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VISTAS

An **Allegheny Land Trust** Publication

2017 Quarter 4



AT 2017'S END



Catfish Pond at Dead Man's Hollow pictured in the fall. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Help Make a Difference in 2018

by Tom Dougherty | VP of Development & External Affairs

“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature -- the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.” - Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

It's hard to believe that 2017 is already drawing to a close. We set out in January with an exciting agenda and an ambitious list of goals for land protection, stewardship, education, and urban greening, and it has been quite a year on all fronts!

If you've been working with us or following us over the past 11 months, you know that we've been successful in advancing many key initiatives.

Our accomplishments include, but certainly aren't limited to the signing of agreements to purchase 120 total acres of beautiful woodlands in the Big Sewickley Creek area, the completion of major habitat improvements in Dead Man's Hollow and Audubon Greenway, the creation of a joint venture with Grow Pittsburgh to advance our work in urban greening, and a dramatic increase in the number of children who gained a new appreciation and deeper understanding of the natural world through our environmental education efforts.

We are working diligently to close out 2017 on a positive note, and perhaps even more importantly, to build upon our momentum as we move into 2018.

Specifically, there are two things that we must address with urgency as we close out the year:

- Raise the final \$6,000 needed before the end of December to finalize the purchase and permanently protect 70 of the 120 acres of green space mentioned above.
 - Bolster our general fund by \$46,000 to continue our fulfilling our conservation mission into 2018 without interruption.
- Quite simply, resources from our general fund make it possible to efficiently operate our organization and effectively carry out our mission of *Helping Local People Save Local Land*.

We need your help to make these things happen. We hope you consider us for your year-end giving as your contribution will advance our work dramatically, and result in more protected green space, improved ecological health for the region, and a better quality of life for all residents of our region.

Your support is much-needed and will be much-appreciated. Please use the enclosed envelope to make your donation and to direct it to the project of your choice.

Thank you very much.



OUR SPONSORS

Sponsorships allow us to expand and improve our work and bring its benefits to more community members.

We welcome and thank our new and renewing sponsors.

NEW

- Bayer Corporation - Gold
- ACF Environmental - Silver
- Civil & Environmental Consultants, Inc. - Silver
- Victor Wetzel Associates - Silver
- Pheasants Forever - Bronze

RENEWING

- First National Bank - Bronze
- Sota Construction - Bronze

Please recognize and patronize our sponsors.

If you're interested in becoming an ALT sponsor, please contact Tom Dougherty at tdougherty@allegHENYlandtrust.org

notes

FROM THE LAND:

by Roy Kraynyk | VP of Land Protection & Capital Projects

We often take green space for granted until we see it for sale. Consider a place you once enjoyed that has since been developed.

The benefits of ALT's land protection work are usually not immediately recognizable.

The only physical change appears on a deed and sometimes in the form of a sign on the land.

So, one must take a longer view into the future to imagine and appreciate the array of benefits that protecting a parcel of land can have for a community.

The size and location of protected land are factors that affect the potential impact. For example, 843-acre Central Park has been referred to as "the lungs of New York City" -- a far cry from the derelict blighted land it was created from in 1857.

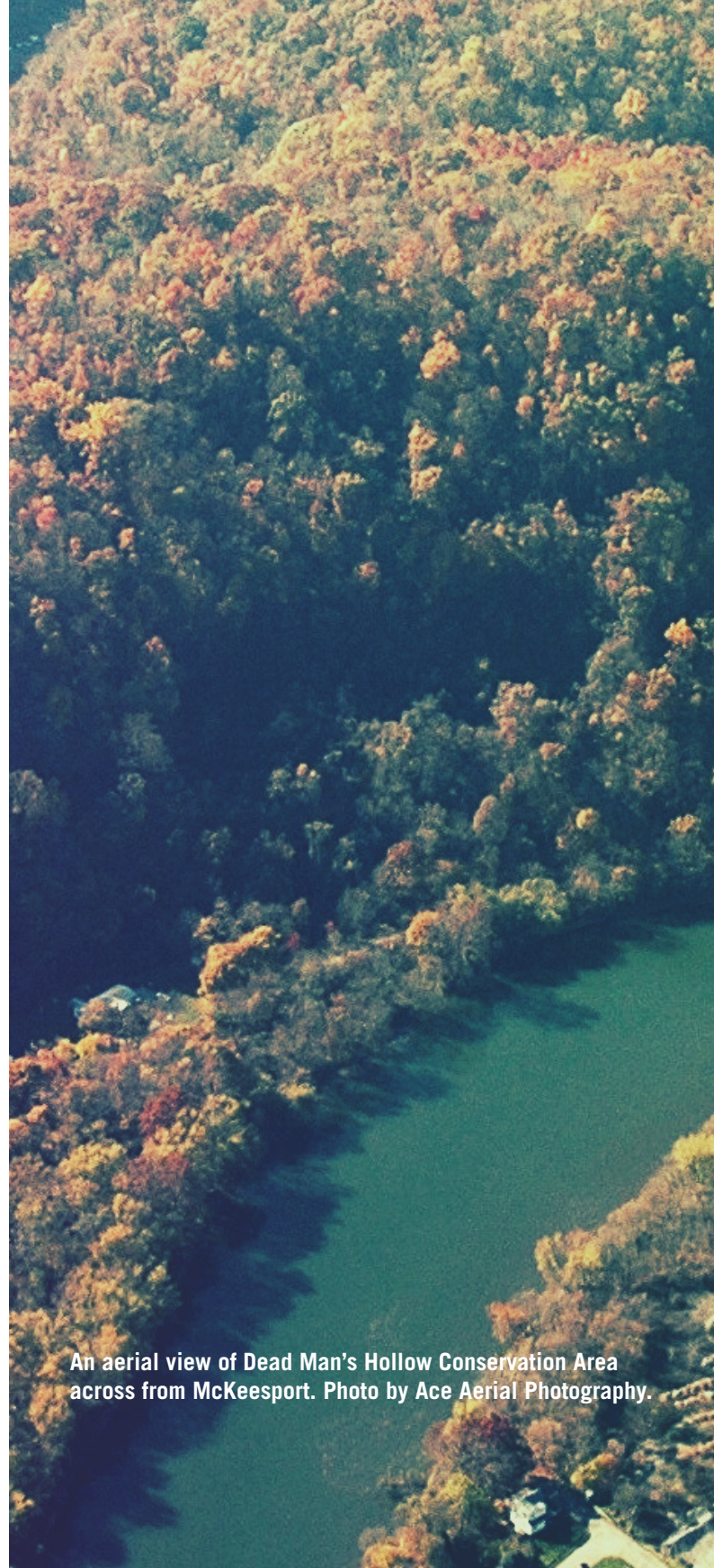
Planners back then took a long-term generational view into the future to envision the need for and benefits of such a large park; they acted urgently to acquire the land even as others opposed the creation of such a large park in such a desolate area. I wonder if 160 years ago they envisioned New York City as it is today with Central Park a verdant island amidst a vast sea of concrete. No one really knows what our world or local communities will be like in 150 years, but I'd venture to say we'd all be grateful for the

green space.

As we know, green space plays a significant role in the quality of our air, water and health, and we're learning more about how green space can support a community's resiliency in responding to the impacts of climate change. Green space provides a carbon sink that sequesters greenhouse gases, keeps rainfall in the evapotranspiration system, provides habitat and migration corridors for avian and terrestrial species seeking more accommodating habitats in response to changing temperatures or moisture.

Therefore, ALT acts urgently to seize on the most strategic land protection opportunities that we encounter while also prioritizing them through criteria that we believe will benefit the community today and in the future.

As I write this, ALT has 6 properties under contract, or contract pending a final signature, totaling 204 acres, and several other negotiations underway on land totaling more than 300 acres. With your support, we can continue, and hopefully accelerate, our pace of land protection for the needs of today's and tomorrow's society.



An aerial view of Dead Man's Hollow Conservation Area across from McKeesport. Photo by Ace Aerial Photography.



Easement Update

In the last issue of VISTAS, we reported that ALT sent a letter to Duquesne Light Company documenting our concerns about the 100-foot wide right-of-way to accommodate a 138 KV powerline being constructed on a conservation easement that ALT holds in Indiana Township on Tingle and Richard Barnes' property. We've since seen new maps showing that the section affecting the Barnes easement has been realigned to avoid the property. We're not certain that the conservation easement was the reason for the route being relocated, but we are very pleased that it was. Thank you for following these developments.

SPONSOR SUPPORT CREATES EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

by Jessica Kester | VP of Education

If you've hiked a forested trail, explored the creek bottom for life or learned about your impact on a watershed with us, then you've reaped the benefit of our educational program sponsors.

Our Environmental Education Team was formed only about 16 months ago, and throughout that time, we've been thankful to have our programs sponsored by caring local businesses. They've helped to bring our conservation and natural history-based programs to all ages in schools and in communities.

The EQT Foundation, RiverWorks Discovery and PNC Grow Up Great have been major supporters for our in-school STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) programming. These programs included our Science Sprouts early education program which brings basic level natural history to life with toys, puppets, stories, skulls, furs and more for children age 2 through 2nd grade.

Additionally, our middle school program, "Riverton: A Watershed Development Project", uses geocaching techniques to focus on human effects on watersheds, and how small decisions can make large impacts on local ecosystems.

Pheasants Forever and the Upper St. Clair Citizens for Land Stewardship have been community-based programs funders, and have helped to bring all ages to our on-site programming such as Starlight Strolls, Bountiful Botany Hikes, Macro Mayhem Mondays and the Chartiers Creek BioBlitz series.

Finally, we had funders who sponsored programs focused on adult learning. PA American Water funded two Stream Monitoring Trainings held at Dead Man's Hollow this fall to show volunteers how to collect data and rate stream health in the headwaters of Dead Man's Run. The Get Outdoor PA funds supplied expert-level bird training for our education team, and provided a host of bird identification guides and binoculars for our Twitter in the Trees programs that are open to all ages.

Support from funders such as these and others goes a long way to making our programs accessible to everyone including those from traditionally underserved areas.



“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Nelson Mandela

A young girl searches for macroinvertebrates at Venango Trail Conservation Area during a summer Macro Mayhem Monday event. Photo by Lindsay Dill.



Buzzing Wingfield Pines

by Caitlin Seiler | Director of Volunteer & Land Resources

Left: Students participate in an environmental education lesson at Wingfield Pines. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Right: The Wingfield Pines boardwalk pictured on a summer morning after a rain storm. Photo by Wild Excellence Films.

At the break of dawn, a birder takes to the trails with binoculars and their favorite guide; by mid-day, exuberant school children take samples of the ponds and wetlands; and by early evening, locals are grabbing their leashes, and hiking shoes, and taking to the trails for a “happy hour” that both they and their pup can enjoy.

We know there are many folks out there who love Wingfield Pines and want to keep an enjoyable public space. When organizations and individuals partner with ALT, that helps make it happen.

Some of our successful 2017 partnerships:

- Upper Saint Clair Citizens for Land Stewardship, regional experts, and citizen scientists came together with ALT to host a 4-part BioBlitz where over 1,500 observations were collected.

- More than 60 students from Brashear High School and Wesley Spectrum volunteered to improve trails and managed invasive plant species.

- Two Boy Scouts from Troop 2 in Bridgeville constructed a footbridge, fence, and kiosk.

- Employees from Apple Inc. organized and ran a staff service project where they planted trees and removed invasive plants.

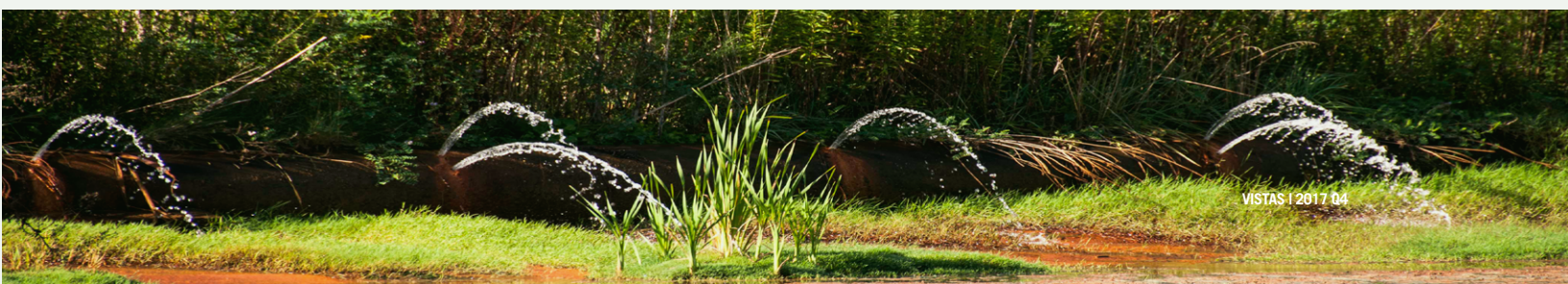
- 4 new volunteer land stewards joined our team to help maintain trails and restoration areas.

- An ALT friend lent the use of his drone over the conservation area to locate the section of boardwalk that was washed away by flooding.

As is the nature of any green space, our stewardship work is never finished but ongoing; for example, we’re securing funding for an ecological management plan, developing a permanent solution for a washed-out land bridge, and repairing damage to the Abandoned Mine Drainage (AMD) treatment system.

So, thank you to all of those who partnered and volunteered with us this year; your help was much needed and appreciated, and we hope to maintain your support.

If you’re interested in helping us with this year’s goals by partnering with ALT for an event, project, or volunteer effort, contact Caitlin at cseiler@alleghenylandtrust.org.



Take Action



Allegheny Land Trust employees paddle across the Allegheny River to reach Sycamore Island Conservation Area. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Stay Engaged, Protect the Green

by Chris Beichner | President & CEO

Another year has meant another state budget standoff for Pennsylvania. In a tense political climate, nonprofits are more aware than ever of the need to communicate the importance of our work locally, nationally and internationally.

The argument over how to balance the budget has resulted in the proposal of raiding Special Project Funds, which includes several environmental and conservation programs. This would pull funding from projects that have already been awarded a state contract, but that haven't spent the money yet.

At this time, ALT's projects are unaffected, but this could set a precedent that is unsustainable and damaging for the health and well-being of our communities. We'll continue to stay on top of budget discussions with our state partners like the Growing Greener Coalition and the PA Land Trust Association, both of which do an excellent job at tracking and communicating budget negotiations.

Our call to action for you is to contact your state Senator and Representative and tell them to stop raiding environmental and conservation programs. Tell them to pass a budget on time and to identify sustainable revenues that will help increase the quality of our state parks, forest land, municipal parks and nature preserves rather than endanger them. While at it, ask them to find new sustainable revenues that will allow for an increase in land protection efforts for our communities.

Together, with a unified voice, we can make a positive impact and ensure our land is protected from corporate negligence, historic environmental hazards and from our state legislators.



To find your representatives and their contact information, visit this website:
www.legis.state.pa.us



meet a steward



JOHN CINDRICH
Left: John clears trash around Catfish Pond. Right: Volunteers from John's group hike Dead Man's Hollow's trails. Photos by Lindsay Dill.

by Caitlin Seiler | Director of Volunteer & Land Resources

It's a brisk October morning,

A Lynyrd Skynyrd song rings through the trees, and John Cindrich drinks coffee with his recruited "squad" of fellow BNY Mellon employees. They're warming up for a day outdoors as they've traded a day at the office for a full day of stewardship work.

Since 2015, John has coordinated four corporate service days with ALT at Dead Man's Hollow. ALT provides the tools, lunch, and tasks, and the BNY Mellon group brings the music, good attitudes, will to work, and happy hour tailgating supplies.

During their volunteer days, they've hauled a large load of tires from a significant dump site, cleared a trail-encroaching rosebush grove, hauled trail-blocking rocks, removed trash along Catfish Pond's edge, and cleared way for the Cool Spirit and Table Rock trails. The October 2017 workday alone involved removing 73 tires and 300 pounds of trash, and cutting a .25-mile section of trail.

When he is not rallying volunteers, John spends some free time doing work at DMH on his own. He also volunteers with other Pittsburgh-area organizations including Boys & Girls Club, Pittsburgh Botanical Gardens, and Rebuilding Together.

"What attracted me to ALT was their ability to make a lot of headway on their projects with extremely limited staff or resources," John said. "Throughout my travels, I have encountered cities with very little green space. Without these types of properties, these cities seem to be lacking a vibrant life. ALT's mission to protect these lands is what makes Pittsburgh a unique and beautiful place for its residents and visitors. ...This is why conservation is such a valuable mission."

UPCOMING EVENTS

E Education Events

V Volunteer Events



by Wild Excellence Films.

Twitter in the Trees

Wingfield Pines

December 16, March 10 | 8 am–10 am

Listen to the sounds of Wingfield Pines as we learn to identify and count the wide variety of birds that call it home. Stay late on the December date to continue to bird with us as part of the Pittsburgh South Hills Bird Circle and the Christmas Bird Count!

All ages | Cost: \$5

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courtesy of Bureau of Land Management, Flickr Creative Commons.

Starlight Stroll

Dead Man's Hollow

January 1, March 2 | 6 pm–7 pm

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!

All ages | Cost: \$5

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courtesy of Sergey Yeliseev, Flickr Creative Commons.

Once in a Blue Moon

Dead Man's Hollow, Venango Trail

January 31, March 31 | Times Vary

Explore the wonders of the second full moon in January and March. We'll learn fun facts about the "blue" moon, listen to moon lore, and find your moon shadow as we hike through the forest's filtered moonlight. Stay after to enjoy a moon snack at the end of the hike.

All ages | Cost: \$5

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bit.ly/altoutside



ALLEGHENY LAND TRUST

416 Thorn Street, Sewickley,
Pennsylvania 15143
phone 412.741.2750
email info@alleghenylandtrust.org
alleghenylandtrust.org



ABOUT ALT

Allegheny Land Trust (ALT) is a nationally accredited, 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

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Vistas is underwritten by an anonymous donor. Thank you!

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FRONT COVER: BNY Mellon employee pictured during a volunteer day at Dead Man's Hollow Conservation Area. By Lindsay Dill.
BACK COVER: A three-horned wartback freshwater mussel is found on Sycamore Island's shores. By Lindsay Dill.



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