes. We need an aggressive and strategic land conservation effort in these and other watersheds involving the public, private and nonprofit sector to prevent the problem before the damage occurs.

A case in point: Allegheny Land Trust acquired an 80-acre floodplain property in the south hills along Chartiers Creek called Wingfield Pines. ALT raised \$450,000 from public and private sources to acquire the land for permanent green space. During Hurricane Ivan in 2004, approximately 50 million gallons of water flooded the property. Based on the purchase price, the cost to store this substantial amount of water was only about one penny per gallon. In addition to floodwater storage, an estimated 1,500 tons of silt was deposited at Wingfield Pines during the flood. This amounts to about a \$40,000 savings on the Chartiers Creek dredging project.

Alternatively, if Wingfield had been developed all would have been lost under 15 feet of floodwater. If a dike had been built along Chartiers Creek to prevent Wingfield from being

flooded the 50 million gallons would have been confined in the creek channel increasing the floodwater's volume, velocity and peak height downstream. It is hard to say how many dollars-worth of damage was prevented downstream due to Wingfield's storage capacity, but Bridgeville, Heidelberg, Carnegie and other communities experienced damage amounting to \$60 million.

This example illustrates how protecting one property provides multiple cost saving solutions, and will continue to do so for generations as it is protected by ALT as permanent green space.

Dredging, hauling and land-filling silt is literally an expensive end-of-pipe solution of last resort. Local, state, county and federal agencies need to support and promote sustainable solutions such as land conservation, so that flooding and siltation are not accelerated by paving lands that are actually helping to mitigate the problem.

Allegheny Land Trust will continue to meet with various government agencies to promote land conservation as a cost-effective strategy to help resolve the region's flooding, siltation and water quality problems.

Wingfield Pines stands ready to store another 50 million gallons if it ever has to. In the meantime, it captures water and silt from many smaller storm events while providing the community with scenic beauty, a place to get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and a place for wildlife.

To see pictures of Wingfield Pines you can visit www.alleghenylandtrust.org. Or visit ALT's Wingfield Pines Conservation Area at 1550 Mayview Road in Upper St. Clair. Look for the high water mark sign on the telephone pole by the lower parking lot. You'll be amazed, and possibly very happy it's forever greenspace.



Investing in land conservation pays dividends for generations. The brilliance of an autumn-tinged hillside reflects on a shallow pond, both forever protected at Wingfield Pines.

Ubinger accepts Board position, continued from page 1

against regulatory agencies and private parties."

In representing such clients as Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corporation, PPG Industries and Temple-Inland Forest Products Company, Ubinger looks at environmental issues from multiple perspectives, combining the best interests of the business and the environment in advising his clients. "I've tried to do that all along—see things from both sides of the fence when it comes to representing my clients," Ubinger commented.

When first approached to plan and serve on the Board of ALT, "I didn't know much about land conservation or nonprofits and saw it at first as just another educational experience," Ubinger reminisces, "but it truly was a gratifying thing to get that first grant of three or four years of seed money and see [ALT] start from nothing and move to real projects."

"But are we going to maintain the status quo or move ahead? The real reason I got back on the Board is because I feel it is imperative that we go to the next level," Ubinger asserted.

Still in the environmental realm, Ubinger also teaches a course on "environmental conflict resolution and problem solving" in the environmental science and management master's degree program at Duquesne University.

**"Forever Projects"
Ubinger recalls ALT's beginning**

Because he was actually on the founding Board, Jack Ubinger has a unique perspective on ALT and recalls ALT's founding and first proceedings. "The Land Trust is a product of the [Allegheny] County Planning Department which saw a need for a conservation group to work between neighborhoods and public and private interests," he explained.

"The perception of ALT and other conservation groups used to be that they were out there to protect grass and trees and get in the way of development," Ubinger commented. "We realized we had to point out the services that open space provided to the community in addition to its value of preserving biodiversity and threatened species."

"The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy was beginning its Natural See **"Forever Projects"** on page 7

A New Strategic Land

Since January, ALT Board of Directors and staff have been engaged in an intensive strategic planning process that has resulted in several significant decisions of which two key ones will set the course for the foreseeable future.

1. Increasing staff to respond to the increasing demand for our services.
2. Revisiting and refining our criteria for a regional land conservation agenda.

These conclusions were a result of analyzing input from more than 400 people including an online public survey, and personal interviews with leaders from the funding, real estate, land trust, business and development community. Several local, county and state government representatives were interviewed as well to learn about what they believed were the land conservation priorities for our region.

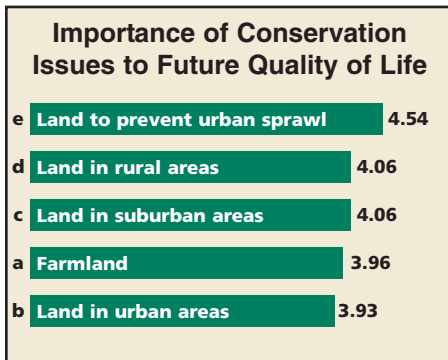
The data was assembled and presented to the Board of Directors as part of a one and one-half day retreat, generously underwritten by Duquesne Light Company, where five key themes emerged.

1. Develop a fund raising function to provide organizational sustainability;
2. Acquire/build optimum staff capacity to implement the strategic plan;
3. Position Allegheny Land Trust as the “Go To” land trust through a marketing plan;
4. Develop a regional conservation agenda prioritizing land conservation for the public good—“ALT Greenprint”;
5. Continue developing a strong and diverse Board of Directors.

Board members were assigned to Strategic Plan Action Teams for each theme based on their expertise and met several times over the summer to hammer out goals, objectives, time frames and budgets.

One central component that emerged from the planning effort was an agenda for land conservation. We dubbed this agenda

the **ALT Greenprint**. We looked to the results from the public survey and interviews to see what types of land or physical attributes the public considered to be the highest priority to protect. Three attributes were considered the highest priority. Where they overlap will be our Primary Conservation Targets. The Venn diagram at right illustrates this strategy.

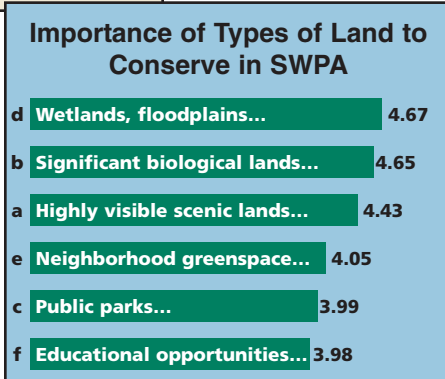


Figures taken from the public survey distributed in March and April, 2006.

Over 400 respondents were interviewed and 356 completed the survey online.

Questions were rated on a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being “very important” and 1 being “not important”

Scores are mean values over all respondents.



Data from these sources will be used to set conservation targets to be identified.

- ALT 2006 Public Survey
- Allegheny County
- Allegheny County
- DCNR funded River
- Three Rivers Seco
- Pittsburgh H
- Ecology and
- Natural Inf
- Ag Secur
- Natural Herit
- Three Rivers
- Water Qu
- Growth
- Flood
- Other



ALT Greenprint
A Regional Conservation
Prioritizing Conservation
Public

Protection and Stewardship

Organizational Capacity

Strategic Planning

Strategy for Land Conservation

Completed and analyzed to identify
prioritized lands identified in the ALT Greenprint.

Survey & Interviews
Greenways Plan
County Comp Plan
Conservation Plans
and Nature Studies
Hillside Report
and Recovery
Infrastructure
Priority Areas
Age Inventory
Wet Weather
Quality Data
Trends
and
Patterns



Greenprint
Conservation Agenda
Prioritizing Conservation for the
Public Good

Sustainable
Funding

Marketing
Action Teams

1. Biodiversity—based on Natural Heritage Inventories which map the natural areas in the counties. Biodiversity has historically been the only attribute we have considered.

2. Water quality and stormwater management—Certain lands such as floodplains, wetlands and wooded slopes can impede runoff, store floodwaters and filter water before it reaches streams or the underground aquifers that supply public drinking water. Protecting certain lands can reduce the impact of flooding downstream and protect water quality.

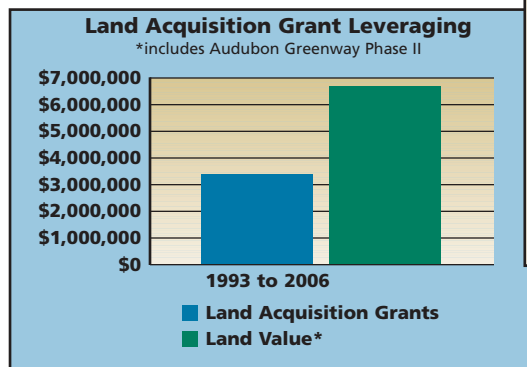
3. Scenic landscapes that define our region's unique geographic character—the *Physical and Ecological Investigation of Pittsburgh's Hillside* report enlightened us about the unique geographical region we live in and the public benefit of protecting the highly visible wooded slopes and ridgelines that provide the verdant backdrop to our city, communities and neighborhoods.

The resulting ALT Greenprint will be a map of prioritized conservation targets. Existing data will be collected and analyzed to spotlight the lands that include the three attributes. See the hourglass diagram at left. This methodology will ensure that we are focusing our resources to protect the lands that provide the highest public benefit per acre.

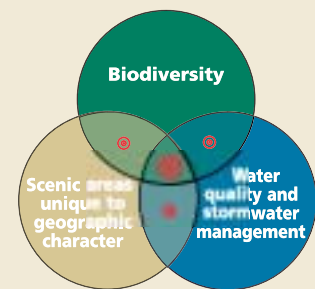
I am pleased to announce that our plan to develop the ALT Greenprint was met favorably by a foundation who invited us to submit a proposal to develop it. During development of the ALT Greenprint, we will once again be seeking the public's input and feedback as the map takes shape. We need you and your neighbors to inform us about the unique lands in your community so the ALT Greenprint includes the best lands to be protected forever. Keep an eye out for meeting announcements early next year.

While the ALT Greenprint is being developed over the next 10 months we will also be fundraising to build staff capacity to implement it and the rest of our strategic plan. Our goal is to have the ALT Greenprint adopted by the

Board of Directors and
the Strategic Plan
funded by June
2007.



A Regional Conservation Agenda Prioritizing Conservation for the Public Good



⊙ Primary Conservation Targets
○ Secondary Conservation Targets

Regional Mall Invites Sustainability Assessment

ALT was invited by Sustainable Pittsburgh's Sustainable Business Solutions enterprise to join a team to conduct a sustainability assessment of The Mall at Robinson. Experts were assembled to review various design elements and operations of the Mall to identify where adjustments may be made to be more sustainable. Waste management, energy efficiency and stormwater management are a few of the elements that were analyzed. ALT's executive director drafted a report that included recommendations that could be implemented today as well as others that can be considered for any future development. "ALT plays a valued role in helping landowners like the Mall to consider options and benefits of land stewardship," says Court Gould of Sustainable Pittsburgh. Thanks to Sustainable Business Solutions for inviting ALT to participate and for coordinating this visionary effort.



Row 1 (from left): Dave McGaffin, Mall at Robinson; Dave Mazza, PA Resources Council; Ryan Snow, Green Building Alliance; Michael Stepaniak, PA Resources Council.

Row 2: Mark LaFrance, Mall; Richard Pearson, BioSpace Development, Co.; Greg Wozniak, Wozniak & Associates; Beth Edwards, Mall; Tracy Montarti, In the Loop, Inc.; Shema Krinsky, Mall; Lynn Manion, Airport Corridor Transportation Association; Marcia Maslonek, Wildlife Habitat Council; Court Gould, Sustainable Pittsburgh; Melissa Krista, Mall; Christine Jamison, Mall; Meredith Kladakis, Mall; Amanda Harber, SP; Roy Kraynyk, Allegheny Land Trust; John Schombert, 3 Rivers Wet Weather; and Matt Mehalik, University of Pittsburgh Engineering.

Not Pictured: Linda Dickerson, 50lc32; Larry Resick, 50lc32; Mike Fischer, Community Energy; Dick Rosey, Solar Power Industries.

Note Cards Feature Seasonal Images of ALT Conservation Areas



Allegheny Land Trust Board and staff members have created two beautiful note cards featuring ALT's Audubon Greenway property with the message: "There is only one thing more rewarding than living in a beautiful setting. Protecting it." The cards are blank inside. The note cards are bundled five to a pack including envelopes and are attractively packaged as shown at left. The Trust is selling two packages of cards for \$15.00 (plus \$2.00 shipping and handling). You may choose the winter scene, the fall scene or one of each. Buy several packages for yourself or as gifts for friends. Order online at www.alleghenylandtrust.org or call the Trust office at 412-604-0422. All proceeds benefit Allegheny Land Trust. Thanks!

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New Federal Law Gives Fairer Tax Benefit for Voluntary Conservation Agreements

Generous landowners who donate voluntary conservation agreements, also known as conservation easements, to the Allegheny Land Trust are inspired by many things: they love the Southwestern Pennsylvania landscape, they feel connected to their land, and they wish to leave a legacy for future generations. This inspiration is at the heart of our work to permanently protect valuable natural resources. But for almost all of our donors, donating a conservation easement is a major financial decision, and the federal income tax deduction that comes with a donation helps make easements possible for landowners in our community.

Congress recently passed a new law that enhances the tax benefits of protecting private land for many landowners. The legislation improves the tax incentive for conservation easements by allowing conservation easement donors to:

- Deduct up to 50% of their adjusted gross income in any year (up from 30%);
- Deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income if the majority of that income came from farming, ranching or forestry; and

*A view of the Audubon Greenway—
read about it on page 3.*

- Continue to take deductions for as long as 16 years (up from 6 years).

Congress also passed tighter appraisal standards for such gifts, and stronger penalties for appraisers who violate the standards.

The Land Trust Alliance (LTA) led the effort to get Congress to approve this new law. LTA is a national organization that sets national standards for conservation organizations like Allegheny Land Trust, provides training and networking opportunities, and represents the land trust community in Washington, DC. Allegheny Land Trust has been a member of LTA for 10 years.

Each day we are touched by the generous and inspired landowners who work with us. The new law will make it easier for others in our community to build on their love of the land and permanently protect local land.

To learn more about these new incentives to protect your land with a conservation easement feel free to contact the office at 412-604-0422.

Forever projects, continued from page 2

Heritage Inventory, and that became our priority list,” he explained. From that list the Board chose projects that “seemed doable” and which had someone in the locality to assist with any planned implementation. Dead Man’s Hollow in Elizabeth Borough was chosen according to those criteria and became the model for conservation projects to come.

Five other properties were acquired for their habitat and biodiversity, then along came the 80-acre Wingfield Pines property in Upper St. Clair, a former golf course and resort that included an abandoned mine drainage outflow that gushes at 2,000 gallons per minute and discharges 43 tons of iron oxide per year into Chartiers Creek. “We really had to decide whether to take on a property that would require a significant amount of time and money to resolve the mine drainage problem,” Ubinger explained.

And there was the public service provided by protecting what was essentially a natural flood plain allowing it to perform its function as an overflow should the creek flood catastrophically, as indeed happened on September 17, 2004 when Wingfield Pines held about 50 million gallons of water.

Referring to the retreat which resulted in the ALT Greenprint, Ubinger comments, “The process we have gone through has been really, really good for

the organization, and in the next year or two I think you’ll see us building the capacity of the organization.”

“What we need to know about ourselves at this juncture is that we have a tremendous track record of keeping promises and doing things well, and now we want to become a self-sustaining organization and there is value in investing in us,” he continued.

“The projects we are working now are ‘forever projects’, long-term projects,” Ubinger says of the organization’s current state. “Organizations like ALT are at the interface of ownership and use and enjoyment of private property, and the regulation of private property for the public good. There are limits on government for what it can do legally and what it can afford to do,” he explains, “and ALT can fill the niche to see that land is used in a way that best benefits the public.”

Help us continue to protect biodiversity, viewscape and stormwater-sensitive areas.

Make a tax-deductible donation or join the Allegheny Land Trust today.

- Use the enclosed reply envelope to make a tax-deductible donation.
- Visit www.alleghenylantrust.org and join online or download a membership form and mail it in.
- Call 412-604-0422 or e-mail info@alleghenylantrust.org.

Recent ALT Events Read about these and others at www.alleghenylantrust.org.

Below, the ALT Board in retreat in May 2006. Find out who they are on ALT’s website.



At right, a Duquesne University student displays a frog at Chartiers Creek Day, June 10, 2006.



Above, U.S. Congressman Tim Murphy strums his guitar and sings “This Land is Your Land” at Bluegrass for Green Space 2006.



Helping local people save local land.

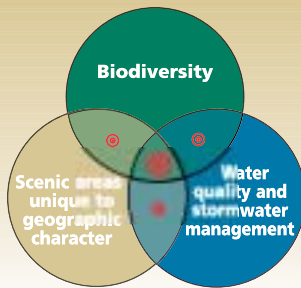
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A New Strategy for Land Conservation

ALT Greenprint:

**A Regional Conservation Agenda
Prioritizing Conservation for the Public Good**

The goals of stakeholders, ALT Board members and the general public guide the future of the Allegheny Land Trust.

Read about it on pages 4 and 5.

A Unique Holiday Gift that Benefits Land Conservation Exclusive French and Indian War Prints by Pittsburgh artist Nat Youngblood

Allegheny Land Trust has an unique opportunity for you to commemorate Western Pennsylvania's role in world history and, at the same time, support conservation of Western Pennsylvania land.

The Trust is offering a very limited edition of prints by Pittsburgh artist Nat Youngblood depicting events of the French and Indian War. These prints, produced using the superior giclée process, are numbered and signed by the artist.

Now, through the cooperation of Peter West, owner of World West Galleries in Washington, PA, you can examine and even purchase the prints at his gallery.

While other Youngblood prints sell for up to \$450, this series of seven prints is very reasonably priced between \$135 and \$185 each.

Please visit ALT's website at www.alleghenylandtrust.org to view the set of prints, read about the history of these prints and find out how to purchase one for yourself or as a gift.



"Army Train Ascending the Allegheny Front", Nat Youngblood