

**CREEK TO CREEK GREENWAY**

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# VISTAS

An **Allegheny Land Trust** Publication

Spring 2018







Photo by Wild Excellence Films.

## Connections: From Creek to Creek

by Roy Kraynyk | VP of Land Protection & Capital Projects

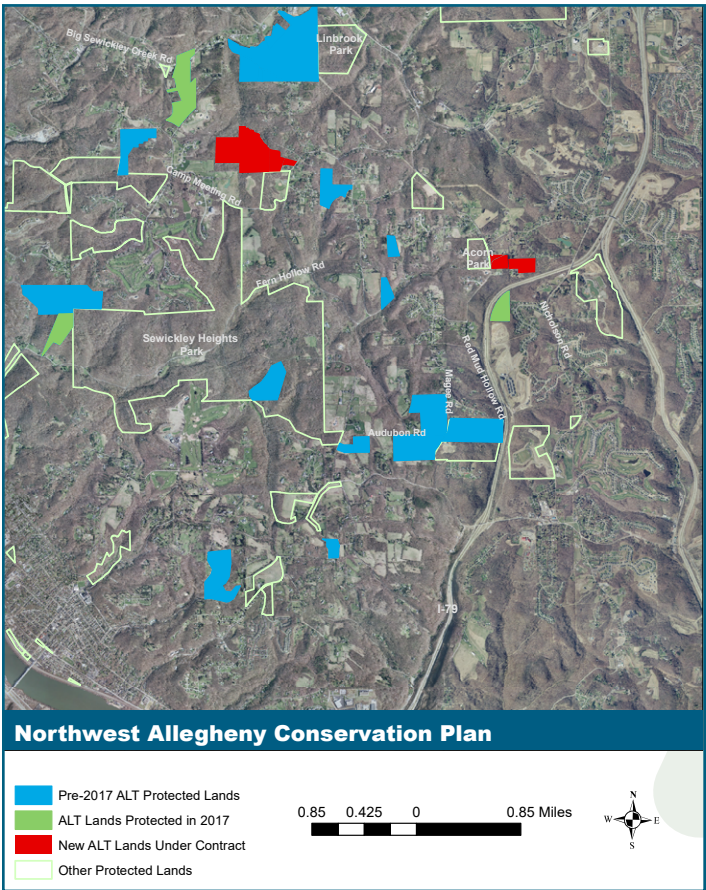
Typically, greenways follow meandering riparian (river or stream) corridors, and this is the case for many of ALT’s conservation areas. Now, however, ALT and our partners are uniquely working to protect land that would cross and link creeks over the ridges that divide them with the “Creek to Creek Connector” project.

Thanks to the support from surrounding communities earlier this year, ALT closed on 2 properties totaling 70 acres in the Big and Little Sewickley Creek Watersheds helping to connect these two watersheds with a greenway. This brings the total land protected by ALT in the Quaker Valley area to more than 700 acres.

Now, we have an opportunity to do it again! We have two parcels under agreement for purchase; one is a 50-acre parcel along Camp Meeting Road in Bell Acres, and the other a 25-acre parcel adjacent to Acorn Park in Franklin Park Borough. These acres would add to the growing Creek to Creek Connector, and bring ALT closer to linking these green spaces, parks, and trails together.

By supporting this project, you’ll be part of the grassroots movement working to build the backbone of a multi-municipal regional greenway that can provide recreational trails and protect scenic beauty in the region. Protection of the land will help to maintain water quality, reduce flooding, and enhance property values.

Please consider using the enclosed envelope to designate a gift to this project, signifying your dedication to “Helping Local People Save Local Land”. You may also donate in-person at our office, or online by visiting: [alleghenylandtrust.org/donate](http://alleghenylandtrust.org/donate)





# notes

## FROM THE LAND:

### Communities Protecting Land: A Case Study

by Roy Kraynyk | VP of Land Protection & Capital Projects

**W**e frequently receive calls from people upset with newly-proposed development in their neighborhood.

Often, they represent a group of neighbors already organized to fight the project, or maybe they learned about a new project that will convert treasured local green space into a housing plan. They usually want ALT to buy the land. Unfortunately, we don't have funds available for immediate purchases, and we need time for local fundraising and grant applications for each project we take on.

However, this doesn't mean all is lost. The neighborhood may still have recourse to positively influence the design of the proposed project, or - like in the following case - stop it and ultimately protect the land with ALT's help.

Residents of a community in Allegheny County were challenging a 22-lot subdivision on land adjacent to their neighborhood. Together, they attended Planning Commission, Council, and Zoning Hearing Board meetings to express their concerns on the record.

Getting your comments on the record helps to establish legal standing. When the subdivision was approved by the Borough's Council and a variance was granted that allowed the developer relief from a particular requirement in the ordinances, residents of the neighborhood group needed the legal standing to appeal those decisions.

In this case, the neighborhood needed to raise money to pay for legal representation to file the appeals; in other cases that we are aware of, a lawyer in the neighborhood volunteered their services.

Frequently, developers seek variances or waivers from requirements in the Land Development or Subdivision Ordinances that they believe to be a burden, like setbacks between other units, tree replacement requirements, or prohibition from disturbing mature forests or steep slopes (which are frequently defined as slopes exceeding 25%). Sometimes getting relief from any one of these examples is critical to making the project profitable for the developer, and some stall or back out if they don't get the variance.

This is exactly what happened in the example above. The neighborhood appealed every approval granted by the municipality drawing out the project for several years. ALT became aware of the conflict and met with the neighbors who wanted to protect the land, but they couldn't strike a deal with the developer and none of the neighbors wanted to own the land.



A spring view of an ALT conservation area. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

We evaluated the property against our GreenPrint criteria and agreed that it qualified to be added to our portfolio of high quality conservation lands, and that the land provided public benefits as permanent green space.

The neighborhood decided the maximum that they would be willing to pay, ALT reached out to the developer (who was frustrated with the delays caused by the appeals that the neighborhood filed), and within a month ALT had the parcel under contract. Two months later, we purchased it with money raised by the residents. Now, we are using this project to leverage a state grant to purchase more land in the immediate vicinity to create a greenway connection between two local parks.

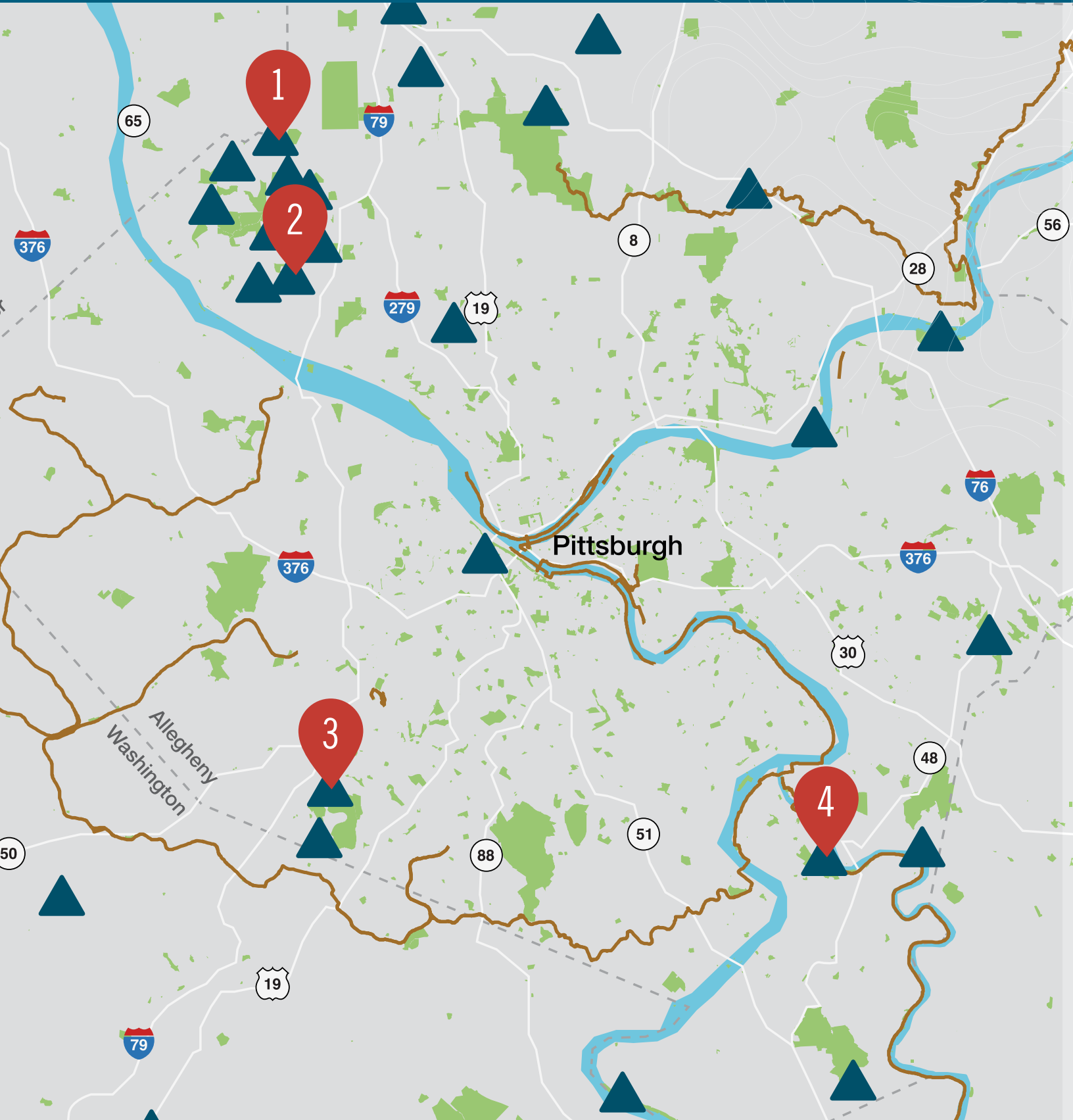
This project resulted in permanent green space because:

- 1) Residents paid attention and attended their local municipality's council, planning commission, and zoning hearing board meetings.**
- 2) The residents understood their municipality's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances and the process by which land development is approved by their municipality.**
- 3) The residents committed to the long haul and raised the money to have legal representation and to buy the land.**
- 4) The land met ALT's criteria and adjacent parcels were available to expand the greenway to connect to parks.**
- 5) The developer was delayed to the point of wanting to get out of the project.**
- 6) There was a willing seller with reasonable expectation of the land's value.**

It's our goal to help local people save local land, and in this case study, the local people gave us a great head start that led to an easier process in protecting land. Learn your ordinances, befriend ALT, and let's make our region greener together.

# WHAT'S HAPPENING NEAR YOU

In Allegheny Land Trust's Conservation Areas







For more info on activities at conservation areas near you, visit [alleghenylandtrust.org/find-a-green-space/](http://alleghenylandtrust.org/find-a-green-space/)

Photo by Lindsay Dill.

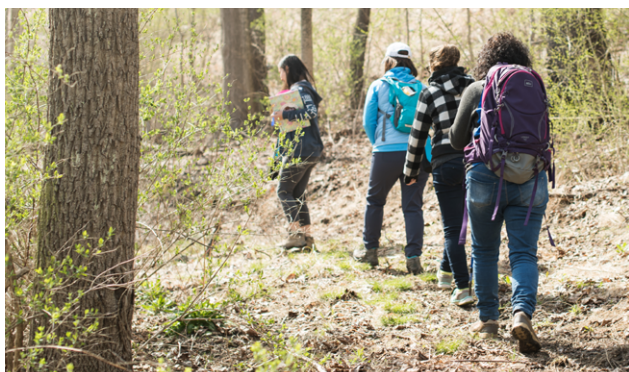


Photo by Lindsay Dill.



1

### **Sewickley, PA** **A Greenway in the Works**

At the beginning of this year, we protected another 70 acres of green space in the Big & Little Sewickley Creek watersheds. Now, we have another 75 acres under contract, and we need your help to protect it. Read more on page 2.

3

### **Wingfield Pines | Upper St. Clair, PA** **AMD System Sees Repairs**

Wingfield Pines' Abandoned Mine Drainage system stopped receiving water due to a geologic event in November 2017. We're working with technical experts to reroute the mine water back to our passive treatment system. We expect a permanent solution to be completed by the end of this year.

Photo by PPU Professor Matthew Opylyke, Ph.D.



Photo by Julie Travaglini.



2

### **Audubon Greenway | Sewickley, PA** **ALT Feeds a Bee & Studies it**

Thanks to our partners from Point Park University and Bayer's "Feed a Bee" Initiative, ALT has projects at Audubon Greenway focused on protecting and enhancing pollinator habitat, and studying bee species making use of the space. Learn more at the Audubon Greenway Pollinator Festival on July 28 from 9 am - 2 pm. Info at [alleghenylandtrust.org/events](http://alleghenylandtrust.org/events).

4

### **Dead Man's Hollow | McKeesport, PA** **Fitness in the Trees**

This newly-launched program invites explorers to get their workout in the woods using . . . the woods! Strategic use of stumps, roots, hillsides, trees, and more are all part of this series of FIT hikes at the hollow. Visit our event page for more details on both the light workout days and intensive workout days.



## Start Your Own Nature Quest



A boy holds up a feather he found during an ALT education program. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

by **Julie Travaglini** | Director of Education

Spring's late arrival will soon give way to summer's season of cookouts, swimming, and no school. Are you looking for something fun and outdoorsy to do with your kids while they're home for the summer? You're in luck because ALT is launching our Summer 2018 Nature Quest!

Nature Quest is ALT's check list challenge of 50 things to do this summer. You can work together with your child to complete this list of nature activities like building a stick fort, holding an earthworm, looking for a shooting star, planting a pizza garden, and much more.

You can even go on a "hula hoop safari", placing a hula hoop down in a natural area around your house and exploring what plants and animals you can find just inside that hoop. What you find may surprise you!

Many of the items on the list can be completed at ALT's community programs, such as Twitter in the Trees, Creek Critters, and Starlight Strolls. Show our educators your progress as you attend our events, and on August 18th, we'll host an end-of-summer bonfire at Wingfield Pines to cele-

brate all the fun we've had completing the Nature Quest. Maybe we'll even complete a few more items on the list!

View and print the list at home from our website: [alleghenylandtrust.org/what-we-do/education/](http://alleghenylandtrust.org/what-we-do/education/). We hope to see you outdoors at our events working towards completing the Nature Quest! Remember to tag us in your social media posts as you're exploring: @alleghenylandtr on Twitter and Instagram, and Allegheny Land Trust on Facebook. Make sure you use the hashtag #ALTNatureQuest2018 so we can see what you find! Maybe you'll even be featured in one of our next Vistas!

**"We have such a brief opportunity to pass on to our children our love for this Earth, and to tell our stories. These are the moments when the world is made whole. In my children's memories, the adventures we've had together in nature will always exist."**

Richard Louv | Last Child in the Woods



### OUR SPONSORS

help us expand and improve our work, and bring its benefits to more community members.

Many thanks to our new and renewing sponsors listed below.

To view a full list of our current sponsors, visit:

[alleghenylandtrust.org/our-sponsors](http://alleghenylandtrust.org/our-sponsors)

Please recognize and patronize our sponsors.

### NEW

- American Eagle Outfitters - *Silver*
- Dobil Laboratories - *Bronze*

### RENEWING

- Williams Coulson - *Gold*
- Fort Pitt Capital Group - *Silver*
- Highmark - *Supporting*
- Dollar Bank - *Other*

If you're interested in becoming an ALT sponsor, please contact Tom Dougherty at [tdougherty@alleghenylandtrust.org](mailto:tdougherty@alleghenylandtrust.org)



# Membership Program Turns One Year Old

by Tom Dougherty | VP of Development & External Affairs

Donations of all amounts from individual supporters are at the very core of Allegheny Land Trust's financial foundation.

The sustained support from a dedicated group of repeat donors is a critical component of our ability to carry out our mission and is much appreciated.

We must maintain and expand this strong base of repeat donors if we are to meet our ambitious conservation and environmental education goals in 2018 and beyond.

With this imperative in mind, we launched our membership program in June of 2017 with the specific goals of:

- Strengthening our relationship with existing repeat donors
- Re-engaging donors who had not given in many years
- Communicating the full ALT story to new first-time donors to create a more lasting connection
- Providing a "tool" for staff, board, and supporters to easily reach out to potential new supporters

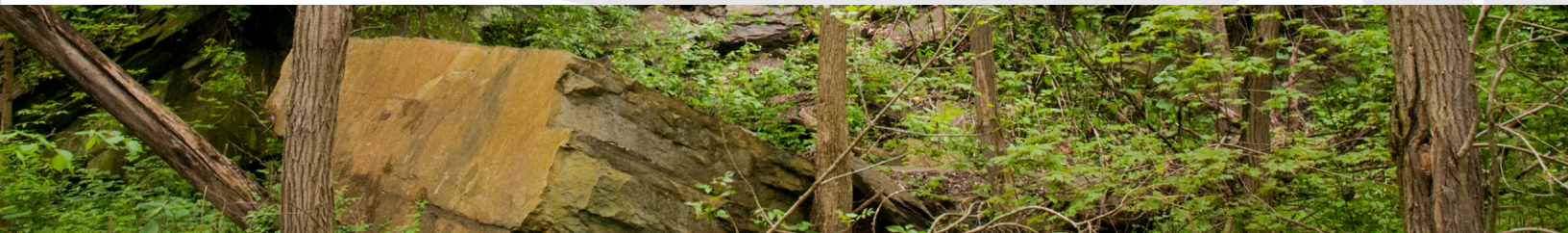
As the membership program approaches its first anniversary, we are happy to report that we have exceeded individual donation levels from previous years, enrolling more than 650 members with 60% being either new donors to ALT or donors who have re-engaged with ALT after a prolonged absence. We are extremely grateful to have the new and revived members joining our base of committed supporters and hope they will all continue to support and be active with ALT.

Please help us to grow our membership program by:

1. **Becoming an ALT member by clicking the "Support" button at the top of our website**
2. **Renewing your membership when you receive your mailed renewal notification on your anniversary date**
3. **Sharing your knowledge of ALT with a friend, and asking them to help protect green space by also becoming a member.**

Thank you for doing your part!

Contact us with any questions or suggestions about ALT membership by emailing [tdougherty@alleghenylandtrust.org](mailto:tdougherty@alleghenylandtrust.org).



# Business Sponsorship Integral Part of Success

by Tom Dougherty | VP of Development & External Affairs

When introducing Allegheny Land Trust to new audiences, I can always count on someone to eventually ask "So where does your money come from?"

Regardless of the audience, I begin the answer by saying "you," before further explaining that we count on a broad spectrum of supporters including individuals, foundations, state and local governments, and businesses to enable us to carry out our mission. We count on the entire community to help us succeed so that the entire community can share in the benefits. The broader the support, the greater the success.

We are working to take our message to the local business community so that business leaders are aware of ALT and fully understand the far-reaching impact that our efforts have on the region where they do business and on the quality of life of their employees.

We truly appreciate support in the form of monetary donations or in-kind services from businesses of all kinds and sizes, and we do our best to work with sponsors to recognize their support in every way possible. We are proud to now have 34 Business Sponsors at various levels. 20 of these are new in the past year.

## Please Help Us Continue to Grow Our Business Sponsorship Program by:

- Clicking the scrolling link on the ALT website homepage to view our complete list of current sponsors
- Thanking our sponsors for their support and patronizing their businesses when possible
- Checking with your employer to see if they have an employee involvement/community support grant program
- Telling your friends who are corporate managers or business owners about ALT sponsorship opportunities
- Referring potential sponsors to Tom Dougherty: [tdougherty@alleghenylandtrust.org](mailto:tdougherty@alleghenylandtrust.org) or 412-741-2750 x211

*Thank you for your support!*



## Forming “Friends Of” for Green Space

by Caitlin Seiler | Volunteer & Land Resources Director

Are you a FRIEND of ALT? How about of Dead Man’s Hollow, Sycamore Island, or Wingfield Pines? “Friends” are people like you who have taken their love for an ALT green space and transitioned it into volunteering their time and services to support ALT’s mission and enhance the green space.

Our “Friends Of” groups form for a variety of reasons, but all understand the value of their favorite conservation area and share a common goal to make that green space the best it can be.

With ALT support, Friends Of groups are volunteer-led to connect fellow volunteers, plan social gatherings, and coordinate workday parties to help meet stewardship goals. They are a great way to connect with the local community and learn from fellow volunteers. Friends Of groups work closely with ALT stewardship staff to help shape projects, happenings, and a vision for their favorite spaces.

Some Friends Of groups have been around for several years, like the Sycamore Island group, which runs mainly through their Basecamp page. Others, like at Dead Man’s Hollow and Wingfield Pines, have many members involved individually, but are only now organizing to form a centralized Friends Of group. These groups can connect explorers to each other and to ALT lands, while enhancing the role of green space in increased biodiversity, water quality, and quality of life.

We currently have Friends Of groups at Wingfield Pines, Sycamore Island, Dead Man’s Hollow, and Linbrook Woodlands conservation areas. It is these eyes on the ground that help us manage, maintain, and improve these conservation areas.

Thank you to all of our existing Friends Of groups, and we look forward to helping interested volunteers form new ones!



Lenny, volunteer and Friend of Dead Man’s Hollow, beautifies a trail entrance at the Hollow. Photo by Lindsay Dill



### Become a “Friend Of”

Joining a Friends Of group is a great way to make a difference, meet more volunteers like you, and help us maintain and improve the green space you love. If you’re interested in joining an existing Friends Of group, or want to start one at your favorite ALT conservation area, contact Caitlin at [cseiler@alleghenylandtrust.org](mailto:cseiler@alleghenylandtrust.org) or 412-741-2750 x207.

## Volunteers Make a Difference at Barking Slopes

by Caitlin Seiler | Volunteer & Land Resources Director

Spring is an enlightening time at the Barking Slopes Conservation Area. Just as the warm weather emerges, so too does a sea of wildflowers along the Riverside trail.

Trillium, Dutchmen’s Britches, Phlox, and Saw Leaf Toothwort wave with the wind greeting hikers who are dodging wild ramps growing on the trailside. The forest is alive with birdsong and playful squirrels crashing through still-decomposing leaves. Passing crumbled ruins of homesteads long forgotten and a clearing where a nearby smokestack billows steam overhead, there is a feeling of solitude, of shrinking away from civilization.

The trail winds around boulders the size of cars and branches of large oaks and sycamores stretch overhead adding to the

feeling that perhaps there is something magic about this place.

This is what our Stewardship team works to create, preserve, maintain, and improve for all to enjoy. If you’ve ever explored Barking Slopes, you know that navigating the upper or lower trails can be quite taxing and take a bit of strategy to get where you want to go. We are actively coordinating with neighbors and partners to improve access to the property and its trails, and we hope to have your support as we continue to make progress on the goals established in our Management Plan for this conservation area.

This year our partner, Plum Borough, has greatly helped our efforts at the lower Riverside Trail by establishing a trailhead and in-

stalling two sets of stairs to access the trail. We still have work to do improving tread, water crossings, and steep sections. A mudslide this Winter has also washed out a section of trail we must reroute. As a 100% volunteer-built and -maintained trail, we need your support.

### Get Involved

- Volunteer at a public workday event
- Plan a service project with your friends, family, or coworkers
- Do solo work as a “Land Steward”
- Donate to the Barking Slopes Maintenance Fund
- Partner with or sponsor us at an event
- Get out and explore the area





## 25 Supporters for 25 Years



TOP LEFT: ALT staff and Board hike Barking Slopes Conservation Area's lower trail. TOP RIGHT: Todd Hooe hikes Barking Slopes' upper trail in March 2018. Photos by Lindsay Dill.

by Lindsay Dill | Marketing Communications Director

### Your support has helped us thrive.

For 25 years, ALT has helped local people save local land. It's due to thousands of supporters ranging from casual volunteers to major donors that we've been able to protect more than 2,200 acres of green space.

As part of our 25th Anniversary, we'll be substituting our typical "Meet a Steward" column with featured supporter stories from our "25 Supporters for 25 Years" series.

Supporters come in many types: Members, Donors, Advisors, Board Members, Volunteers, Partners, and more.

Todd Hooe's story is one of 25 that we'll be sharing in 2018 as part of celebrating our 25th Anniversary: [alleghenylandtrust.org/25-years](http://alleghenylandtrust.org/25-years)



## Featured Supporter:



TODD HOOE

by Lindsay Dill | Marketing Communications Director

**The hill into the upper trails of Barking Slopes Conservation Area is no small feat. The orange, clay-laden soil boasts a steep terrain topped with loose rocks that easily slide when dry and further erode with rain. It's one of our "up-and-coming" conservation areas to visit, but its current unmanicured state never stops ALT member and volunteer Todd Hooe.**

Todd takes to the hill with momentum, familiarity, and ease. He can carry a conversation while climbing the hill, and all the while, he's still attentive to nature; he turns an ear to a far-off sound, takes a moment to listen, and identifies the bird whose call he thinks he's heard. Of the 147 species of birds logged at the green space, Todd has logged 142.

"(Barking Slopes) is a weird place to be by yourself, which is why I like it. ... It has a sort of haunting solitude," Todd said. "It's a purposeful, peaceful place to escape to."

Having learned of Allegheny Land Trust in the early 2010s during a trip to Sycamore Island, Todd has volunteered for more than five years at Barking Slopes Conservation Area, tending to the trails, logging bird species, and helping ALT make ecological considerations during the trail planning processes.

"I really appreciate all the green space in the county, and I wanted to spend my time productively to help improve those things," Todd said. "It's gratifying to help maintain a space I enjoy, to meet nice people, and to learn more about what's near you."

Nature played a big role in Todd's childhood, as his father was a botanist and college professor, and his family would often spend time outdoors. Today, his appreciation of nature has only grown and developed into a proactive approach toward conservation. Even when he's not volunteering, Todd will spend the weekend sunrises at Barking Slopes with a cup of coffee, a pair of binoculars, and an ear to the green space until 8 hours have passed in the blink of an eye.

While he makes use of the trails as a peaceful escape from the 9-5 work week in the concrete jungle, Todd also brings back a piece of the outdoors to the work week: he brings nature to the children with autism that he works with. Todd has walked with these children at another ALT green space, Dead Man's Hollow, and tries to get them out in nature as much as possible.

"As a child, these places were so important to me," Todd said, adding that some kids have pretty challenging underlying behaviors. "Some can really be at their best when they're in nature."

It is thanks to supporters and conservationists like Todd Hooe that our conservation areas thrive, that we become aware of concerns on our green spaces, and that future generations are introduced to and bonded with nature.



# UPCOMING EVENTS

**E** Education Events

**V** Volunteer Events



Photo by Lindsey Dill.

## Creek Critters

### Location Varies

June 13 | 4:30 – 6:30 pm | Wingfield Pines

July 11 | 4:30 – 6:30 pm | Irwin Run

August 8 | 4:30 – 6:30 pm | Wingfield Pines

September 12 | 4:30 – 6:30 pm | Irwin Run

Join our trained education team as we wade into the waters that flow through our greenspaces in search of the macroinvertebrates or “creek critters” that call these waters home. Great for families and community groups.

All ages | Cost: \$5

**E**



Photo courtesy Flickr Creative Commons. User: Fit Approach.

## Fitness in the Trees (F.I.T.) Series

### Dead Man's Hollow

May - September, 1st & 3rd Wednesdays

1st Weds, 5 – 6 pm | 3rd Weds, 5 – 6:30 pm

Looking to spend more time in nature, get fit, and learn about your surroundings? Join our environmental Education Team to get FIT on our trails using nothing but your self and the green space! This is a bimonthly series; the first WEDS of each month is the 1-hour basic training program and the third WEDS of each month is the 1.5-hour advanced training program. JUN 6, 20; JUL 11; AUG 1, 15; SEPT 5, 19

Adults | Basic Program: \$15/program.

Advanced Program: \$20/program.

**E**



Photo by Lindsey Dill.

## Tree ID Hike

### Bradford Woods

June 16 | 10 am - 11 am

Take a walk with one of our trained education staff as we identify a portion of the botanical diversity that can be found growing at this green spaces. Today we'll focus on plant and tree identification at Bradford Woods Conservation Area. Wear good hiking shoes, and bring a camera and your favorite field guide if you have them.

All Ages | Cost: TBD

**E**



Photo by Lindsey Dill.

## #TrailTuesdays

### Dead Man's Hollow

April - September | 5:30 – 7:30 pm

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.

All ages | Free to attend

**V**



Photo by Lindsey Dill.

## Educator Workshops: Early Childhood

### Location Varies

June 27 | 9 am – 3 pm, July 9 | 9 am – 12 pm

July 26 | 9 am – 12 pm, August 7 | 9 am - 12 pm

ALT's Environmental Education Team provides programming for all ages; learn how to bring nature into your early childhood classroom with these workshops for different grades and classrooms! PAKeys and Act 48 Hours available at several workshops. Fees vary. More info on specific programs on our website.

Educators & Curious Adults | Fees vary

**E**





Photo by Lindsey Dill.

## Barking Slopes Trail Day

### Barking Slopes

June 23 | 9 am – 12 pm

Help improve trails and remove trash, natural debris, and invasive species at this rocky, hillside green space along the Allegheny River.

All ages | Free to Attend

V

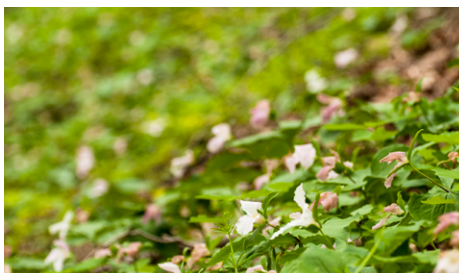


Photo by Lindsey Dill.

## Plant Pursuit: Plant & Tree ID

### Barking Slopes

August 4 | 10 am - 12 pm

Take a walk with one of our trained education staff as we identify a portion of the botanical diversity that can be found growing at this state-designated Biological Diversity Area. This event occurs several times throughout the year; today, we'll focus on tree & plant identification.

All Ages | Cost: \$5

E



Photo by Lindsey Dill.



Photo courtesy of Flickr Creative Commons.

## Stars & S'mores

### Location Varies

June 29 | 8 – 10 pm | Wingfield Pines

July 27 | 8 – 10 pm | Barking Slopes

August 26 | 7 – 9 pm | Barking Slopes

Stroll under the light of the 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! We'll enjoy s'mores over a fire following the hike.

All ages | Cost: \$5

E

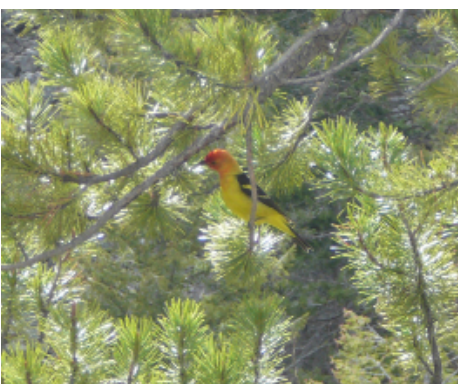


Photo courtesy of Flickr Creative Commons. User Kaye Heins.

## Twitter in the Trees: Tweets & Treats

### Devil's Hollow

August 11 | 8 – 10 am

Listen to the sounds of the Devil's Hollow over light breakfast snacks as we venture along the trails to count the wide variety of birds that call the green space "home". Become a citizen scientist; no experience or equipment needed.

All ages | Cost: \$5

E

## Invasive Plants & Insects ID

### Bradford Woods

August 11 | 10 am – 11 am

Gain a better understanding of invasive plants and insects by joining our experts as we venture through Bradford Woods. You'll learn to identify common invasive plants and insects, and understand what makes a plant/insect invasive and why that matters to a green space's health.

All Ages | Cost: TBD

E



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To register and find more information, visit:  
[alleghenylantrust.org/events](http://alleghenylantrust.org/events)





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# 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 a quarter century.**

Founded in 1993, ALT has protected more than 2,200 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: An educator participates in a Healthy Water Healthy People early childhood education workshop at Sycamore Island with ALT's education team.

BACK COVER: A frog enjoys the pond at Sycamore Island in Blawnox.  
Both photos by Lindsay Dill.



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