

VISTAS

A publication of Allegheny Land Trust

Fall 2009



From the Executive Director

EMPOWERED BY PARTNERS

By now summer is just a memory and everyone is back into their normal routine. I look back at the success that ALT has achieved over the years and realize that there is one thing all of our projects have in common...Partners.

ALT approaches projects with an open mind and open arms, inviting ideas and people into the fold resulting in community awareness and support. For example, on July 15 we closed on the 73-acre Irwin Run Valley Conservation Area (formerly known as North Park Greenway) in Pine Township adjacent to North Park. The property fulfills our Greenprint criteria by helping to hold back silt and stormwater in Pine Creek, maintaining the water quality of North Park Lake.

Local organizations North Area Environmental Council, Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy, Friends of North Park and Villas of North Park Homeowners Association supported the project by raising local awareness and much needed funding (\$30,000) to match state and foundation grants.

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Stewardship Accomplishments in 2009

by Doug France, Stewardship Coordinator

Partnerships, collaboratives and dedicated volunteers are assisting Allegheny Land Trust in addressing the stewardship needs for ALT's nearly 1,500 acres of protected lands. Throughout this year more than 400 trees and native shrubs were planted to enhance wildlife, and non-native invasive plants were removed to sustain native growth. Every day litter and illegally dumped material is being cleared from ALT property.

Here at ALT each day includes planning for stewardship activities on ALT properties and arranging all the details of workdays. Over 250 volunteers participate in ALT stewardship activities and our thanks to those who help is immeasurable. Individual volunteers, volunteer organizations and partnering businesses are discovering that green collar work has rewards that are long lasting and filled with natural healthy exercise.

Pittsburgh Cares, a partner volunteer organization that locates volunteers for projects, provided volunteers for the spring planting of wetland enhancement trees and shrubs at our Wingfield Pines Conservation Area in April and were led by Eagle Scout Dawson

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We couldn't do it without our partners.

ALT Board member John Inserra joins volunteers at a tree planting at Wingfield Pines.

More Inside!

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Welcome New Board Members

The Board unanimously appointed Ann Coburn, Robin Hummel-Johnson, Laurie Johnson and Brian O'Brien to three-year terms at the May and June Board meetings. "We are delighted to have these distinguished individuals join our team. Their participation will certainly help to build and define the image of ALT and accelerate our rate of land protection," states Board Chair Kevin Garber.

ALT's efforts. She is the current Vice President of the PA Environmental Council and Secretary of the Board for the Center for Plant Conservation in St. Louis. In the past, she has served as the Treasurer, National Conservation Chair and National Legislative Chair for the Garden Club of America. Locally, Ann is the President of the Village Garden Club of Sewickley.

Club serving as President, and Garden Club of Allegheny County where she served as Treasurer for two terms. Involvement with these groups introduced her to organizations that protect and preserve the land and water systems in Allegheny County. This past year she joined the Board of Friends of the Riverfront and can be found gardening, taking a walk, paddling her kayak or riding her bike as time allows.



Ann Coburn, Robin Hummel-Johnson, Laurie Johnson and Brian O'Brien

Ann, Robin and Laurie of Sewickley will help to represent a geographic area where we now have 150 acres under conservation and a strong base of community support. As a Shareholder at Schneider Downs, Brian will complement the Board's financial and accounting expertise and Chair the Audit Committee.

ANN COBURN is "impressed with ALT's work in land conservation" and is looking forward to drawing on her own experiences in land conservation to further

ROBIN HUMMEL-JOHNSON feels "what ALT is doing is important and effective." Robin is an Associate member of the Village Garden Club and the past Regional Director for the United States Equestrian Federation.

LAURIE JOHNSON firmly believes that protecting our land and waterways for living, commerce and recreation is the guarantee for a better quality of life. Since moving with her husband to Sewickley in 2002, Laurie joined the Trowel and Error Garden

BRIAN O'BRIEN is Chairman of Schneider Downs Accounting, Assurance & Advisory Service Department. His areas of specialization include lumber, coal, mineral and oil and gas extractive industries, real estate development and nonprofits. In addition to his numerous past and present affiliations with boards of directors as a member and outside consultant, Brian is a member of the IGAF Worldwide's National Professional Education Committee. Brian resides in Hickory.

ALT Welcomes Operations and Development Coordinator Leanne Bloor

Leanne comes to ALT with over six years of experience in fundraising for the arts and education. Upon graduating with a BA in Communications from Allegheny College, Leanne served as the Assistant Director of Summerbridge Pittsburgh at Sewickley Academy and Coordinator of Development at Lincoln Park Performing Arts Center in Midland, PA.

"I'm so excited to be a part of the work ALT does to protect our local lands and to raise awareness of the importance of saving greenspace for future generations to enjoy."



Another Emerald Under Contract

In 2007 ALT acquired an 11-acre tract on Mt. Washington that has become part of the Emerald Link (AKA Grandview Scenic Byway Park)—a 260-acre greenway and park around Mt. Washington, in Pittsburgh. In August, ALT inked another deal to acquire an adjacent 19-acre tract. ALT's role in this project is to help our partner, the Mt. Washington Community Development Corporation (MWCDC), to acquire privately-held land to complete a contiguous greenway from Grand View Park on the north face (City side) to Mt. Washington Park on the south face (Saw Mill Run side). In addition to these parcels ALT is also brokering the gifting of five parcels directly from landowners to the City. ALT will be working with the MWCDC to engage the local community in the project as we advance a campaign to raise awareness and the local funds necessary to obligate state and foundation matching funds.

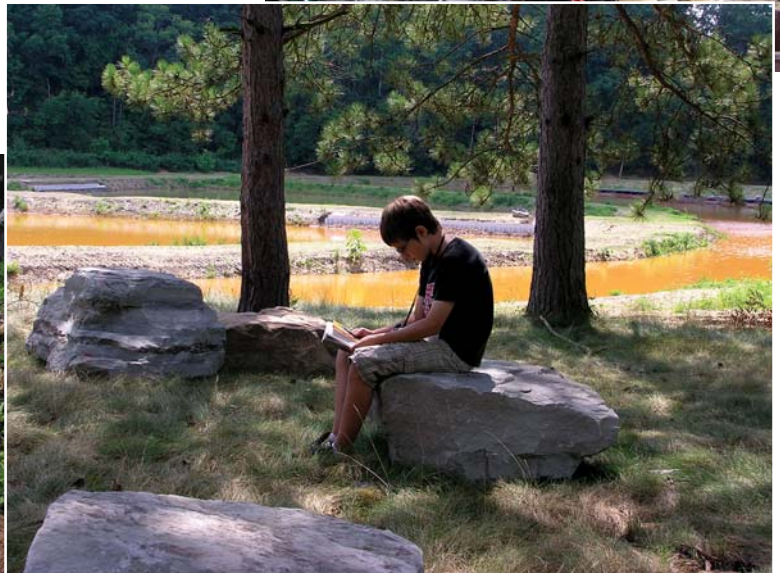


Ace Aerial Photography

Abandoned Mine Drainage System Begins to Flow at Wingfield Pines

After five years of planning and permitting, testing of the AMD system at ALT's Wingfield Pines Conservation Area has begun. The system will naturally treat up to 2,000 gallons per minute of iron-laden mine water before it reaches Chartiers Creek. The system will remove about 43 tons of iron oxide from the mine water annually, and provide a regional educational attraction.

Even during construction several site tours have visited. ALT is discussing partnering with the nearby Regional Environmental Education Center on programming. The overall site plan for the project included an interpretative trail system featuring stepping stones across the wetlands, interesting vantage points and a mini outdoor "classroom" nestled within a cool shady pine grove.



Many Mussels Mingling

The life cycle, breeding habits and benefits of fresh water mussels is too complex to be addressed in this short article, but it deserves to be mentioned that these unique creatures love Sycamore Island.

Perhaps it's the cool summer breezes, wonderful riverfront views and romantic sandy beaches.

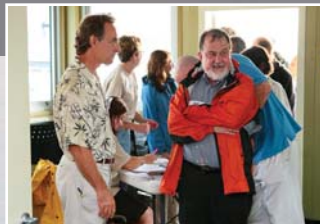
Early research by scientists has discovered seven distinct species so far. Each species provides a clue to the river's health and ecology since mussels are dependent upon other fish for their survival. For example, the fact that the Three-Horned Wart Back mussel has been found indicates that there are Common Shiner and Long Nose Dace fish in the river, and the Pink Heal Splitter mussel is an indicator of the presence of Freshwater Drum fish.

An inventory of mussels is just one component of the scope of work being done by Applied Ecological Services, a firm contracted by ALT to conduct an ecological study and make recommendations for a management plan of the island. At right is a sample of the work to be conducted over the next 6 to 8 months. Over that time, public meetings will invite input from the community about the island's history, activities and management.

ALT Boat Tour of

On August 19, 125 Allegheny Land Trust guests boarded RiverQuest's floating classroom, *Explorer*, for a tour around the Trust's Sycamore Island property and a preview of stewardship plans for the island.

Afternoon rain storms and road detours made land travel difficult, but as soon as the boat left the Fox Chapel Yacht Club dock, the weather cleared. After that, it was smooth sailing up the Allegheny River to the 14-acre Sycamore Island near Blawnox. Those aboard were able to view, up-close, remnants of former uses: pilings from a former marina in the backwater channel and an old wooden barge overgrown with vegetation that provided a gas dock from 1962 to 1972. They also saw the floodplain forest of silver maple and other hardwoods that makes this island so unique as well as the large area of invasive Japanese knotweed that covers the head of the island. Toward the end of the evening, they witnessed a large number of turkey vultures returning to Sycamore Island and its neighbor, Nine Mile Island, to roost for the night.



Scope of Work for Sycamore Island

- An explanation for the chronology of accretion (growth of the island)
- A biological and aquatic inventory encompassing the bottom of the river to forest canopy
- Evaluation of the Island's impact on the ecology and hydrology (water properties) of the Allegheny River
- Evaluation of the Island's significance as fish and aquatic species habitat
- Evaluation of the Island's significance as terrestrial (land) species habitat
- Evaluation of the Island's significance as resident and migrating bird species habitat
- Threatened and Endangered Species Survey and Existing Studies Review
- Aquatic Species, Reptile, Amphibian, Terrestrial Mammal, Bird & Vegetation Surveys
- Geology Study
- Human Use and Impact Study
- Individual Key Stakeholder Meetings/Interviews

Are you interested in participating in upcoming public meetings or volunteering for stewardship activities on the island?

**Please contact us at
admin@alleghenylandtrust.org or
call us at 412-741-2750.**

Sycamore Island

During the tour, Scott Quitel of Applied Ecological Services (AES) discussed his firm's initial assessment of the island's ecology and displayed samples of vegetation and freshwater mussels that are found in and around the island. Scott also talked about the management plan that will be developed to further ALT's vision for Sycamore Island as an outdoor classroom to study river island ecology with opportunities for birding and hiking.

Everyone enjoyed a beautiful evening on the Allegheny River and came away with renewed enthusiasm for Allegheny Land Trust's vision for the future of Sycamore Island and mission to help local people save local land. Special thanks go to RiverQuest's Executive Director Paul King, Captain Richard Jablonski and the crew of *Explorer* for use of the boat.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reporter Don Hopey covered the event in the August 23 Sunday edition.





Allegheny Land Trust Announces Legacy Program

The Allegheny Land Trust Legacy Society recognizes ALT supporters who have chosen to help ensure that the beautiful local landscapes right here in Allegheny County are protected for future generations to enjoy.

With ALT conservation areas located from Mt. Washington to Sewickley, the North and South Hills and the Mon Valley, ALT established the Legacy Society for supporters who want to provide for the long-term care of these woodlands and natural spaces that make this area unique.

“Allegheny County is gaining more and more national and recent world-wide attention for the beauty of its wooded hillsides. We’ve established the Legacy Society in response to the growing commitment by a special group of our local supporters who want to make sure that it stays that way by making a legacy gift to Allegheny Land Trust,” says Rhonda Hagins, Director of Development.

Through Allegheny Land Trust’s Legacy Society you can provide future support for local conservation by making a gift that costs nothing during your lifetime, with possible tax benefits.

Learn more about:

- Adding Allegheny Land Trust as a beneficiary in your will;
- Making Allegheny Land Trust a beneficiary of your IRA or retirement fund;
- Naming Allegheny Land Trust as a beneficiary of an insurance policy.

Please visit www.alleghenylandtrust.org, return the enclosed envelope and check the box for “please send me more information about including ALT in my will or estate plans”, or contact Rhonda Hagins at 412-741-2751 or by email at rhagins@alleghenylandtrust.org.

Always consult with your attorney concerning the best way for you to provide for Allegheny Land Trust in your estate plan.

IRA Gifts Extended Through 2009 NOW YOU CAN MAKE A TAX-FREE GIFT TO ALLEGHENY LAND TRUST FROM YOUR IRA!

Congress has temporarily extended through 2009 the legislation that allows donors to make tax-free gifts from their IRA Accounts. The special legislation allows you to make charitable gifts directly (“rolled over”) from a traditional or Roth Individual Retirement Account (IRA) without incurring federal income taxes. The following limitations apply: the donor must be age 70-1/2 or older, the cap on annual IRA rollovers is \$100,000, and the contribution must be a direct gift to a charity made before December 31, 2009.

Please contact your financial advisor to learn if making a charitable gift to Allegheny Land Trust from your IRA is appropriate for you. For more information please contact Rhonda Hagins at 412-741-2751 or by email at rhagins@alleghenylandtrust.org.

“From the Executive Director”, continued from page 1

Now that the land has been acquired by ALT, the responsibility of long term stewardship begins. It is comforting to know that these organizations and their members are already engaged in the project and will be there as the demands of land ownership mount. Moving forward we’ll be working with others like the PA Game Commission as we develop a plan for management of ALT’s newest conservation area.

This is just one example of how a community has rallied around one of our conservation projects. It indicates how responsive the public can be when they are empowered to impact the way their community grows and is developed—in this case, not developed. While ALT empowers local people to save local land our partners empower ALT.

*We would like to make our gift in honor of
our grandchildren and all children—may they
cherish the land saved for them.*

Linda and Harold Deiss, Gibsonia

"Stewardship", continued from page 1

Marshall. At the planting, one family of volunteers planted a tree for each member of their family knowing that for many years to come they could visit the area and watch the progressive growth of the trees. The children loved answering my question of "who will live in your tree when it is older?"



Our spring cleanup for Dead Man's Hollow Preserve on April 25 hosted extra volunteers through a partnership with the Borough of Lincoln along with many others. The volunteers were treated to a cookout by the Lincoln fire department and were able to trade the trash they collected for treasure. Among the prizes were some fishing tackle boxes with gear included—a big hit that brought smiles to many.

During the month of May we were out talking to the public at events like Garden Mart in Sewickley where beekeeper Robert Steffes joined us at our table. Children and adults were treated to honey and saw the bees doing their work. Later in the month staff and volunteer Sue Gold talked with the many visitors at the Venture Outdoors Festival where passersby were invited to take the Conservation Pledge.



Early summer brought yet another partner organization, Allegheny Cleanways, to assist ALT with a "tireless event" cleaning up shoreline along the Allegheny River. ALT's Barking Slopes Preserve has over 6,000 feet of shoreline where volunteers helped remove an incredible two tons of trash. Local citizens in the small river town of Barking were exceptionally helpful donating time and the services from a local marina to get the job done.



There is a time for everything and so it is with removing invasive species of non-native plants. Management tools in natural land management are helpful to stewardship, and one of those tools is knowing when to do the work. July was time to partner with Citizens for Land Stewardship in Upper St. Clair on the Wingfield Pines Preserve to remove purple loosestrife.

ALT's partners are providing invaluable help with the stewardship of our lands. Local canoe clubs and boat clubs help get workers back and forth to Sycamore Island and our Eco-Stewards are helping to monitor the use of trail systems on the properties. With the help of our volunteers and partners we look forward to providing more opportunities for organized hikes, bird watching, canoe and kayak trips and seasonal outings so that the public can enjoy the lands they helped ALT to preserve.



2nd annual Bounty in THE BARN

SEWICKLEY HEIGHTS

Saturday, October 3, 2009
6:30 - 10:30pm

This year we celebrate the harvest from the land with a catered al fresco meal featuring Spanish foods and wine. Music by the NewLanders! Last year's event sold-out so order your tickets early online at alleghenylandtrust.org or call 412-741-2750.

Tickets are \$100 per person and benefit ALT's conservation efforts. Come prepared to bid in the Silent Auction.

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**VISTAS is underwritten by an anonymous donor.
Thank you!**



Helping local people save local land.

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www.alleghenylandtrust.org

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VISTAS

UPCOMING EVENTS

BOUNTY IN THE BARN **Sewickley Heights**

October 3, 2009

See page 7 for details.

Visit www.alleghenylandtrust.org to
buy your tickets!

STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM **Irwin Run Conservation Area** **North Park**

October 8, 2009, 7:00 p.m.

IRWIN RUN DEDICATION **Irwin Run Conservation Area**

October 31, 2009, 11:00 a.m.

For information on upcoming events, go
to www.alleghenylandtrust.org.



2nd Annual **Bounty** **in the** **Barn**

OCTOBER 3, 2009

See page 7 for details

Remember this Date: **Matching Day 2009** **October 28, 10:00 AM**

The Pittsburgh Foundation through its
PittsburghGives program will match
contributions 50 cents on every dollar up to a
maximum of \$2,500 per individual. Minimum
contribution is \$50.00.

\$200,000 in matching funds will be available to
area nonprofit and supporters can visit
www.pittsburghgives.org.

Go online early to make a matching gift to ALT!
Funds are expected to be exhausted in an hour.



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Allegheny Regional Asset District

