

# VISTAS

*A Publication of Allegheny Land Trust*

SUMMER 2013

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# *We couldn't do it without our volunteers and donors*

Visitors to Wingfield Pines this summer will notice that its many trails are more walkable and visually appealing than ever before, thanks to the June arrival of a Husqvarna garden tractor.

This new and shiny piece of equipment will be used for mowing and trail upkeep. The campaign to purchase the tractor was spearheaded by ALT volunteer Dave Wilton, avid conservationist and longtime visitor to Wingfield Pines. As past visitors will remember, the high grasses of late spring and early summer growth often made the pathways throughout the property difficult to traverse comfortably. This past year, Wilton found that his volunteer efforts along with those of some local boy scouts to maintain Wingfield's trails between large scale mowings became more challenging with the small pushmowers available. In early November, he posted an open letter to fellow Wingfield patrons asking for donations to ALT's Wingfield Pines Maintenance Fund to purchase a garden tractor for use on the property's trails.

Thanks to Wilton's on the ground fundraising efforts and the generosity of more than 35 donors, ALT was able to purchase the tractor in late spring. The motivation behind the campaign was "to foster the goodwill among people that use Wingfield Pines," Wilton said. "As a scout leader, a conservationist, and one who likes to utilize the outdoors, I saw an avenue to really have a big impact on the communitywide effort."

ALT is thrilled and grateful that the initiative of one volunteer led to such a positive response from Wingfield patrons, and that communitywide effort is ongoing. The Wingfield Pines Maintenance Fund is still open for contributions that will support upkeep of the new tractor (including gas to keep it moving) as well as other onsite improvement projects. To give, you can visit the How to Help page on ALT's website on which instructions for online or mail donations to the Wingfield Pines Maintenance Fund are available.

A huge thank you to Dave and all those who supported this successful campaign to make experiencing the great outdoors at Wingfield Pines the best it can be. Get out and enjoy those trails!







## ALT and Sewickley Hills Community Collaborate to Expand Audubon Greenway by 50%

by Roy Kraynyk, Land Protection Director

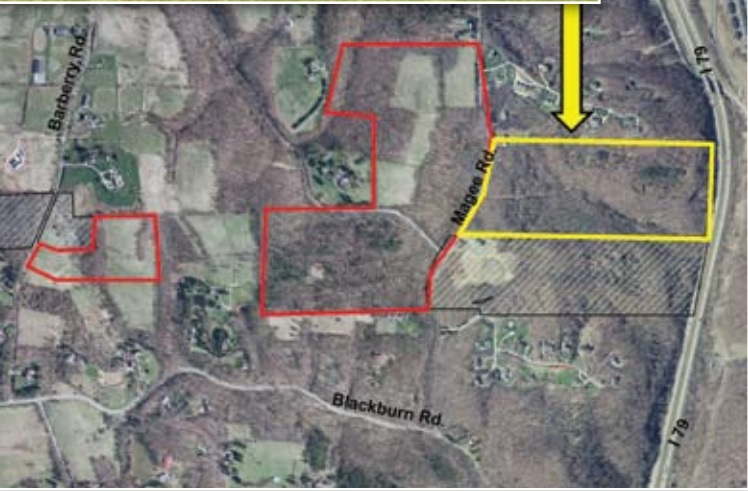
Last December the Audubon Greenway grew by 10 acres thanks to an anonymous gift from a local family bringing the acreage protected by ALT in the Audubon Greenway to more than 110 acres. Now ALT and the community together have the opportunity to increase the Greenway by nearly 50% by acquiring 48 acres in Sewickley Hills. ALT already protects more than 160 acres throughout the Quaker Valley, but this tract of land is critical because of its location adjacent to the Sewickley Hills Park and ALT conservation land along Audubon and Magee Roads. The goal of the Audubon Greenway is to link Sewickley Heights and Sewickley Hills parks with uninterrupted green space with trails, wildlife habitat, springs and scenic beauty.

On June 14, 2013 the local campaign to raise \$160,000 needed to match larger grants was launched with a press conference outside the Sewickley Hills municipal building. Speakers included PA Senator Matt Smith, Representative Mark Mustio, Sewickley Hills Council President Cindy Phillips and ALT Executive Director Chris Beichner. Each speaker emphasized different benefits of keeping the 48 acres in a natural condition such as maintaining the Borough's rural character that residents desire, or how the land now holds back an estimated 40 million gallons of rain water annually, and how conservation lands increase adjacent property values.

ALT has the land under contract to purchase and a \$500,000 grant is pending with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. A closing date is scheduled for October 31, 2013. A small group of residents are beginning to organize small house parties and a larger public meeting is being scheduled for September to help raise the local match. \$38,000 has already been pledged towards the \$160,000 needed to give the campaign an early jump start. Local matching funds are absolutely necessary to match

the state grant and show that there is community support for the project and no contribution is too small. The number of people who give is very important because each gift represents a vote for conservation. When elected officials see large numbers of their constituents giving they are more empowered to support legislation that protects natural land and funds conservation projects. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the local citizens to shape the future of their neighborhood by protecting this land forever. ALT is confident that they will rise to the occasion!

Make your pledge today by calling 412-741-2750 or go to [www.alleghenylandtrust.org](http://www.alleghenylandtrust.org). And don't hesitate to call my extension #203 if you have any questions.



### A visit to Audubon Greenway...

*After the grand-detour around the paving project on Magee Road (glad I filled up the gas tank), I had another absolutely fascinating experience at this site. I first noticed a territorial battle between 3 male towhees; they put on a beautiful show. Then something caught my eye...seemed to be a small squirrel about 25 feet from me...running in and out of a hole in a dead sapling. Yet, there was something un-squirrel like about it. I am sooo glad I brought the binoculars today...turns out...it was a WEASEL! I had no idea what kind until I got home and did some research online; seems to be the least weasel; and it was most likely pursuing chipmunks! This is an amazing place, and I can't believe how lucky I am to experience its wonders. Thank you so much for this opportunity! ... Carolyn Morrison*

## \$509,600 in grants received in June for PCF

For more than a year ALT has been working to secure funding for the Pittsburgh Cut Flower project through grants offered by the Redevelopment Authority of Allegheny County. Our hard work paid off in June with approval of a \$500,000 GEDF (Gaming Economic Development Fund) grant. Representative Mike Turzai was instrumental in getting the grant approved. A second grant of \$9,600 was received from the Sierra Club Huplits Grant bringing the total raised and pledged to \$1.7 million.

For those following this project closely, you know that ALT needs to raise enough to cover the land cost of \$1.4 million, plus reasonable clean-up costs estimated to be around \$1 million. The final clean-up costs won't be known until possibly September for a few reasons; the total volume of material that is actually removed, and what structures can be saved to preserve some history of the PCF operation. Many people attending our visioning meetings suggested an outdoor museum with PCF artifacts, and the smoke stacks have been landmarks for generations. ALT has engaged structural engineers to do an evaluation of the stacks and a couple other buildings for structural integrity. Hopefully, a few are structurally sound enough to preserve reducing clean-up costs.



## Greenhouse demolition opens up view not seen for 100 years

Greenhouses, garages and other structures have hidden the view of the Montour Run Valley from the Red Belt for a century. This view is now one of the most commanding and distant views of northern Allegheny County from the Red Belt. Scenic quality is important to ALT because our natural scenery shapes the character of our communities and provides a sense of place. Therefore it is one of three criteria that ALT uses as we consider land to protect as permanent green space. Other criteria include presence of biological resources and the land's capacity to absorb rainfall and provide good water.

Due to the extended time that it has taken the owner to clean up the asbestos and demolish structures, an extension was necessary that pushes the closing date out to October 1, 2013. We welcome this extension because it will provide ALT additional time to close the funding gap that we will otherwise have to bridge with a short-term loan. From the beginning, our funding plan included recycling some of the previously developed land back into the economy, and using the proceeds to repay any bridge loans necessary to close the deal.

Since completing our community outreach and visioning efforts and producing the Conceptual Master Plan in April, several parties have approached ALT about implementing parts of the plan. Keep in mind, however, that the plan is conceptual, so the final outcome may not reflect exactly what's shown. We will work hard to integrate many of the ideas, like the outdoor museum, that more than 500 people have offered, but the market will strongly influence what gets built on the approximately 30 acres of formerly blighted land. The community can be assured however, that at least 150 acres of the best land will remain natural forever! We look forward to many individuals and community groups stepping up with a sense of ownership to help us care for and improve the land.



But we still need community financial support. So far \$66,000 has been raised towards the \$140,000 of local funds needed to match major grants. If you have given we sincerely thank you and please consider giving again. If you haven't, please consider what it is worth to you to protect 150 acres forever and make your tax-deductible contribution today to help push this project across the finish line!



*If you volunteer for ALT, you become a rock star! ALT nominated Annette Robinson for a Volunteer of the Year award for her efforts in fundraising for Pittsburgh Cut Flower; above, Annette with her husband Mike (with tie) and the Clarks, with whom they sat at the Volunteer Dinner.*

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## Days of Giving

### Pittsburgh Foundation Day of Giving, October 3

The Day of Giving 2013 is an opportunity for you to make a donation to your favorite non-profit, ALT, and have that money be matched in some way by the Pittsburgh Foundation. Please consider making a donation to ALT that day to help us continue our conservation efforts.

Detailed information regarding Pittsburgh Foundation Day of Giving 2013 can be found at [www.pittsburghgives.org](http://www.pittsburghgives.org).

### Washington County Community Foundation Day of Giving, September 10

ALT was invited to participate in the first annual Washington County Community Foundation Day of Giving which will take place on September 10, 2013. The Washington County Day of Giving works pretty much the same way as that of the Pittsburgh Foundation. Detailed information regarding Washington County Day of Giving 2013 can be found at [www.wccfgives.org](http://www.wccfgives.org). Please consider donating to ALT.



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