

VISTAS

AN ALLEGHENY LAND TRUST PUBLICATION | 2017 Q1

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2016: A Year to Remember



by Chris Beichner | President & CEO

We won't soon forget 2016. Just looking at the infographic tells a lot about our accomplishments over the past year. We were busy. We accomplished a lot. We are happy with our results. But, the statistics do not tell the entire story, and we're certainly not done reaching for our goals. Here are a few other ways that made 2016 a year we won't soon forget.

In August 2016, ALT was officially notified of our national re-accreditation status by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. Out of 1,700 land trusts nationwide, we are only one of 350 land trusts that are nationally accredited. The accreditation status signifies to landowners, funders, and partners that we are committed to a high standard of excellence in all aspects of our operations and programming.

We began our re-accreditation process in 2015, five years after the original accreditation. It took us 18 months, five rounds of review, and more than 400 hours of time to complete the "audit" review of our communication, documentation, and decision processes.

Our renewed accreditation will not expire until August 2021. Here's to another five years of high standards!

This year also saw the launch of our new environmental education team. In June 2016, ALT hired two certified teachers from The Outdoor Classroom, which closed its doors in June. We also hired several part-time program facilitators to help bring our programming to various classrooms, scout camps, after-school programs, municipal parks, and our own conservation areas. Since June, we have provided programming to more than 5,000 children, adolescents, and adults. Our goals are to provide programming at more of our conservation areas and to bring new types of programming through unique partnerships.

Finally, our conservation and stewardship teams have been as busy as ever protecting more land, preparing conservation easements, managing a legion of volunteers, and completing various habitat projects. This past year saw us and our variety of great partners come even closer to protecting Hays Woods in the City of Pittsburgh to ensure that site becomes a future City park. Our stewardship team has organized numerous volunteer events planting trees, restoring habitats, removing invasive species, and maintaining trails. And as new land is protected, our team explores the best management practices for each conservation area, compiling what they learn into a management plan.

2016 was a year to remember, but we can only look back for so long. With 2017 upon us, we have set our sights on the next best project, looking for great partnerships, and of course, looking forward to seeing you outside exploring or volunteering at a green space near you.

For more information, e-mail Chris at cbeichner@alleghenylandtrust.org.

Making a Connection through Local Water



Photo by Jessica Kester. Students release trout into Chartiers Creek.

by Jessica Kester | VP of Education

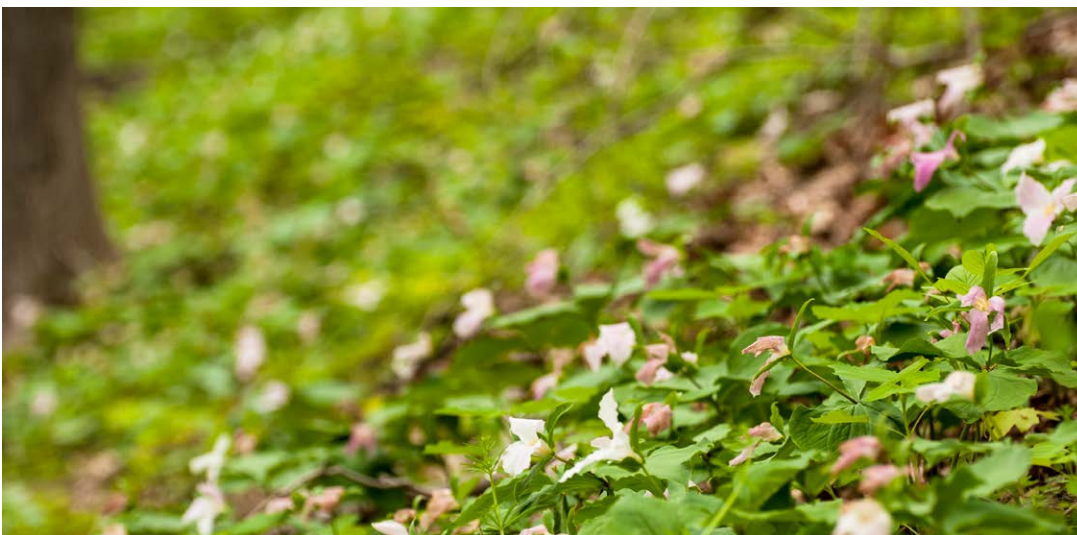
"Odd," passersby may have thought on that cool Saturday morning in May as they witnessed a dozen 6th grade students and their parents eagerly peering at Chartiers Creek yelling, "Go, Hercules! Go!" For the teachers, parents, and Harrison Middle School 6th graders, though, it was the culmination of months of learning.

ALT's Environmental Education Team had been working with these students for months, teaching them about macroinvertebrates, water quality, water pollution, and other bodies of water. All of this aimed to help them determine if the little trout fingerlings they were releasing that day would survive in the creek waters at the Wingfield Pines Conservation Area. Through grant funding from the Department of Environmental Protection and support from the Baldwin-Whitehall School District, the students were able to raise Trout In The Classroom, and bring in ALT to do hands-on water conservation education programs with the students over the course of the school year.

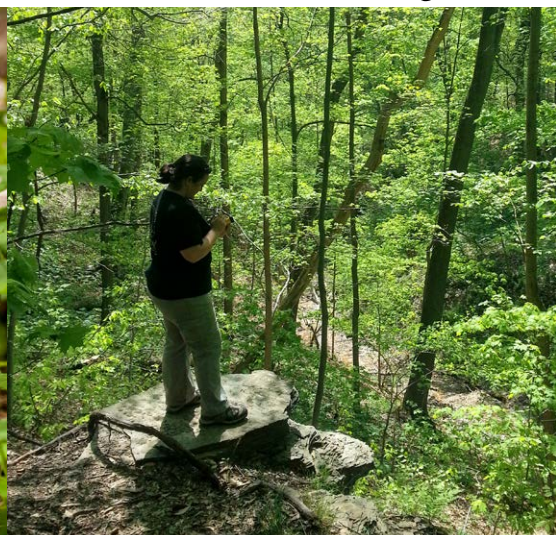
It's activities like this—the trout release and leaf-pack macroinvertebrate studies—that leave the students with lasting impressions on land and water conservation. These hands-on activities build a sense of responsibility and care in the students today to make them better land owners tomorrow. This is why we're eager to bring more environmental education programming to more students and adults: to build a better, more healthy green future for us all.

For more information, e-mail Jessica at jkester@alleghenylandtrust.org.

From Industrial Site to Wild Plant Sanctuary



(LEFT) Photo by Lindsay Dill. A patch of Trillium from May 2016 on a steep slope.



(RIGHT) Photo by Keri Rouse. ALT VP of Land Resources Emilie Rzotkiewicz surveys Dead Man's Run headwaters.

by Keri Rouse | Community Coordinator

Too often, we see our treasured natural areas fall victim to development, disuse, misuse and other threats.

At Dead Man's Hollow Conservation Area, the opposite has happened as the once-industrial site transformed over the years into a biologically diverse conservation area, home to an array of flora including Trillium, Virginia Bluebells, and Jack in the Pulpit. Touting more than

200 acres of interior forest – habitat that can support some of the state's rare and threatened plants – the Hollow was designated as a part of the Wild Plant Sanctuary Program by Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) this January.

DCNR developed the Wild Plant Sanctuary Program to recognize private landowners for conserving and providing habitat for native plant species. ALT is

implementing management recommendations to both enhance recreational opportunities at the Hollow and better the unique spaces and habitats found there.

Keep an eye on our website calendar for details about a May 7 wildflower hike to celebrate the Hollow's Wild Plant Sanctuary designation as well as views of the blooms.

For more information, e-mail Keri at krouse@alleghenylandtrust.org.

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and then you will understand everything better."**

—Albert Einstein

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her secret is patience."*

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It will never fail you."*

—Frank Lloyd Wright

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We do our best to run accurate reports to list all of our donors; sometimes human and technological errors get in the way. If you were a 2016 donor, but do not see your name listed, please contact us so we can recognize your support.

Make A Difference: Join Our Board

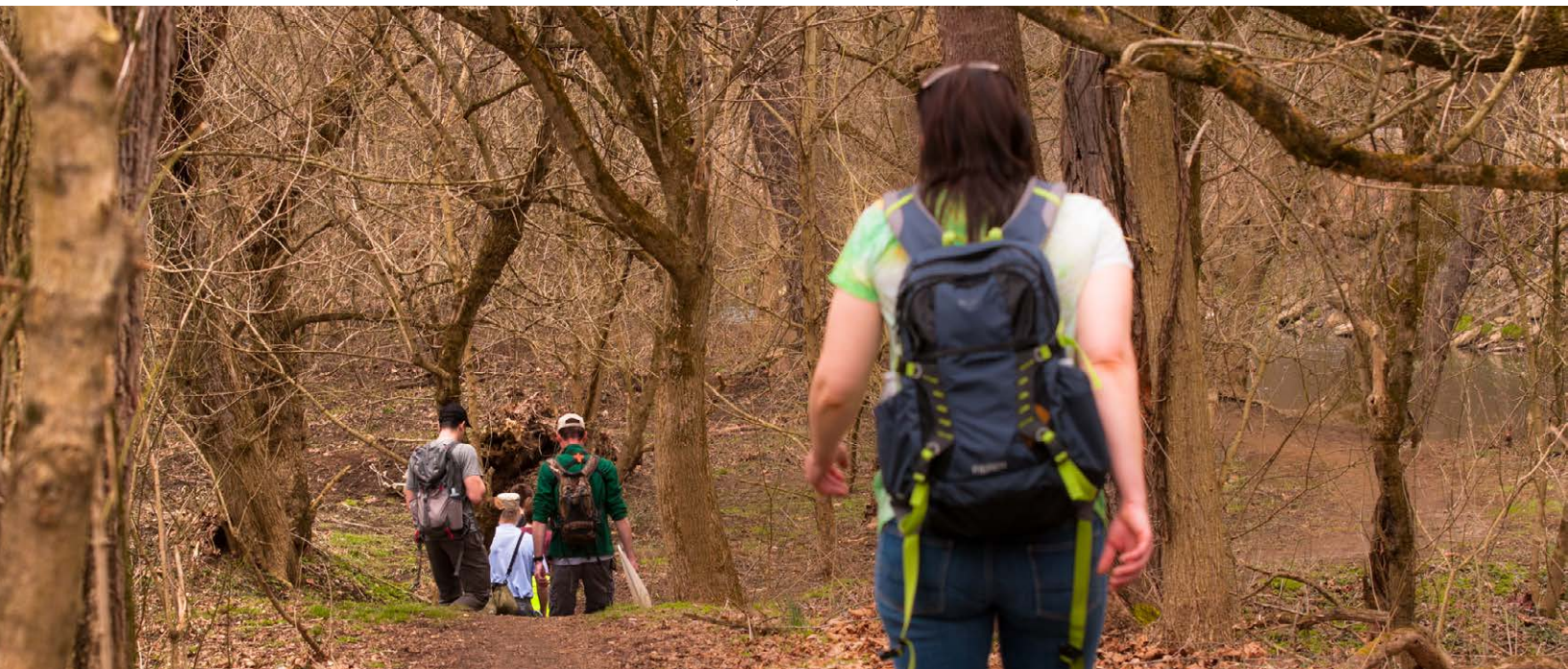


Photo by Lindsay Dill. ALT volunteers take an amphibian identification hike at Wingfield Pines during a Bioblitz event.

by **Chris Beichner** | President & CEO

Volunteers are the heart and soul of most nonprofits. They spend countless hours out in the sometimes-extreme elements to help an organization begin, maintain, or complete a project.

We feel very fortunate as most of you are the best volunteers we could ask for; You're there when we need you. In 2016 alone, you have contributed nearly 5,000 hours of

your time to the cause of land conservation.

Thank you for your commitment to service and for supporting ALT!

We are currently looking for a different type of volunteer – Board members. By June, ALT hopes to add a few new faces to our governing body, and who better to ask than our dedicated supporters, donors, and volunteers?

You've already committed your-

self to ALT in so many ways, and we hope you'll consider getting involved on another level as a member on our Board of Directors.

If you are interested, please contact us to discuss the details of being an ALT Board member, and your interest in land conservation in our region. Thank you!

For more information, e-mail Chris at cbeichner@alleghenylandtrust.org.

notes from the land:

Protecting Social & Wildlife Habitats



Photos by Lindsay Dill. (LEFT) An early spring afternoon at Linbrook Woodlands in April 2016. (RIGHT) Community members and project supporters of Linbrook Woodlands hike the trails during the May 2016 unveiling event.

by Roy Kraynyk | VP of Land Protection & Capital Projects

Our ecological metrics and Allegheny GREENPRINT often identify which lands we should prioritize protecting. For example, Biological Diversity Areas (BDAs), are large land areas throughout the county that host certain species of special concern. The plant(s) or animal(s) making a tract of land a BDA may be unique to the county, state, continent, or even planet. So BDAs are targeted for protection because their ecology is diverse and intact so they represent the best of the remaining natural areas.

Our success is often measured by the number of acres protected in BDAs, miles of stream restored, miles of trail constructed, or tons of carbon sequestered by trees. These objective, quantifiable metrics are

commonly used by land trusts when reporting out to our funders and constituents about our work.

However, there is another type of ecology that we are beginning to find more value in tracking and measuring. It's not something that we are aware of when we are in the evaluation phase of project, like whether or not it is a BDA, nor is it something that we can be sure will be there after we acquire a property. However, it is something that may grow organically over the lifecycle of a project. When it does, it morphs into its own shape, character and personality. They are the social networks that evolve around ALT's conservation areas.

Since ALT began protecting land in 1993, five of these so-called "social networks" have formed as a result of our work protecting more than 2,100 acres in 27 municipalities. So-

cial groups have organized around Dead Man's Hollow, Bradford Woods Preserve, Sycamore Island, Wingfield Pines, and, most recently, Linbrook Woodlands. These groups organize special outings and fundraisers to help care for and fund conservation area trails, natural features, and education. All the while, these groups are having fun, expanding social networks to new friends and neighbors, and learning more about the importance of local green space.

A lot has been written about the importance of the social fabric of a community. It is rewarding to know that our work is not only protecting and creating habitat for wild things, it is also providing habitat that fosters social relationships for people.

Contact us if you'd like to create your own "Friends Of" group for your favorite local ALT green space.

For more information, e-mail Roy at rkraynyk@alleghenylandtrust.org.

Upcoming Events

Education Events

Volunteer Events

APRIL 10, MAY 10, JUNE 9, JULY 8

Times Vary

Starlight Stroll @ Wingfield Pines

All ages | Fee to Register

Stroll under the light of each month's full moon with trained education staff. Topics vary depending on the evening's expert, and can include nocturnal and crepuscular creatures, astronomy, lore, and more!

APRIL 15 | 8:30a - 4:30p
Birds, Blooms, & 'Shrooms
location TBD

Adults & Educators | Fee to Register

Learn bird, flower, and mushroom identification techniques at our workshop. Guided by experts, you'll also learn how to use citizen science platforms like Project BudBurst, iNaturalist, and eBird and to bring hands-on activities into your classroom.

APRIL 18, MAY 16, JUNE 20
5:00p - 7:00p

#TrailTuesdays @ Dead Man's Hollow

Lace up your boots, get outside, and lend a hand in helping improve local land! Join us every third Tuesday (April-September) as we work to improve and expand the Hollow's trail system.

APRIL 29 | 9:00a - 12:00p
Breaking Ground Trail Day
@ Barking Slopes

Armed with a trail plan to expand and enhance the trails at Barking Slopes Conservation Area, we need helping hands to make the improvements a reality! Join us!

APRIL 29, JULY 8, SEPT 30

Times Vary

Bioblitz 2 & 3 @ Wingfield Pines

All ages

Join ALT staff and experts to identify varying plant, animal, and fungi species, and use citizen science platforms to record our findings. These are part of a four-part bioblitz series to take place in 2017.



Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays
through May & June

Environmental Education Series
@ Lauri Ann West Community Center

Ages Vary per Program | Fee to Register
Join our Environmental Education team as they bring their lesson plans to the Lauri Ann West Community Center for the following series: Investigation Nature (ages 5-10) on Mondays, Nature Nearby (ages 18+) on Wednesdays, and Science Sprouts (ages 3-4) on Fridays. Investigation Nature attendees will learn about how to cook and who eats whom in nature. Nature Nearby attendees will participate in expert-guided hands-on learning about a variety of nature topics from Hummingbirds to the benefits of composting. Science Sprouts attendees will engage with STEM activities to learn about nature's architecture, flora & fauna, and water health. Registration & additional information for these programs is on the community center's website.

MAY 2, 9, 16, & 23 | 10:30a - 11:30a
Science Sprouts Camp
@ Wingfield Pines

Ages 3-4 | Fee to Register

Sign up your young explorer to become a sprouting scientist! Our new Science Sprouts camp immerses young learners in nature as they interact with the natural environment through age-appropriate stories, crafts, and hikes around the many habitats of Wingfield Pines.

To register and find more information, visit our events calendar at: alleghenylandtrust.org/events/

EQT Foundation Joins Sponsorship Program

by **Lindsay Dill | Marketing Communications Director**

We welcome EQT as a major organizational sponsor.

Thanks to EQT and other recent sponsors, we met our 2016-2017 goal for sponsorships and are continuing to strive for more program support.

Last year, sponsorships translated to funding for more than 7 community day outreach events; mushroom/bat/ghost/dog hikes, and more.

This year, we'll be expanding on-site education events for the public, including more hikes exploring macroinvertebrates, mushroom identification, plant identification, bird identification, watershed comprehension, full moon-watching, and more.

If you or your company are interested in learning more, con-

tact us or visit our website www.alleghenylandtrust.org. We'll send you an informational packet detailing benefits of our various sponsor levels. Again, a big THANK YOU to the EQT Foundation.

For more information,
e-mail Lindsay at ldill@alleghenylandtrust.org.



Meet A Steward: The Allison Park Sportsmen Club



(LEFT) Photo courtesy of the Allison Park Sportsmen Club. Club members volunteer on a Pine Creek stream improvement project in August 2016 at North Park. (RIGHT) Photo by Keri Rouse. A hunter walks an ALT conservation area trail.

by **Lindsay Dill**

Marketing Communications Director

Stewards come from varied backgrounds with varied interests: hiking, biking, canoeing, birding, horseback-riding, mushroom hunting, star-gazing, and hunting. Each is an explorer of the land, and we also consider them a user.

No matter how careful we are, though, users leave an impact on the land even if they follow the "Leave No Trace" Policy. Our avid group of volunteers helps to balance the impact of people on land by monitoring, maintaining, and improving our conservation areas.

Hunters are often portrayed strictly as users, so when ALT staff spoke at an Allison Park Sportsmen Club (APSC) meeting, we approached them with information on hunting permissions, details about ALT

hunting lands, and the permitting process. While explaining "Leave No Trace" and our reasoning for allowing hunting – deer population management to maintain a healthy forest – we learned that for members of the APSC, to use the land is to make a promise to the environment:

"I give my pledge as an American to save and faithfully to defend from waste the natural resources of my country. The soil. The water. The air. The minerals. The plant life and the wildlife. This is my pledge."

This is a pledge read at each APSC meeting and printed in each published bi-monthly Conservation Committee Report, where they also report on conservation news affecting local ecology.

"As a sportsman, I spend a lot of time in the woods and on the streams of Pennsylvania. I want to preserve all this for

future generations so that they may have the same experience," APSC member Tom Walsh said.

While we consider ourselves open-minded, even ALT staff were surprised and delighted by this club taking on land conservation as seriously as we do. It's rare to find user groups as dedicated to valuing land conservation, and we certainly didn't expect to find it in a hunting-based group.

Maintaining our current lands, enhancing habitat for game, and protecting additional acres for hunting take both effort and money, and we need your help. We hope you'll consider volunteering or donating to aid our land protection and stewardship efforts.

Contact us to learn more about getting involved, invite ALT to your group meeting, or share stories from your season.

For more information, e-mail Caitlin at cseiler@alleghenylandtrust.org.

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ABOUT ALLEGHENY LAND TRUST

Allegheny Land Trust (ALT) is an independent, non-profit organization that has been helping local people save local land in the Pittsburgh region for nearly a quarter of a century.

Founded in 1993, ALT has protected more than 2,100 acres of green space preserving our region's unique natural beauty, providing enhanced outdoor recreational opportunities, improving water quality, fostering biodiversity, and enhancing the overall quality of life for our communities. ALT's areas of strategic priority include Land Conservation, Stewardship, Education, and Urban Greening.

ALT's mission has expanded in recent years to include innovative methods of land conservation in support of community needs for urban green space as well the addition of a professional environmental education team teaching children of all ages to understand and appreciate the natural world.

With conservation areas in 27 municipalities, there is now an ALT conservation project within 12 miles of every Allegheny County resident. The benefits of ALT's efforts can be experienced across the region from McKeesport to Franklin Park, Upper St. Clair to Blawnox, Mt. Washington to Plum, and many places in between.

Keep in Touch with ALT



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