

VISTAS

A publication of Allegheny Land Trust

Autumn 2012

Allegheny Land Trust Welcomes New Executive Director

by Philip L. Brooks, Interim President

On behalf of Allegheny Land Trust's Transition Team, I am very pleased to announce that Christopher Beichner has accepted the position of Executive Director. He will begin on September 17, 2012.

Chris was selected from a very strong pool of candidates at the culmination of a six-month, nationwide search. He comes most recently from the Mount Washington Community Development Corporation (MWCDC) where he served as its Executive Director for the past four years. Prior to his current position he served for eight years in a number of different capacities with the Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission in Oil City, PA. His final position with the Commission was as Director of Community Development and Planning. Chris received a BS in Business Administration from Clarion University of Pennsylvania.

Chris has shown strong leadership while at the MWCDC overseeing business retention, expansion and attraction, park management, youth programming, environmental education, energy assistance, housing development, and public safety. Among Chris' many accomplishments are doubling his organization's budget in three years and receiving the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Innovation Award twice. He is very familiar to ALT, as our staff has worked with him at the MWCDC to expand the Emerald View Park. In fact, his organization gave ALT its "Park Partner of the Year" Award at their annual dinner in 2011.



Chris Beichner, ALT's new Executive Director

Chris shared that he is "very excited to begin a long-term relationship with a tremendous organization like ALT and work hand-in-hand with the Board, staff, investors and partners." Alan Miller, Chairman of the Board of Directors, commented, "The Transition Team was impressed by Chris' success with the CDC in engaging stakeholders in the organization's strategic planning and implementation efforts, strong leadership and his ability to understand, identify and implement diverse and sustainable funding streams."

Please join with Allegheny Land Trust's staff and Board of Directors in welcoming Chris to our organization. We look forward to introducing him to you, our valued stakeholders, over the coming months as we transition into the celebration of ALT's 20th year of *helping local people save local land*. If you have any questions or comments about this announcement, please call me at 412-741-2750 or email me at pbrooks@alleghenylandtrust.org.



PHOTO BY EMILIE COOPER

Harvest Time!

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Do you know this butterfly, this wildflower, or on what property these were photographed? See page 6 to find out!

Pittsburgh Cut Flower Property Campaign Launched

LOCAL CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED TO RAISE \$140,000 OF MATCHING FUNDS TO PURCHASE THE FORMER PITTSBURGH CUT FLOWER PROPERTY

by Roy Kraynyk

On August 1, Allegheny Land Trust announced a community campaign to raise \$140,000 of local funds needed to match foundation and public grants to purchase the former Pittsburgh Cut Flower property in Richland Township, Allegheny County. The campaign was launched with the unveiling of a fundraising status sign at the property and the presentation of a check from the Erie Insurance Group.

More than \$300,000 has already been raised and \$700,000 has been pledged pending matching funds being raised towards the goal of \$1.4 million that Allegheny Land Trust needs to purchase the 180-acre property. Fundraising is off to a good start with grants from the Colcom Foundation, Laurel Foundation, The Pittsburgh Foundation, and the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds.

Approximately 150 acres of meadows, pond and woodlands will be permanent green space, and nearly 30 acres of abandoned buildings and greenhouses will be demolished to make the property safe and available to be recycled for an economic development use. Demolition and clean-up may run another \$1 million.

"The property has been in a downward spiral for decades," states Herb Dankmyer, Chairman of the Richland Township Board of Supervisors. "Many developers have been interested in the property. None have been able to make things

work due to the costs involved. The Board of Supervisors believes ALT's approach is the best and only viable way to clean up the property and make it productive again."

A subcommittee of the Richland Township Parks and Recreation Board has been meeting for several months generating ideas to raise money. John Pasquinelli, a former Supervisor and current Parks Board member, has donated a big screen TV to raffle at Pine-Richland home football games and at

Pasquinelli Insurance Agency, 5349 Route 8, Gibsonia. In addition, Mr. Pasquinelli was able to secure a \$5,000 grant from the Erie Insurance Group. "I've been hoping for years for something good to happen to the property and Allegheny Land Trust's vision is perfect," states Mr. Pasquinelli, "I encourage other businesses, organizations and individuals to step up and contribute to this exciting community effort."

More than \$20,000 was raised in August toward the local match of \$140,000. "No amount is too small," said Roy Kraynyk, Allegheny Land Trust's Land Protection Director. "The number of people who give is as important as the amount because it indicates wide community support which the major funders love to see."

Visit our website at www.alleghenylandtrust.org to learn more and make a contribution to this exciting conservation opportunity!

Unveiling the PCF Sign with Annette Robinson, Dean Bastianini, John Pasquinelli, Leah Micholas, John Marshall and Roy Kraynyk



An abandoned building with a tall brick stack reflects on the pond on the PCF property.

NOTES FROM THE LAND

ED Transitions to Accelerate Land Protection

Earlier this year I approached the Board with the idea that I step down from the Executive Director position that I've held for the past 11 years to be able to dedicate more time to ALT's core mission of land conservation. Now with the title of Land Protection Director, I'm able to devote my time to identifying conservation targets that meet ALT's GREENPRINT criteria, negotiating the deal and raising the money to make it happen.

I believe this change will empower ALT to accelerate projects and take on more projects at one time. In fact, right now I'm working on five conservation projects that total more than 950 acres! Perhaps these opportunities would have come along anyway, but now I have the capacity to dedicate the time necessary to handle the complexity and demands of a real estate transaction such as hiring and managing vendors for due diligence, financing, and working closely with the local citizens and elected officials.

So looking back through 9/11 and the worst economic slump since the Great Depression, it seems like light years ago, when in February 2001 I was hired as ALT's first full-time director and had to find an office, operating revenue, and move all the files from the County offices to my basement until an office was found. Since then, ALT's operating budget grew from \$88,000 to \$500,000 and the amount of acres conserved doubled.

So the baton will be handed to a new Executive Director, Chris Beichner, who already has a successful track record of protecting local land. While Chris was still the Executive Director of the Mt. Washington Community Development Corporation, we collaborated to acquire land on Mt. Washington to expand Emerald View Park.

I personally look forward to working with new leadership, and the challenges and opportunities that the position of Land Protection Director is sure to present. A sincere Thank You to everyone who has supported ALT over the years and especially to the numerous Board members I've had the pleasure to work with for your guidance, wisdom and confidence in me when I pushed the envelope of traditional land conservation with projects such as the Wingfield Pines AMD system and Pittsburgh Cut Flower. ~RK



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VISTAS is underwritten by an anonymous donor.
Thank you!



Best Wishes, Shannon



PHOTO BY MIKE GOOD

It was a pleasure getting to know and to work with Shannon Powers over the summer. Shannon excelled in her role as Chartiers Creek Watershed Intern, and we can't help but feel that she left us too soon. The day after her last day with ALT, Shannon left the country to begin a study abroad program in Buenos Aires. And so, we wish her the very best of luck as we say: Adios and buena suerte!

ALT STEWARDS

Our volunteers made a huge difference from spring to summer, and we wanted to share with you some of their most exciting activities and accomplishments. We're always looking to spend more time outside with you, so let us know if you're interested in helping us out. Become an Urban EcoSteward, sign up for our e-newsletter, "like us" on Facebook and get outside. E-mail Mike at stewardship@alleghenylandtrust.org with any questions, ideas, and interests regarding volunteer opportunities at ALT.

Chartiers Creek

CHARTIERS CLEAN UP

Chartiers Creek borders Wingfield Pines and flows through nearly 30 communities in the south and west of Pittsburgh. Paddle Without Pollution cleaned litter from the creek during a spring paddle.



PHOTO COURTESY DAVID ROHM

Wingfield Pines

PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE PULL

This attractive yet invasive plant prevents the growth of valuable native species that feed local song birds. Volunteers removed the flowers so the plant does not produce more seed. If you missed us in July look for us again next year! The loosestrife pull was just one of many events Shannon Powers, Chartiers Creek Watershed Summer Intern, worked to organize this summer at Wingfield.

"Wet, Scaly and Slimy" was a wonderful success.



PHOTO BY S. POWERS



PHOTO BY MIKE GOOD



SHIP ACTIVITIES

Barking Slopes

WELCOME KENNETH DONALDSEN

Barking Slopes welcomes its first Urban EcoSteward Kenneth Donaldsen onto the Conservation Area. Ken, a retired civil engineer, is focusing on maintaining the trails and marking property boundaries. We are overjoyed to welcome him.

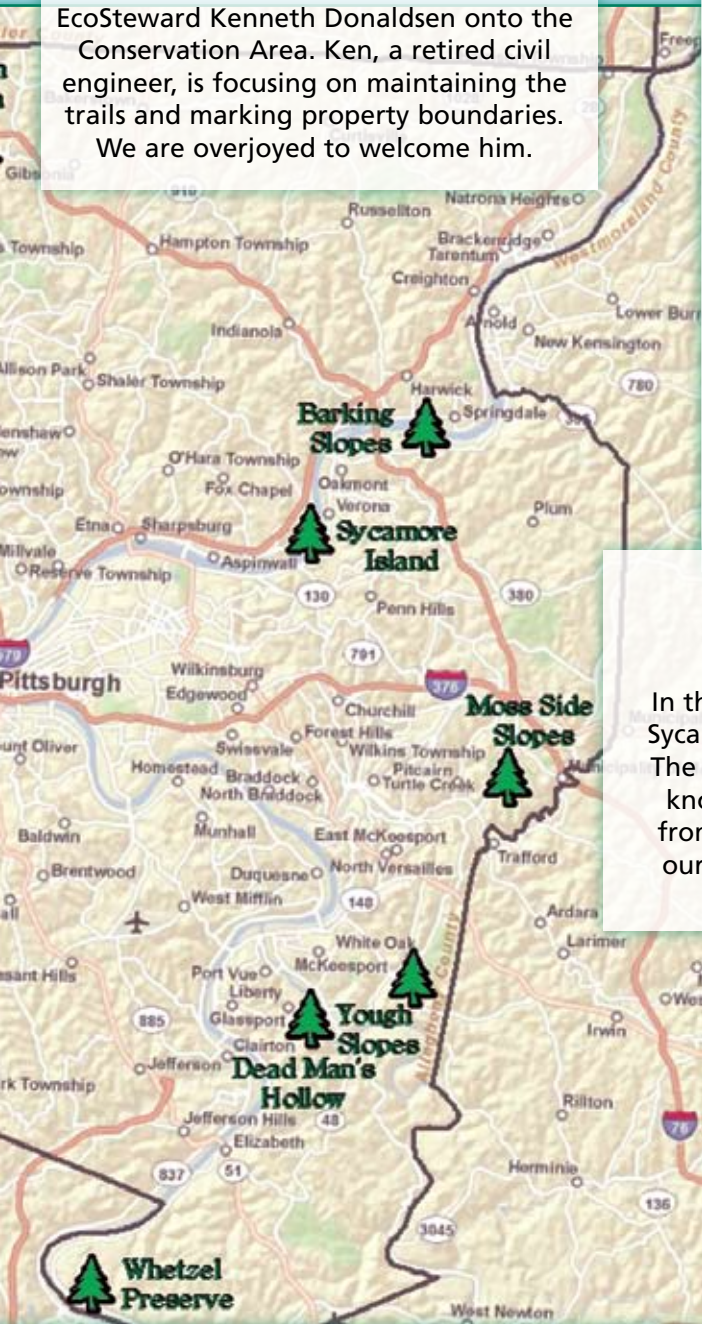


PHOTO BY MIKE GOOD

Sycamore Island

TOO MANY ACTIVITIES TO COUNT!

In the last year, our volunteers have logged over 500 hours of service on Sycamore Island. Just realize what a tremendous accomplishment that is! The island has truly become a treat for visitors: we've removed Japanese knotweed, killed off poison ivy, measured oak saplings (rescued a few from oriental bittersweet), removed literally a boat load of debris from our river, and sometimes we just paddled. Thank you to everyone who contributed to Sycamore Island, and our many partners.



MAP BY JESSICA STEWART

Chartiers Greenway

LITTER CLEAN UP

Illegal dumping plagues many wooded areas in our region. Last April, Allegheny Land Trust was lucky to host the Diller Teen Fellows, who managed to pull a truck full of litter from one of our newest Conservation Areas: Chartiers Greenway. Some of the Fellows travelled all the way from Israel, as the Diller Teen program is a 15-month international Jewish leadership program.



PHOTO BY MIKE GOOD

GreenTalk with Rick Duncan

Rick Duncan has volunteered over one hundred hours toward the stewardship of Sycamore Island, building and maintaining the trail loop or the “Duncan Donut,” as I like to refer to it, battling poison ivy, and hacking down Japanese knotweed. But Rick is more than that, he is a friend, father, husband, archaeologist, and lately, is in the process of founding his own GIS (Geographic Information System) consultation company, Earthrise.

1. Do you have a favorite spot on Sycamore Island?

Yeah I think it's the area around the pond (formerly the swimming pool, see pg. 7)—I like the pond. It's more open, and the way the plantings have been done makes it fun to explore for bugs and animals.

2. What changes have you noticed on the island in the last year, and what would you like to see on the island in the future?

Last year, the trails were cleared, and the pool area had been landscaped. Both of these things have really opened the island up and allowed people to use the island. I'd like to see the poison ivy cleared entirely.

3. Can you talk a little bit more about Earthrise and how you got involved in GIS?

I started working with GIS—let's see—sixteen years ago primarily for archaeology. More recently, I've decided that it's a skill I can use to help people do the sort of work that I like to do: conservation, and the prioritization of



Rick Duncan

GREENTALK

social issues. GIS is basically just a mapping tool with data attached. In reality, it's a tool for understanding how the information is linked to location, and so GIS can help us make our decisions. So many environmental and social issues have problems driven by location. GIS details can help track these problems, and allow users to make more informed decisions.

4. Do you have a favorite Sycamore moment over the last year?

It will sound hokey, but I really enjoyed the clean-up out there. A lot of people going to the island, and hearing their reactions. I like the moments when I'm out there by myself, but I really enjoyed watching people ask questions and notice things like the wooden barge and swimming pool for the first time.

5. What has been the greatest challenge with working on Sycamore Island, and in starting your own company?

For the island, weather. Not being able to get there. For the company? Well I knew it would be hard when we started, but I wasn't ready for how complicated certain things would be or how intermittent it was. But that's all right, I'm not in a hurry. I'm looking forward to making something useful and concrete that makes a difference and contributes on its own.

Interested in Earthrise? E-mail Rick at rbduncan@verizon.net or visit the website, although Rick cautions, “it is still under construction” at www.earthrise-gis.com. ~MG

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/Legacy Society or call us at 412-741-2750.



PHOTO BY BERNADETTE KAZMANSKI

Answers: Red-spotted purple butterfly (Limenitis arthemis), butterfly weed, Meadowview Conservation Area, one of ALT's newest acquisitions.

VOLUNTEERS: MAKE OR BREAK

ALT volunteers are as unique as one could imagine; traits like age, experience, and expertise all come to mind. In recent years, local Boy Scouts have assisted ALT in many projects including trail work, signage and building wildlife habitat boxes. This summer at Wingfield Pines local Eagle Scout **BLAKE NOURIE** built a bat condo to house the increasing population of brown bats. This is great, for bats have been known to eat more than 1,000 mosquitos an HOUR. This past year, local Scouts volunteered almost 1,000 hours to ALT. The young motivation and strong backs of the Scouts have made ALT conservation areas into better places.

Local volunteer and site steward **STEVE BOSYNAK** has spent countless hours from childhood exploring his backyard, Dead Man's Hollow. His experience knowing the local topography and communities has been invaluable in maintaining ALT's biggest conservation area. Experience also is shown by **DAVE CLARK**, ALT's Captain of the Steward Ship. Working on old motors is something learned, and Dave has had lots of experience with this through his years. He has kept the 1973 Johnson motor humming all through the heavy Sycamore Island travel season. Steve and Dave have experience that is critical for ALT to advance our mission.

To build a solid structure you need expertise in angles, nails and concrete. That is what we got from a local construction company, **CENTRIA**, who erected a shed at Wingfield Pines for storing ALT tools and materials

including shovels, pick axes and digging bars. The building was designed and constructed by the staff at Centria and it is amazing! The beautiful glass block windows provide ample sunlight but offer protection from vandals. The 3+ days of building expertise that Centria volunteered will benefit ALT for decades.

As the Stewardship Director, I know that ALT volunteers **MAKE** our organization and without them, my job would be nearly impossible. If you are looking to volunteer for ALT, remember it does not matter your age, experience, or expertise, we have something that you can do to **MAKE** Allegheny Land Trust and the places we conserve a better place. ~EC



PHOTO BY EMILIE COOPER

Sycamore Snippet

When ALT acquired Sycamore Island in 2008, one glaring question reared its face: what could we possibly do about that old swimming pool? Invasive Japanese knotweed engulfed the eroded structure, which showed rust, peeling paint and stagnant water.

In November 2011, ALT and Joel Perkovich, long-time volunteer with ALT, concocted a construction project which would fill the deep end, plant a garden, install seating, and make the shallow end safe and accessible for wildlife. Volunteers took to the pool area on June 27 during our "Pull and Paddle" to remove as much invasive growth as possible and on July 10 found tadpoles for the first time. On August 9, we discovered the tadpoles had transformed into young Eastern American Toads.

ALT continues to monitor the area, and could use your help: knotweed continues to compete with the new native garden, and we aren't quite sure which amphibians could potentially call the pool home. Think you can lend a hand? Join the iNaturalist Project by contacting Mike at stewardship@alleghenylandtrust.org and become an Urban EcoSteward. ~MG



PHOTO BY RICK DUNCAN



PHOTO BY MIKE GOOD



Helping local people save local land.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

10/6/2012 – SYCAMORE ISLAND MUSHROOM WALK II

Join ALT and mycologist Jim Tunney from the Western PA Mushroom Club on Sycamore Island at 10AM. Last May we were able to identify 14 different species!

10/27/2012 – BOUNTY IN THE BARN

“How to Win the West”, ALT’s Fifth Annual Bounty in the BarN Celebration, 6 to 10 pm

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5TH ANNUAL "BOUNTY IN THE BARN"

**HOW TO
WIN
THE
WEST**

in Western Pennsylvania

SAVE THE DATE

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2012
6pm - 10 pm - An evening of grazing under the stars!

For further information
412.741.2750 or admin@alleghenylandtrust.org
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