

# VISTAS

A publication of Allegheny Land Trust

Autumn 2013

## Celebrating 20 Years of Conservation Excellence!

by Chris Beichner, Executive Director

On October 15, 1993, Allegheny Land Trust was officially recognized by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as an incorporated Pennsylvania charity.

We have come a long way in that time. In the last twenty years, you have helped ALT protect over 1,600 acres. We have gone from not having volunteers to leading over 5,000 volunteer hours. We have increased fundraising efforts to ensure we were successful with major projects throughout the years.

We have turned a closed

golf course into an environmental reclamation

attraction at Wingfield Pines. We have created expansive greenways and park extensions in the North Hills and Sewickley area, and we have protected an undeveloped island in the Allegheny River that is 14 acres and growing. Our accomplishments have been vast with the creation of our largest conservation area called Dead Man's Hollow, and our accomplishments include protection of urban steep hillsides in Mount Washington as part of a regional park called Emerald View Park.

Considering our range of great accomplishments and major milestones, now is the busiest time in our 20-year history: we are trying to acquire our most complicated project ever with the Pittsburgh Cut Flower property; for the first time we have three properties under contract for purchase which has never happened in our 20-year history. This also means we have three separate fundraising efforts occurring simultaneously. We are exploring ways to meet the high demand for urban conservation in low-income areas within Pittsburgh and other urban centers across Allegheny County. And finally, today we are targeting another 1,100 acres of conservation

lands by talking with interested landowners about ALT protecting their land forever.

Over the next 12 months, ALT will be celebrating 20 years of land conservation excellence by holding several special events, contests and recognitions. We want to recognize everyone who has helped ALT be successful the last 20 years, and at the same time, we want to bring attention to our current conservation projects that will take place over the next 20 years.

Thank you for contributing to land conservation the past 20 years! It has always been a team effort, and success could not have been achieved without dedication from our Board, volunteers, funders and partners. And thank you for your continued dedication to ALT and local land conservation.



### Time to Celebrate!

#### More Inside:

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Do you know what this is? See page 7 to find out!

## Preserving a Piece of Richland's Cultural Heritage

by Roy Kraynyk, Land Protection Director

From the 1890s to the 1990s the former Pittsburgh Cut Flower operation located on Bakerstown Road had a significant influence on the growth and development of the Gibsonia area and the lives of its residents. As the end of that era is in its final chapter now with the much anticipated demolition of the greenhouses and other structures almost complete, sentiments of melancholy and nostalgia begin to surface for the past days when PCF was a bustling flower plantation. Allegheny Land Trust (ALT) hopes to preserve a small piece of that history by saving some of the unique structures on the property.

Although ALT's mission is land conservation, we still have a sincere interest in preserving other components of a community's cultural heritage when it's tied into a land protection project. ALT has identified several structures that we want to save from becoming landfill, namely, the red brick house on the north side of Bakerstown Road, the tall and short smoke stacks, the shell of the boiler house and boilers, coal stoker, elaborate and artistic steam pipe arrays, and the "Petticoat Junction"—for those of you who watched 1960s sitcoms—water tower. Several of these structures were identified by local residents as desirable to save during the community planning and visioning meetings we had last winter and spring.

This summer, ALT engaged an engineer to evaluate these structures and they have been deemed to be sound, but will need lots of work to sustain as artifacts or ruins of the flower operation. In historic preservation terms, "Arrest Decay", or to stop further decay without trying to restore, is probably the best way to describe ALT's intentions with the industrial structures. We can envision an open-air museum of ruins with trails, gardens and interpretative signs to educate visitors of all ages about the history, reclamation process and future plans for the property. The red brick house is something we'd like to repurpose for a PCF museum, visitors center, or field research station for ALT and perhaps Chatham University.

From a financial perspective, ALT would be saving an estimated \$250,000 in demolition and landfill costs by keeping these structures. However, we are fully aware that it may take that much money or more to repurpose and further stabilize the buildings. But at the end of the day the landmark smoke stack and other interesting structures will remain as icons of a former time when the energy of the sun, spring water and toil of hundreds of workers produced millions of rosebuds each year and sustained a business for generations.

The local community has raised \$64,000 towards the goal of \$140,000 needed to match other major matching grants that ALT has secured for the purchase and clean-up of the site. For more information on how you can be a part of this effort to protect 150 acres of land for permanent green space and a piece of Gibsonia history contact ALT at 412-741-2750 x203 or online at [www.allegenylandtrust.org](http://www.allegenylandtrust.org).



## 2013 Land Trust Alliance Rally Recap

by Emilie Rzotkiewicz, Stewardship Director

In late September I had the privilege to head to New Orleans for the National Land Trust Alliance convention known as Rally. This meeting of more than 1,200 land trust and conservation professionals happens every year to share stories, learn strategies, and celebrate land conservation. Not only was it educational, it was in New Orleans, so I also experienced beignets, Bourbon Street and an air boat ride through the swamp.



If you are interested in becoming an Urban EcoSteward and adopting a parcel of ALT land, contact Emilie or Mike at 412-741-2750. We are always looking for independent volunteers who love to spend time outside bettering our conservation lands.

As an accredited land trust, ALT strives to stay ahead of the curve and attending Rally offers great networking opportunities, a chance to bounce ideas off of other land trusts, and learn about successful programs around the country.

### ABOUT LAND TRUST ALLIANCE ACCREDITATION

Allegheny Land Trust was awarded accreditation on December 15, 2010 and at that time was one of 113 land trusts out of a national membership of 1,700 in the Land Trust Alliance that had been awarded accreditation since the fall of 2008. Accredited land trusts are able to display a seal indicating to the public that they meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent. The seal is a mark of distinction in land conservation.

"Accredited land trusts meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever," said Commission Executive Director Tammara Van Ryn. "The accreditation seal lets the public know that the accredited land trust has undergone an extensive, external review of the governance and management of its organization and the systems and policies it uses to protect land."

The Westmoreland Conservancy, a land trust neighbor to the east of us, is also now accredited and received their certificate at the Awards Dinner during Rally this year. Congratulations, Westmoreland Conservancy!

At the conference, I presented to other land trusts the volunteer program we run at ALT known as the Urban EcoSteward Program. This collaborative volunteer program is a model of how like-minded groups can educate, train and support their volunteers with limited staff and money. ALT has had such success with it we wanted to share the idea with other land trusts around the country. Two people have already contacted me for more details... so it was a successful presentation and sharing opportunity.



### WHAT IS AN URBAN ECO-STEWARD?



The Urban EcoSteward program is a collaborative effort involving citizens to increase public awareness of urban ecology and biodiversity through stewardship of the urban landscape. EcoStewards volunteer at designated green spaces in Allegheny County (which includes Allegheny Land Trust Conservation Areas) working to remove invasive species, increase the beauty of the space and promote biodiversity. These volunteers are encouraged to visit their site as often as possible (at least 3-4 times per year) and provide feedback on the condition of the site. The Urban EcoSteward Program works by individuals adopting a specific parcel within a conservation area to manage—typically removing litter, invasive species, keeping up monitoring. The program also provides free trainings throughout the year that we highly recommend—with topics ranging from tree identification, to planting techniques.



# This HALLOWEEN Explore something with MYSTERY and HISTORY

by Emilie Rzotkiewicz, Stewardship Director

What better place to take a hike in late October than the Dead Man's Hollow Conservation Area? This 440-acre green space is located along the banks of the

Youghiogheny River and offers

something for everyone. Just beyond the Great Allegheny Passage lies the ruins from the old Union Sewer Pipe Company, destroyed by a savage fire in 1925. Exploring the area offers a unique blend of wildness and industry. One can only imagine the many years of hard sweat and labor that went into working the kiln ovens and rail yard.

If you are feeling a bit more energetic, check out the Witch Hazel Trail. The trail begins with the Enchanted Staircase. These moss-covered stone steps, resembling something that one would find at Hogwarts Castle, curves along the hillside and from there it is a good climb up.

Not interested in breaking a sweat? Walk along the flats into the Hollow and you will find two unique landmarks that are known by many and loved by all. An interesting tree growing along the stream is the Three Trunk Sycamore. It is known to be one of the most photographed trees in Western Pennsylvania. Located upstream from the Three Trunk Sycamore is the Tree Trunk Hideaway that warrants some examination. Rumored to have been the hideaway spot during the Clairton Bank Heist robbery over 100 years ago, this tree trunk allows visitors to crawl inside and connect with the county's history.

Many more opportunities await at Dead Man's Hollow, including Table Rock, Cat Fish Pond and other mysteries you can unfold.

Dead Man's Hollow has had a long history filled with folklore, legends and tragic events that have occurred, many shadowed with inexplicable circumstances. There are many assumptions and ideas around the property's biggest mystery: who was the Dead Man and what was his story? To read more about the Hollows history, check out the Dead Man's Hollow Fellowship at <http://www.dead-mans-hollow.com>. Get out and explore Dead Man's Hollow this October and let us know what you think, saw or possibly what you "felt" walking through the woods.



# SIXTH ANNUAL Bounty in the Barn



OCTOBER 19, 2013

Only a few weeks remain before the start of the Sixth Annual Bounty in the BarN. Again

this year, Bill and Jodie Welge have offered their fabulous barn to hold ALT's signature annual fundraising gala. Please join us for a wonderful evening featuring a catered pig roast, music and dancers by Road to the Isles, over a dozen silent auction items and best of all—dozens of great friends, family and fellow outdoor enthusiasts.

We would like to wholeheartedly thank our sponsors this year. As of the date of this publication, sponsors include:

Allegheny Financial Group  
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 Bobby Rahal Automotive Group  
 Brooks Consulting  
 Calgon Carbon Corporation  
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And special thank you to Bill and Jodie Welge! We appreciate your continued support.

A sample of silent auction items include an all-expenses paid VIP trip to Churchill Downs, an authenticated and autographed electric guitar signed by U2 and four tickets to an upcoming Pittsburgh Steelers game plus parking pass. Other items include vacation packages and exciting items donated by the ALT Board.

Tickets are going fast, and space is limited. After October 4, ticket prices will be \$125 each. Please reserve your space today so you don't miss this year's activities.

You can register three ways:

1. Go to [www.alleghenylandtrust.org](http://www.alleghenylandtrust.org) and pay by credit card;
2. Call us at 412-741-2750 and provide credit card information; or
3. Mail check (made payable to Allegheny Land Trust) to ALT and provide names of attendees.

# Days of Giving

## Washington County Day Of Giving, New in 2013



On September 10, 2013, Washington County Community Foundation shared \$100,000 in matching funds with participating charities. The more donations made to a charity, the more that charity received from the match pool. In 12 hours the Washington County Community Foundation Day of Giving generated \$393,385 (not including match) from 1,005 donors to 106 organizations.

ALT received 7 donations totaling \$1,365. This compares to the Washington Health System Foundation which received \$28,016 and the highest amount of any non-profit.

## Pittsburgh Foundation Day of Giving, October 3

Thanks to all those who supported land conservation with a donation to ALT on this day!

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A Resource of The Pittsburgh Foundation

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#### STAFF

Chris Beichner, Executive Director  
[cbeichner@alleghenylandtrust.org](mailto:cbeichner@alleghenylandtrust.org)

Mike Good, Stewardship Coordinator  
[mgood@alleghenylandtrust.org](mailto:mgood@alleghenylandtrust.org)

Julie Halyama, Development Associate  
[jhalyama@alleghenylandtrust.org](mailto:jhalyama@alleghenylandtrust.org)

Roy Kraynyk, Land Protection Director  
[rkraynyk@alleghenylandtrust.org](mailto:rkraynyk@alleghenylandtrust.org)

Emilie Rzotkiewicz, Stewardship Director  
[erzotkiewicz@alleghenylandtrust.org](mailto:erzotkiewicz@alleghenylandtrust.org)

Tinamaria Colaiuzzi, Marketing Associate  
[tcolaiuzzi@alleghenylandtrust.org](mailto:tcolaiuzzi@alleghenylandtrust.org)

Designer / Illustrator: Bernadette E. Kazmarski

#### Allegheny Land Trust

409 Broad Street, Suite 206B

Sewickley, PA 15148

Phone: 412-741-2750

Fax: 412-741-3253

[www.alleghenylandtrust.org](http://www.alleghenylandtrust.org)

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Thank you!



## Stewardship Gone Digital: We're Going Bloggin'

by Mike Good, Stewardship Coordinator

Social networking has given the "#" symbol a whole new meaning beyond the "pound sign," and we hope "#landconservation" begins trending, and trending fast. What is a hash-tag anyways?

This menace may appear intimidating, indecipherable, or off-putting to some, but I don't find these repurposed pound signs to be so bad. Hash-tags can condense information, contextualize a comment, and make a post more searchable. #Pittsburgh lets readers know we're talking about Pittsburgh, just like #landconservation lets you know we're talking about land conservation.

In the last two years, ALT's online presence has grown like a silver maple on Sycamore Island. Social media, just like the newsletter in your hand, is just one more avenue for ALT to share stories, discuss events, and let folks like you know what's happening—except (thankfully) online we don't have to wait every three months to print you updates, while saving paper and time.

ALT's social media presence has (relatively speaking) exploded. ALT's 180 facebook followers increased to over 400, and although our Twitter profile @alleghenylandtr is less than a year old, we can already thank our 260 followers. So thanks!

In the next month, ALT will wade deeper still into the electronic headwaters where "@" signs, hash-tags, and "like" buttons converge with the actual streams and rivers you help us to protect.

Yes—we're going bloggin'.

It may not come as a surprise to our astute VISTAS readers, but we're asking for your help: Emilie and I are searching for volunteers, outdoor enthusiasts, and anyone who wants to write about the outdoors to contribute to the blog. This will be a place to connect: <http://alleghenylandtrust.org/blog/>

Even if writing isn't your deal, keep #landconservation trending upwards: send us a tweet—follow @alleghenylandtr on Twitter, like our page on Facebook at [facebook.com/alleghenylandtrust](https://facebook.com/alleghenylandtrust), and keep your eye out for our first blog post in next month. Make sure you share our posts too!

Email Mike Good, at [mgood@alleghenylandtrust.org](mailto:mgood@alleghenylandtrust.org), tweet @alleghenylandtr, or message the ALT facebook if you'd like to blog or want more information on the project.

And please give us feedback on the best way to get information to you by returning our Market Research Study on page 7.

## Market Research Study

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your preferred method of learning about Allegheny Land Trust's (ALT) news and events?

- a. Newsletter
- b. E-blasts (monthly updates sent via e-mail regarding upcoming events and new developments)
- c. Facebook
- d. Twitter
- e. Website
- f. Flyers/Brochures
- g. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which social media outlets do you use most frequently?

(Select up to three choices.)

- a. Facebook
- b. Twitter
- c. Instagram
- d. Pinterest
- e. Vimeo
- f. YouTube
- g. Tumblr
- h. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

We have a new database and are working to make sure our records are accurate. Please let us know if something regarding your contact info needs to be updated. We continue to be cost conscious in all that we do and are making electronic versions of communications (such as electronic VISTAS and electronic thank you letters) available if you would like them. If you would prefer electronic communications please provide your current email address".

**CUT HERE, FOLD IN QUARTERS, AND USE THE ENCLOSED PRE-ADDRESSED REPLY ENVELOPE TO RETURN**

### About the Market Research Study

ALT wants to hear from you! Completing this short survey will help us understand the best ways to reach our audiences in terms of events and social media. Your feedback is important to us!

Please circle your answers. When you're finished, cut out the survey on the fold and the dotted line as marked—you'll notice the mailing panel with your name and address are on the back. We won't use this information as part of the survey, but we need it in order to validate the information we've collected. Fold your entry in half and use the BRE (donation envelope) included in each newsletter—you do not need to make a donation!

Alternately, you can complete this survey on our website at using the QR code at right or this URL: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FZXTF22>.

Please choose either paper or electronic completion. And thanks so much for participating!



### 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](http://www.alleghenylandtrust.org) and click How to Help/Legacy Society or call us at 412-741-2750.

ANSWER FORM PAGE 1: This beauty could double as a butterfly from the Amazon, but no this is a Pink Heel-splitter—Potamia laeta—one of the native

scarce mussel species found on SyCAMore Island.



*Helping local people save local land.*



Suite 206B  
409 Broad Street  
Sewickley, PA 15143

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**10/12/2013 – NATIVE SEED COLLECTION**  
UES event at Frick Park, sign up online.

**10/19/2013 – BOUNTY IN THE BARN**  
ALT's Sixth Annual Bounty in the BarN  
Celebration, 6 to 10 pm

**COMING IN NOVEMBER**  
Stewardship Roundtable Meeting and  
Catfish Pond Clean up

### GET NEWS BETWEEN NEWSLETTERS

Don't miss a thing!

- Sign up for our e-newsletters—send your e-mail to [info@allegenylandtrust.org](mailto:info@allegenylandtrust.org)
- Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.
- Visit our stewardship blog at [allegenylandtrust.org/blog/](http://allegenylandtrust.org/blog/)
- Check the calendar on our website at [www.allegenylandtrust.org](http://www.allegenylandtrust.org).

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