

VISTAS

A publication of Allegheny Land Trust

Winter 2010



From the Executive Director

NURTURING NATURE

I have to admit it...I love my job!

To be working to protect the landscape where I grew up is wonderful. We would build tree houses and cabins, make tea from sassafras roots, build a dam in a creek on a hot summer's day to create a pool to cool off, swing on grape vines out over steep hillsides we called Galloping Gulch, hunt, horseback ride, discover a 150-year-old hollow oak tree large enough that three people could stand inside and see the sky. I even stole my first kiss on a high hilltop that we called Vista Grande.

I was lucky to grow up in Moon Township in the 60's when you could walk three directions from my house and not cross another road for more than a mile. Even though it is painful to see the woods where I had those experiences as a kid now being developed into a housing plan, spending time in similar western PA woods with my children brings back those fond memories. It's that experience that motivates me to protect land so others can have the opportunity to have similar experiences.

See "Executive Director", page 6

Last \$25,000 Needed for Emerald View Park Expansion

As this newsletter goes to print, Allegheny Land Trust only needs \$25,000 to reach its goal to protect the 14 acre property on the south side of Mt.

Washington to expand Emerald View Park before the end of the year. We need every gift large and small!

We're hoping to raise an additional **\$6,000 from individuals**

before December 31

to meet the

community goal!

There are also pending grant requests with local foundations.

And remember, a group of local neighbors has pledged a total of \$6,000 in matching gifts as part of a Matching Funds Challenge. So, your gift will be doubled!



Aerial photo by Ace Aerial Photography

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Do you know what these are? See page 3 to find out!

ALT Leads Sewickley Heights Land Planning Effort

Last spring, Sewickley Heights Borough Council embarked on a planning exercise with assistance from Allegheny Land Trust (ALT). The intent was to establish a Vision Plan for the Borough that sustains the distinctive qualities which make it one of the most unique communities in Western PA. To accomplish this goal, ALT and a Stakeholder Committee comprising knowledgeable community members began planning efforts to ensure that future growth and development restores, maintains and enhances, rather than incrementally erodes, the Borough's historic landscape and rural character.

ALT identified and mapped land in Sewickley Heights that met specified recreational, aesthetic and ecological criteria. Land identified included the large area known as the Little Sewickley Creek Biodiversity Area.

Interviews were conducted with key individuals in the community who possess a unique perspective including government officials, historians, naturalists, a realtor and large landowners.

To assist in determining the more subjective aesthetic criteria used to

evaluate land, a public survey was distributed to landowners in Sewickley Heights with 38% responding. Results from the

public survey revealed that the majority of residents believe woodlands have the most influence on the area's character, and therefore are important to protect to maintain the desirable rural aesthetic. An encouraging survey result was that more than 75% of the respondents would support a Land Protection Fund, which would provide matching funds necessary to acquire public grants for conservation.

Land identified to support the recreational, aesthetic,



and ecological criteria of Sewickley Heights was prioritized and incorporated into an implementation plan, which includes strategies for land protection, potential partners and funding sources. "The

Borough is enthusiastic about working with Allegheny Land Trust to carry out the vision as it pertains to land protection and it's encouraging to see residents step up to support it," adds Councilman Tom McCargo, who led the planning effort.

An important component of implementation of the plan includes the re-evaluation of Borough Ordinances. ALT conducted an ordinance review and provided recommendations which demonstrate opportunities to strengthen protection of the Borough's natural amenities.

The Borough is enthusiastic about working with Allegheny Land Trust to carry out the vision as it pertains to land protection and it's encouraging to see residents step up to support it.
— Tom McCargo, Sewickley Heights Councilman

The Sewickley Heights Vision Plan was approved by Borough Council on October 18, 2010. Mayor John C. Oliver III stated that, "current residents of the Quaker Valley are the beneficiaries of a long tradition of land conservation by early

visionaries that settled the valley and surrounding hills. The green space we enjoy today is a result of their caring for the future. It is important for the leaders and residents living today to sustain that legacy so future generations can enjoy the benefits of living in such a wonderful place, as we enjoy today. The Vision Plan is a positive step towards continuing that legacy."

Welcome Jessica Stewart, Conservation Planner

Jessica Stewart was born and raised in Erie, PA. She attributes much of her love of the outdoors to her hometown and time spent in Presque Isle State Park.

After graduating from Mercyhurst Preparatory School, Jessica continued her studies at the University of Pittsburgh. She completed her field study at Yellowstone National Park in the summer of 2008. While enrolled



at Pitt, Jessica also gained experience working for several non-profit organizations including AmeriCorps, Clean Water Action and the Frick Environmental Center. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies in 2009.

Jessica began working at Allegheny Land Trust in August 2009 as an intern and was hired permanently in August 2010. Currently, she is involved in the Sewickley Heights Visioning Plan and administers Allegheny County's Farmland Preservation Program which has led to the preservation of over 2,100 acres of farmland in the county. Jessica says, "I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of an organization doing such meaningful work. It has been a pleasure getting to know the staff, board and members of Allegheny Land Trust. I'm very excited for what is to come!"

OUT IN THE FIELD...

Baffling Beavers

This fall, ALT partnered with the Pennsylvania Game Commission and Western Pennsylvania Coalition of Abandoned Mine Reclamation to install a beaver baffle at the Wingfield Pines Conservation area. In recent months, a beaver colony (or family) moved into the filtering wetlands—the final process step of the AMD system at Wingfield Pines. As excited as we were to have this new family in town, their home caused an interruption in the flow of water through the system. The beaver baffle will allow water to flow as intended from the system into Chartiers Creek without displacing or harming the beaver. The pictures below show the water level before and after the baffle installation.

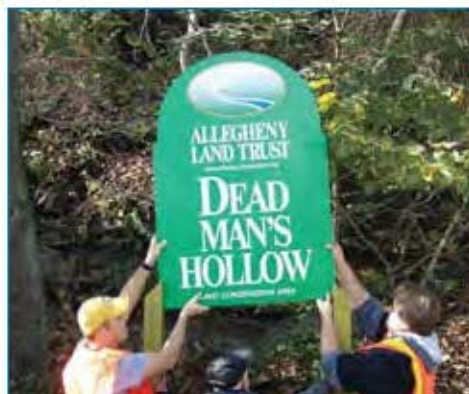


Here we go a-paddling!

Twenty kayakers floated the riverbanks and explored the interior of Sycamore Island as part of a joint outing between ALT and Venture Outdoors.



Dead Man's Hollow



On October 16, a group of 35 volunteers participated in a clean-up at the Dead Man's Hollow Conservation Area. Improvements to the trailhead, installation of a new sign and trail maintenance were just a sampling of the day's events. Thank you to all who participated!



Thank you to our ALT Site Stewards who shared their comments, concerns and success stories at the annual Site Stewards Summit in October! It was great to spend the day talking about ALT properties with the stewards and Board and making plans for the future.

Pokeweed (Wingfield Pines) – this vibrant purple berry is a vital fall food source for birds, but is poisonous to mammals. The toxins are found in the inner seed, which birds intake and extract as whole seeds, only eating the fleshy berry.

Allegheny Land Trust held our 3rd Annual "Bounty in the BarN" harvest celebration fundraiser on October 9, 2010. Once again, hosts Jodie and Bill Welge opened up the doors of their historic BarN in Sewickley Heights for the event. Over 100 guests enjoyed a twist on the traditional American picnic while being entertained by local folk musicians, The NewLanders. Over \$24,000 was raised to benefit ALT's local conservation efforts! Thank you to the event sponsors, donors and guests for making "Bounty in the BarN" a success.

Bounty in the BarN

SEWICKLEY

Saturday, Oct



Artist Dick Thompson,
Heather Semple and
Hostess Jodie Welge

Annamaria and Fanor Vega and
ALT Director Alan Miller and wife Patricia



Belge and Erika Wehmeier



Jean and Jack English



Third Annual

Party in BARN

SEWICKLEY HEIGHTS

October 9, 2010

Sonya Thorbecke
and her daughter Noel Estes



ALT Director Lynn Heckman, second from left, and
her husband, Kevin Smay, far right, and Tom and
Barbara Reilly



Sandra and Phil Hundley



The NewLanders



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**The
WINEBOSS**

GreenTalk with Sangeeta S. Chakravorty, MD

Welcome to ALT's new monthly feature "GreenTalk". Each month we will interview a member of the Pittsburgh community and share their thoughts about our green city and ALT's conservation work.

This month, we interviewed Sangeeta S. Chakravorty, MD. Sangeeta specializes in Pediatric Pulmonology at Children's Hospital and has worked in cities including Buffalo, NY and Atlanta, GA.

What is your favorite ALT Conservation Area?

My favorite green space is North Park. I am excited to know that Allegheny Land Trust has recently acquired the tract of land adjacent to North Park. I look forward to exploring the walking path this spring.

What was your first impression of Pittsburgh?

When I arrived in Pittsburgh in July 2000 from Atlanta, I was struck by how green the hills appeared as we prepared for landing. Driving down the highways, the trees concealed communities and buildings in many areas. I loved the interesting landscape which reminded me of small hill towns in my country of origin, India.



How does Pittsburgh's green space differ from your home/places you have worked?

Other than densely populated residential neighborhoods, suburban Pittsburgh is definitely more green and natural compared to my other experiences.

Why do you think conserving green space is so important?

I feel much more peaceful when connected with nature and my eyes feel rested when they encounter beautiful green landscapes. Green space buffers sound, supports bio-diversity, prevents erosion of hillsides, maintains water tables underground and provides recreational opportunities. We are humans, biologically programmed to be

in natural environments. Cities are not natural environments and green spaces show us the difference.

What can you say about the healing power of nature?

I can't say enough – Nature heals the body, mind and spirit in unfathomable ways.

What influence do you think Pittsburgh's environment has on individuals' health?

It has a tremendous impact. Green spaces filter our air, cut down CO₂, release oxygen and are organic. Losing our green space is like losing our lungs.

Are you interested in contributing to GreenTalk? Please e-mail Leanne at lbloor@alleghenylandtrust.org.

GREENTALK

"From the Executive Director", continued from page 1

The protected green space that we enjoy today is the result of conservationists before us. Author Nancy Newhall said, "Conservation is humanity caring for the future." As beneficiaries of the work of earlier caring conservationists, we are indebted to them. To honor their work we need to pay it forward so future generations can enjoy the benefits as we have. We need to nurture and care for the land we have protected and work harder to protect more. Because if we don't...who will?

There is a legacy of land conservation in our region including municipal, county and state parks as well as private conservation efforts like ALT's. Each of us can be a part of advancing that legacy by sustaining the effort and building upon the framework of protected green space.

We will NEVER protect too much land. But if by some miraculous event we ever do, we can always give some back... if needed. Conversely, if too much land is developed it is impossible to restore the healthy ecology that was once there. **RK**

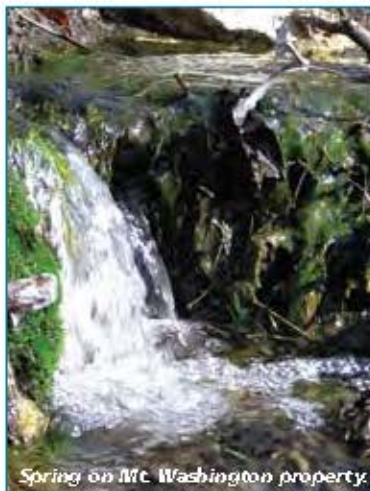
Day of Giving 2010

On October 13, 2010, 69 donors responded with gifts to ALT totaling over \$9,300 as part of The Pittsburgh Foundation's second annual Day of Giving! Donated funds were matched with a prorated amount by The Pittsburgh Foundation.

A big THANK YOU to all who participated in the second annual Day of Giving and to The Pittsburgh Foundation for their support of area nonprofit organizations!

"Emerald View Park", continued from page 1

Big thanks to all of the individuals who have contributed. For those of you still considering a gift, please help us raise the last funds needed by making a contribution today! It's easy. Return the enclosed reply envelope and mark your gift for "Mt. Washington" or visit us at www.alleghenylandtrust.org to make a secure gift online. Every gift counts to show community support



Spring on Mt. Washington property

to the state and local foundations that have provided significant grants for the project.

In partnership with the Mt. Washington Community Development Corporation, ALT has raised \$198,000 toward the total project cost of \$224,000. Major government and foundation funding for the project has been

provided by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, The Pittsburgh Foundation, Laurel Foundation, Colcom Foundation, the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation and The Heinz Endowments.

Building strong partnerships with stakeholders like the Mt. Washington CDC and Allegheny Land Trust is helping to further our City's environmental transformation. Protecting this land as permanent green space will improve the tremendous recreational opportunities available at one of our City's most unique and beautiful regional parks.

—Mayor Luke Ravenstahl

With the protection of this property, Emerald View Park will expand to encompass 257 acres in Mt. Washington. A 19-mile trail system is planned for the Park and the properties protected by Allegheny Land Trust are critical to connecting the south side of Mt. Washington to existing park trails.

Making it Count

by Rhonda Madden, Development Director

Roy opened the newsletter with a call to pay it forward to future generations. I think it's fitting to close with that same reminder. In the conservation business, we often talk about our legacy to future generations. It's why we do what we do and I know, personally, that after twenty years of asking people to support land conservation, it comes down to keeping people connected to the places that they care about. One ALT board member recently responded to a question about why conservation was important to him with, "Although there are many worthy causes, none has a more enduring impact."

It's painful when our connection to the land is broken. When we lose connection to a special place, we look for something else similar to bring back a sense of who we are and where we come from. For Roy, it's other woodlands that bring back the lost woods in Moon. For me, it's any stretch of meadow that reminds me of the lost farmland we ran out of time to save during the first years I was in conservation. For you, it may be some other special place. Our connections to the land are important and our efforts to protect it are some of the most important work we do. As another one of our supporters hoped, "may our children and grandchildren cherish the land saved for them." Yes, I hope they cherish it too but let's make sure we show them what that means by our own actions to cherish it now.

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VISTAS

Happy Holidays
from all of us at
Allegheny Land Trust.

Do you want to pay it forward? For information on visiting an Allegheny Land Trust Conservation Area, volunteering, or making a donation, visit www.alleghenylandtrust.org or return the enclosed reply envelope. Thank you!

 **ALT is on Facebook!**
Become a fan.

Please recycle this newsletter.



What will be your legacy?

You can make sure that future generations will be able to enjoy the same views and conservation benefits by helping to protect the land we cherish.

Learn more about ALT's Legacy Society and making a gift that costs nothing during your lifetime, with possible tax benefits:

- 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 and click How to Help/Gift Planning or call us at 412-741-2750.

