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2

AN EASEMENT CASE STUDY
The Beeson Example

12

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION
A Snapshot of Our Projects

18

A YEAR OF LEARNING APART
Adapting Programs Together

21

VISTAS

An Allegheny Land Trust Publication

Spring 2021



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(top) An explorer hikes the Churchill Valley Greenway conservation project. (right) The city skyline viewed from the Girty's Woods conservation project. Photos by Lindsay Dill.

“

This wooded area is extremely important to me. I grew up playing in these woods. My dad grew up playing in these woods. Protecting them means a lot to my family.”

- Sean S., ALT Member



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A redwing blackbird rests in a tree top at Girty's Woods conservation project. Photo by Lindsay Dill.



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Bradford Woods Conservancy

A fund of the Allegheny Land Trust, the Bradford Woods Conservancy (BWC) promotes and maintains the natural beauty of the Bradford Woods community. The Bradford Woods Reserve is a 4.5-acre green space preserved in a natural state for all to enjoy. Below are the BWC donors of 2020:

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An ALT easement donor worked with ALT to create a conservation legacy by placing an easement on her land. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Create a Lasting Legacy Through Land Conservation

by Tom Dougherty | VP of Development & External Affairs

As a supporter of Allegheny Land Trust, you know that protecting Allegheny County's remaining open spaces is one of the most effective things we can do to address many of the pressing issues our region is facing today, and you understand that how we treat our undeveloped land now and in the future will determine the quality of life for generations to come. Protecting green space leaves a legacy.

If you want the clean air, clean water, scenic beauty, close-to-home recreation, wildlife habitat, and local food growth that comes with land conservation to be a part of your legacy, please consider including ALT in your estate plans.

We would be honored to have your support in this most solemn of ways to contribute to our capacity to help local

people save and care for local land forever. Bequests in a will or trust are one of the most common ways of making a legacy gift and they are simple to establish.

If you would like more information or if you have already included Allegheny Land Trust in your estate plans, then please get in touch with us to discuss the possibilities with you. Thank you!



To discuss possible gifts of these types, please contact Tom Dougherty, ALT's Vice President of Development, at tdougherty@alleghenylandtrust.org.



“

We are 49 years here on the farm and this year fulfilled our dream of protecting our land with a conservation easement.

This means we still own the land but have more protections in perpetuity against development, oil and gas extraction, giant electrical towers, etc. Such are the pressures of living in the countryside. Now the wildlife can roam in peace and safety, the birds can take over and the butterflies and pollinators can find a haven. ”

- Elizabeth “Bett” Beeson

Conservation Easement Case Study: The Beeson Easement

by Roy Kraynyk | VP of Land Protection & Capital Projects



Bett and Bing Beeson's home on their newly-eased acres of green space. Photo by Caitlin Seiler.



The family certified their land as an Audubon Society Backyard Habitat. Photo by Caitlin Seiler.



A Black Swallowtail Butterfly lands on wildflowers at the Beeson's farm. Photo by Caitlin Seiler.

Bett and Bing Beeson approached ALT in late 2019 about protecting the 70 acres they live on in Indiana Township. They learned about conservation easements (CE) from their friends Richard and Tingle Barnes, who in 2013, protected their land with a CE held by ALT.

Over the course of 2020, we took our time and step-by-step worked through the process of identifying four distinct conservation areas - Minimum, Standard, High, and Reserve and the specific language addressing uses and activities that can take place in each. As their names imply, each distinct protection area offers a greater level of protection from virtually no restrictions to activities and uses in the Minimal Protection Area to most restrictions in High. The majority of the Beeson farm is in High Protection and includes sensitive lands such as steep slopes, mature woodlands, floodplains, and riparian corridors. These are the types of land and features that ALT likes to include in a High Protection Area so they are not disturbed. Certain activities and uses such as hiking trails, hunting, woodland and invasive species management are compatible with the sensitive lands so therefore are not a concern and can continue to occur. With some exceptions motorized trails and logging would not be permitted in a High Protection Area.

Working lands like pasture and cultivated fields are normally in Standard Protection Areas so those activities can continue. There are 14.40 acres in Standard at the Beeson farm. The Minimum Protection Area, 1.02 acres, is where you'll find the existing residence, barn and parking area. There is plenty of room to expand the home, install a pool or other structures if the Beesons or a future landowner wishes to do so. The Reserved Area, 3.91 acres, is where a new home or structure can be erected in case a family member wanted to build there or for a future sale to a non-family member.

The protection areas were demarcated in the field by ALT staff with the landowner's involvement, and then surveyed. The subsequent survey drawing is the Conservation Plan that is attached to the conservation easement narrative. Once it is signed by the landowner and ALT, the CE is recorded. Any future title search will reference the CE, which survives the life of the

landowner and applies to every future landowner.

The most significant power of a CE is that it can protect the land from future subdivision and development by severing the development rights from the land. Property rights are severable – meaning that they can be transferred to another entity. How are property rights determined? By local zoning. For example, a 10-acre parcel zoned for one dwelling unit per acre has 10 development rights. If a home exists on the land, then 9 development rights remain that can be transferred. Once transferred to a land trust or conservancy they are held in trust never to be used. If transferred to a qualified conservation organization like ALT, the value of those development rights, as determined by a Qualified Appraisal, are eligible for a federal tax deduction, and can be carried over several years. Also, it is important to remember that a CE does not automatically give the public the right to enter or use the protected property.

So, in the end, the landowner still owns the fee simple interest in the land. They can sell it, but the right to develop it has been surrendered.

ALT has 13 easements totaling about 340 acres in the municipalities of South Strabane, Sewickley Hills, Sewickley Heights, Bradford Woods, Lincoln, Monroeville, Thornburg, Indiana, and the City of Pittsburgh. And one new CE being finalized in Middlesex Township, Butler County on 119 acres.

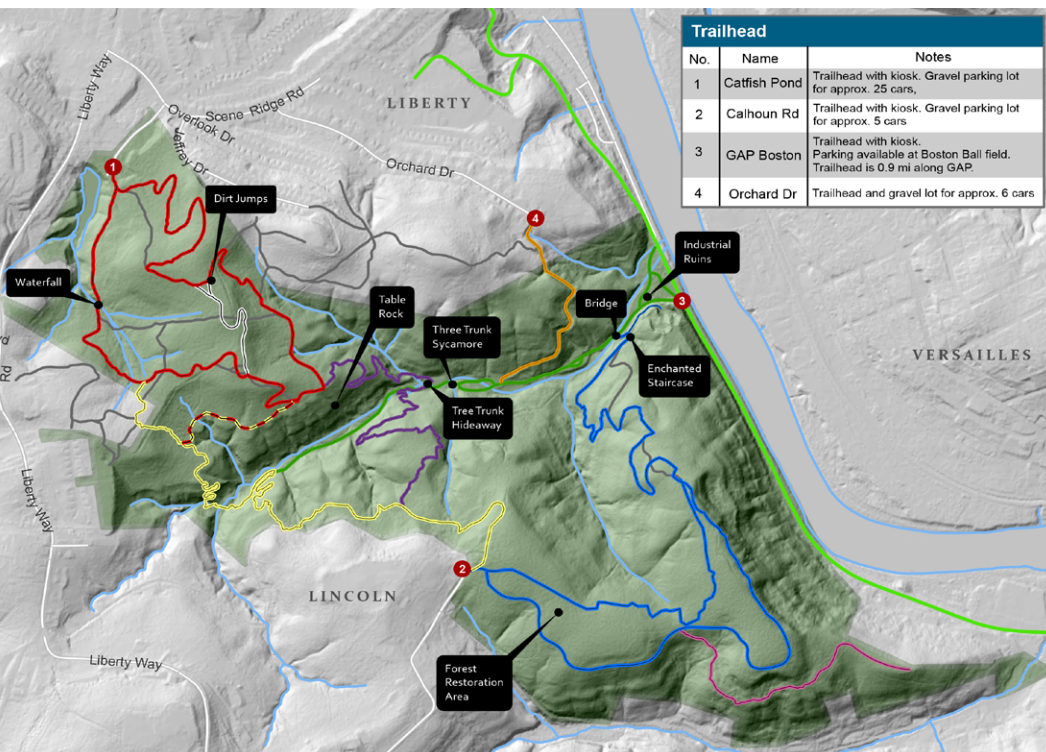
Benefits of placing a CE on your land is that you'll have the peace of mind knowing that it will never be developed. The value of the development rights, when donated, is eligible for a federal tax deduction. And, once the land is eased landowners might consider appealing the assessed value – especially if the appraised value of the severed development rights was substantial, or if the land is not already in Clean and Green.



For more information on conservation easements, contact Roy at 412-741-2750 x 203 or rkraynyk@alleghenylandtrust.org.

(right) Volunteers from the Mon Yough Trail Council help clear a downed tree on a new section of trail along the Great Allegheny Passage at Dead Man's Hollow. Photo courtesy of Mon Yough Trail Council.

(below) Trail Tuesday volunteers help maintain and improve the new sustainable trail system at Dead Man's Hollow by making a sweep and clearing debris. Photo by Caitlin Seiler.



Life Lately at Dead Man's Hollow

by Caitlin Seiler
Director of Stewardship & Volunteers

If you have been following our stewardship activities at the Dead Man's Hollow Conservation Area over the past few years, you have seen a lot of ongoing trail work. In 2014, a master plan was completed to enhance the trail system based on community input, to assess the ecological habitat, and to identify ways to further enhance the recreation and community connections.

Working with local volunteer stakeholders from Lincoln, Liberty, and Elizabeth, a comprehensive plan was developed. The process revealed that there was great interest in building connections between the existing trail systems and highlighting interesting features. Since then, we have been working to implement the recommendations to improve the existing near-6 miles of trail, and adding 4 miles of connections. We are pleased to share that last summer we completed the final phase of new trail development.

Our progress has been the result of contracted trail building services, and the ongoing support of hard-working volunteers. A group of volunteers meets monthly in the spring and summer at Trail Tuesday events, and a team of corporate volunteers from BNY Mellon visit Dead Man's Hollow annually to put in an 8-hour day of work on the trails.

The trail construction may be complete, but the work is far from over. Some sections of trail need to be revisited because of unexpected spring seeps and erosion, and trail maintenance is an ongoing process. Currently, there are mixed trail markers and some of the new sections are yet to be marked. New way-finding markers and signage will be installed throughout the green space, but it will take several months to complete.



Our most up to date trail map and a file available to download to your phone for use in a GPS app can be found on our website at <https://alleghenylandtrust.org/green-space/dead-mans-hollow/>.

Addressing Our Region's Challenges: PHYSICALLY DISTANCED, CONNECTED BY LAND

by Lindsay Dill | Marketing Communications Director

Our mission is to conserve and care for local land for the health and well-being of future generations. We envision a resilient region with abundant green space that is easily accessible and recognized as essential to the quality of life for all.



ALT's 2020 Hamm Intern sees a newly-protected conservation area in summer 2020. Photo by Lindsay Dill.



(above) An explorer takes to the trails of Girty's Woods conservation project to get some movement in February 2021. (below) A wintry tree line at an ALT conservation project. Photos by Lindsay Dill.

During the past year, we've not seen our regional challenges diminish, and instead have experienced a new set of unprecedented challenges through a pandemic that's kept us apart from one another.

We've written extensively about and worked hard on creating close-to-home green space, and its importance has been underscored this year with more clarity than ever before. During the early stages of the pandemic, Google released location data showing that parks visitation in Pennsylvania increased 152%. Many of you answered our pandemic survey describing how green space has become your sanctuary.

As individuals and as a team, we've worked to remember that the guidance is physical distancing - not social; and we've been honored to provide green spaces that allow for communities to connect with nature and with one another in an appropriately-spaced environment. It's given us the drive we need to continue working to protect local land.

Our region's challenges - air quality, water quality, flash flooding, combined sewer overflows (CSOs), landslides, outdoor education and recreation opportunity access,

equitable green space access, food security - have not put themselves on hold while the rest of our lives are on hold. So, while we've continued the same fight for conservation, we've added renewed urgency and purpose to protect these community sanctuaries.

We hope the distribution of the vaccine equates to a safer atmosphere to reopen many of our businesses and meet again in-person for community meetings, education programs, volunteer workdays, and hikes. When our world returns to some semblance of normal, we'll have more than 400 newly-protected acres to explore with supporters like you.

We're grateful for your continued support over this past year of uncharted territory, and we're just as excited as ever to continue saving close-to-home green space for our region's enjoyment in good times and in tough times.



Find close-to-home green space and learn more about upcoming projects: alleghenylantrust.org/find-a-green-space

Creating Permanent Local Green Space

by Tom Dougherty | VP of Development & External Affairs

ALT and its partners are working with great urgency to close the remaining funding gaps on the Churchill Valley Greenway and Girty's Woods conservation projects. While different in some unique ways, both projects have generated unprecedented and truly inspiring levels of community support, and will deliver significant benefits to our region and to their communities now and for generations to come.

Coincidentally, these high-profile projects are both scheduled to close before March 31, 2021. While funding gaps remain, we are hopeful that pending grant requests and on-going discussions with other funding sources will be fruitful and close the gaps sufficiently to move forward with the acquisitions this Spring.

Please recognize that additional support from the community and other funding sources may be necessary to successfully establish these new conservation areas.

CHURCHILL VALLEY GREENWAY

ALT has been working with the communities of Churchill and Penn Hills over the past two years to permanently conserve the strikingly beautiful land of a former private country club to create the 148-acre Churchill Valley Greenway.

More than 700 community members have shown their support for the project by donating over \$170,000 to-date.

ALT has worked diligently attempting to secure grants and other sources of funding to meet the \$3,000,000 acquisition price by the March 31, 2021 closing date. These fundraising efforts received a substantial boost during a 3-week period in February with a \$75,000 corporate donation from the Duquesne Light Company and donations of \$100,000 each from two local families. This \$275,000 boost narrowed the gap needed to close to \$530,000.

At the time this article was written, 82% of the total required funding has been secured. We are anticipating word from the PA DCED in mid-March regarding two pending grant requests, and discussions continue with other potential supporters.

GIRTY'S WOODS

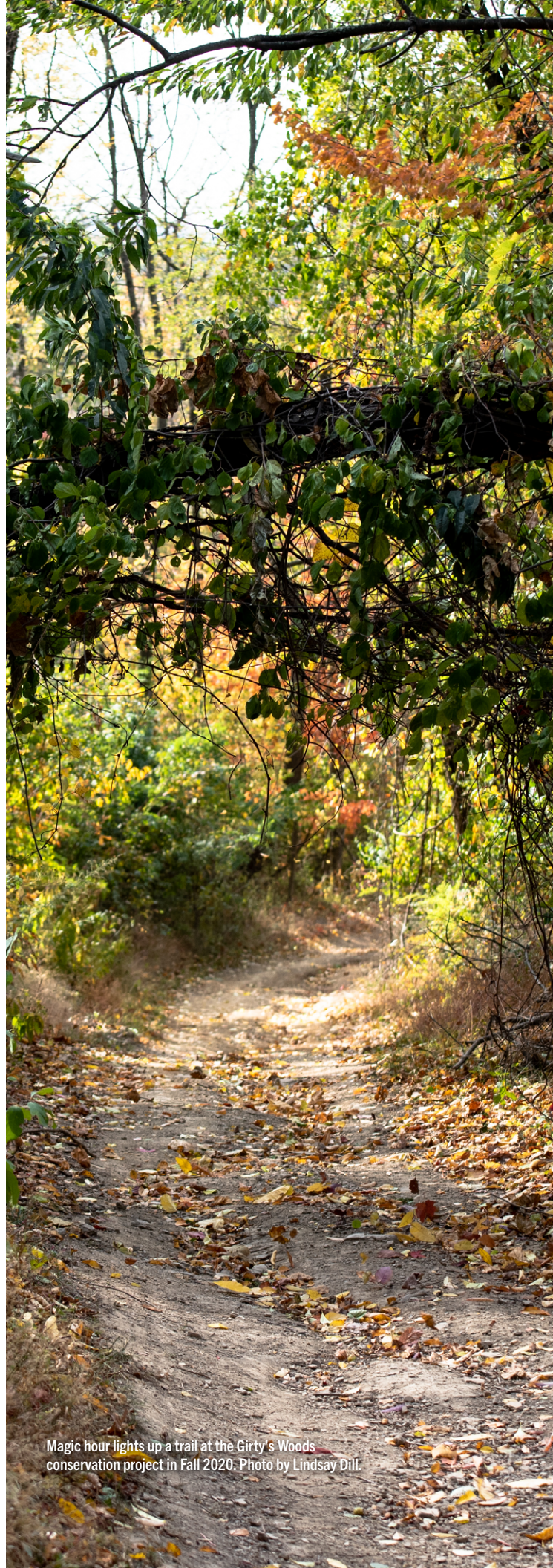
ALT and its partners in Millvale, Shaler, and Reserve have been collaborating over the past year to acquire these 155 acres of woodlands on the expansive hilltops and steep slopes of Reserve Township adjacent to the neighboring municipalities in the Girty's Run Watershed.

More than 620 neighbors, numerous civic organizations and local businesses, and many key community development partners have donated and/or conducted a long list of community fundraising events that have generated more than \$115,000 for the project. ALT has worked to generate grants and other sources of funding in advance of the late March closing date.

At the time this article was written, 96% of the required funding has been raised, and several community fundraising efforts are still in motion.



Learn more about these projects on our website:
alleghenylandtrust.org/girtyswoods
alleghenylandtrust.org/churchill-valley



Magic hour lights up a trail at the Girty's Woods conservation project in Fall 2020. Photo by Lindsay Dill.



A young explorer runs along a trail at Barking Slopes conservation area early in the pandemic.
Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Your Support and ALT through the Pandemic

by Chris Beichner | President & CEO

Last year was difficult, but even during a pandemic that saw tremendous life loss, massive unemployment, hardships on small businesses, children learning remotely, and lives forever changed, our mission to conserve and care for local land took momentous strides forward because of the resiliency of our members like you.

As the pandemic spread throughout the country in March 2020, we were completing the final details to acquire the Bethel Green Conservation Area. Bethel Park and the surrounding South Hills communities provided exceptional support towards the acquisition of this unique 40 acres that included approximately 200 individual donors.

As we concluded the Bethel Green acquisition, we began the Girty's Woods project in Reserve Township while simultaneously continuing our fundraising efforts for the Churchill Valley Greenway.

Even though we delayed our fundraising campaign for Girty's Woods until July 2020 because of the pandemic, you helped us meet our lofty fundraising goal for the community within 40 days. Thank you to the more than 620 donors who have helped generate more than \$115,000 towards the Girty's Woods project. We are optimistically hoping to close on the property by March 31st, and by the time you read this, we may have already protected the land.

Similarly, you have been unrelenting in your support of the Churchill Valley Greenway project. Over the past two years, we have seen close to 700 donors who have contributed nearly \$170,000 towards the project.

Collectively 1,600 very generous people have made the success of these projects possible. The increase in individual donors has helped to leverage additional corporate and foundation dollars, and those dollars have helped to leverage millions of dollars in state grants.

As we protect more land, we also need resources to maintain the land we conserve, as is part of our mission. Your continued support in the next several years will be critical to our ability to grow and sustain our protection efforts, ability to maintain the land we conserve, and general operations.

So, in this issue, we wholeheartedly THANK YOU - our 2020 donors - who made a conscientious decision to contribute to ALT. We would not be where we are without you, and with successfully protecting Churchill and Girty's Woods by March 31st (hopefully), we will have surpassed 3,000 acres conserved since 1993.



ALT VP of Land Protection and Capital Projects.
Roy Kraynyk.
Photo by Lindsay Dill.

On behalf of our board and staff, we would like to congratulate Roy Kraynyk for 20 years of service with ALT. As ALT's second Executive Director and first Vice President of Land Protection, Roy has worked tirelessly to protect Allegheny County's most important ecological treasures for future generations to enjoy. Roy is a skilled negotiator and deal-maker who has positioned ALT on countless occasions to purchase land at only a fraction of the fair market value saving us millions of dollars over the years. Thank you, Roy, for your passion and lifelong dedication to conservation!



A Big Sewickley Creek project partner monitors land along a tributary. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Our Community Conservation Program in Full Swing

by Alyson Fearon | Senior Director of Community Conservation & Resiliency

Many of you may have noticed more information on how our Community Conservation Program is active and moving projects forward. But what is community conservation? ALT has a strong history of working with community-nominated projects, however, community conservation aims to take that a little further. Community Conservation works to listen to more voices in communities to locate projects in areas that revitalize communities, increase access to green spaces, create conservation-focused plans, and provide additional services to their communities.

Some examples we have underway are:

The **Three Rivers Agricultural Land Initiative** or TRALI, where we have partnered with Grow Pittsburgh to identify strong community gardens that are not on permanently-protected land. These gardens are at risk when their neighborhoods begin to gentrify; city-owned lands are eligible for sale and must be sold to the highest bidder. Our partnership means ALT can help acquire these properties and create land security for the gardens, so they can have permanence of place and safely know that their investments in time, effort, and money won't be lost.

We have successfully completed the **Big Sewickley Creek Watershed Rivers Conservation & Stewardship Plan**, which was funded in part through DCNR, other local foundations, and municipalities. ALT has a strong presence in the watershed, and the plan focuses on enhancing the quality of the stream corridor and

public access, as well as enhancing and protecting important upland features. We are now working on critical conservation projects in the area with the newly formed Big Sewickley Creek Watershed Association to ensure the unique nature of the watershed is preserved in perpetuity.

Finally, we are supporting the protection of the former **Healcrest Farm**, in the Garfield neighborhood of Pittsburgh. ALT has been in conversation with the community members for over two years on succession planning for the space, and it was determined that protection by ALT would create the best partnership to allow community access to the location in the future. Healcrest will be incorporated into the updated Garfield Green Zone providing green space access in an area lacking outdoor spaces.

Community Conservation for ALT has a strong focus on creating or preserving green space in neighborhoods and communities that experience high levels of vacancy, blight, and divestment. These projects focus strongly on preserving community-created green space, and creating or saving green space in areas not served by parks, greenways, or other municipal-created recreation opportunities. We are excited to share this work with you in the coming year and the future!



Learn more about our Community Conservation efforts in the Big Sewickley Creek Watershed here:
alleghenylandtrust.org/big-sewickley-creek-watershed/

notes

FROM THE LAND:

For What It's Worth

by Roy Kraynyk | VP of Land Protection & Capital Projects

Thanks to a surge of support from donors, foundations, state grants, and local businesses in 2020, ALT protected 155 acres in Elizabeth Township that we refer to as Buena Vista Heights, and 40 acres in Bethel Park we call Bethel Green. We also accepted as a gift from Pioneers West Society, the Walker Ewing Log House- a historic log cabin situated on an acre of land in Collier Township.

We frequently write about the benefits of protecting land and quantify those benefits in acreage, dollars raised, amount of water or carbon that the land can sequester, miles of trails, and types of wildlife habitat the land provides. While cross-country skiing at twilight on a golf course near one of ALT's conservation areas recently, it dawned on me how we often overlook some of the greatest attributes of land because they are not easily quantifiable – but none the less, perhaps even more valuable. Not in a monetary sense, but rather a visceral one.

In my opinion, twilight is the best time to be out in the snow. This was one of those evenings when the sky was a layered collage of restless clouds in shades of grey, a smattering of pure white and some as dark as night. Occasionally, a brilliant patch of contrasting indigo would peak through this caravan of clouds pushed swiftly across the sky by the cold atmospheric winds. The swish-crunch, swish-crunch, swish-crunch rhythm of my skis through the unbroken snow and occasional honking gaggle of geese overhead

were the only sounds interrupting the quiet solitude as I meandered through frozen fairways, sand traps, and ponds edged with brown cattails shivering in the wind. Kicking and gliding over the landscape, occasionally intersecting the telltale evidence of a deer hoofing away at the snow for a nibble of turf, the tracks of a fox or coyote prowling for a vole hidden under the blanket of snow, a large disturbed area of K-9 paw-prints (that I imagined were from an awkward young golden retriever frolicking in the snow for the first time), and other signs of two- and four-legged creatures large and small. It was a highly contrasted black and white world with white predominantly punctuated by dark tree trunks and the occasional brown pin oak leaf that would blow across the snow like a miniature tumbleweed.

Stopping at the top of a rise to catch my breath and a sip of ice-cold water, scanning west across the smooth sculpted landscape, the setting sun suddenly peered through a narrow window between the clouds and horizon to instantly cast a spell of pastel light that tinted the pure snow a radiant pink. The undersides of the clouds glowed in lavender and gold from horizon to horizon. The sunset winds decided to get in on the act and gently pushed waves and swirls of colorful “snowdust” across the openness. A stronger burst of wind nudged the flagpole cord against the metal pole, clanging like a distant church bell, as if to proclaim the end of another day.

Priceless!



The sun sets at the Churchill Valley Greenway conservation project, reflecting off of a tributary. Photo by Lindsay Dill.



Featured Supporters:



(left) Shaler Area High School students at a Spaghetti Fundraiser for Girty's Woods conservation project. (right) A mountain biker hits the trails at the conservation project. Photos by Lindsay Dill.

by Lindsay Dill | Marketing Communications Director

In February 2020, our staff was looking forward to the launch of a new land protection campaign in Reserve Township. Sitting at the border of three municipalities, the project would connect more than 100,000 residents within a 3-mile radius to some rare urban green space. We knew the passion would run high for many who would be impacted by the permanent protection of this land.

None of us knew that the world was about to change in March, just as we were readying to launch this campaign and mail fundraising appeals to neighbors. We put everything on pause, aware that many in these and other communities would be hurting from losing work. After careful consideration and conversations with community leaders, we launched an online awareness campaign in April, and didn't mail out fundraising appeals until July; knowing all the while that we'd need all the funds to protect this land forever by March 2021.

For the first time ever, we placed a check-box on our mailed envelopes to allow individuals to express support even if they couldn't give a donation at this time. We hoped this would satisfy larger grant requirements that look to the number of donors as a vouch for community support. We were blown away when residents in Reserve, Millvale, and Shaler met and exceeded our local fundraising goal within 40 days.

At the time this article is being written, more than 620 individuals helped generate more than \$115,000 toward the Girty's Woods conservation project. What's more, we've been amazed by the amount of grassroots efforts made by neighbors of the green space collecting donations of any and all size to help close the fundraising gap.

Shaler Area School District middle school and high school students have helped in many ways to raise awareness and dollars. One boy took a door-to-door salesman approach to help sell the idea of Saving Girty's Woods. Half a dozen students helped raise awareness and dollars during an outdoor, physically-distanced Spaghetti Dinner in Millvale. Two students launched a GoFundMe for Girty's Woods with a \$1,000 fundraising goal; by March, they'd raised more than \$8,000!

Most of the students created one-of-a-kind pieces of art to auction off for funds to protect Girty's Woods.

The Millvale community also rose to and beyond the occasion to ensure these 155 acres were forever protected to maintain air quality, absorb rainwater to prevent exacerbated flooding issues, save wildlife habitat, and create opportunities for recreation and outdoor education. In fact, nearly half of the businesses or organizations on Millvale's main streets have helped raise awareness or dollars in some capacity. Here is a snapshot list: Baby Loves Tacos, Delta Eta Epsilon at University of Pittsburgh, Duncan Street Sandwich Shop, EIS Solar, Emergence A Women's Collective, EvolveEA, First National Bank (Millvale Branch), Gristhouse Brewing, Hahn Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Kiwanis Club of Glenshaw, Lemon Tree Records, Lucky Sign Spirits, Maude's Paperwing Gallery, Maitri Genetics, Millvale Borough, Millvale CDC, Millvale Community Library, Millvale Peeps, Millvale Tee Company, Mr. Smalls Theatre, Neighborhood Allies, New Sun Rising, North Area Environmental Council, Pageboy Salon & Boutique, Palo Alto Consulting, Pamela's Lincoln Diner, Saxifrage School, Shaler Area School District, Strange Roots Brewing, Sprezzatura, Triboro Ecodistrict, Tupelo Honey Teas, and Yetter's Candies. We'd also like to thank Representative Sara Innamorato's office, Senator Lindsey William's office, Lt Governor John Fetterman's offices, and County Councilperson Anita Prizio for their active roles in supporting this project. Thank you, all!

Our slogan is "Helping Local People Save Local Land", and that has truly been the case for Girty's Woods. Launched under uncharted and challenging circumstances, this campaign has seen great success thanks to local people who have bonded together to continually ask "how can we help". Their efforts have ensured that these 155 acres of rare urban green space will be protected for neighbors today and for generations to come.



To donate or learn more about Girty's Woods, visit alleghenylandtrust.org/girtyswoods



science at home

Top 5 Lessons that Fit in Your Backpack!

by Julie Travaglini | Education Program Director

Nature Backpacks in Allegheny and Washington County have a wide variety of topics and themes. Here were my 5 favorite themes to work on and create!

1. **BUGS:** Who doesn't love uncovering colorful insects in the meadow?
2. **SIGNS OF WILDLIFE:** Tracks, scat and rubbings, oh my!
3. **WATER CONSERVATION:** Discover how water serves as a nursery for many species of insects!
4. **WILDFLOWERS:** Try to find a wildflower in every color of the rainbow.
5. **BIRDS:** Learn bird calls then go for a walk and see if you can get birds to respond to your calls.

We've just launched a Washington County Nature Backpack program. Ask the library near you about our explorer packs!



(left) A young explorer enjoys the Sewickley Storywalk ALT hosted at Audubon Greenway. Photo by Lindsay Dill. (below) Two young learners participate in ALT virtual programming for a nature-based education program. Photo by Christopher J. Beichner.



Going the Distance: A Year of Learning Apart With You

by Julie Travaglini | Senior Director of Education & Curriculum

Marking one year of shutdowns, quarantines and Zoom meetings, I want to take a moment to say a huge THANK YOU to everyone who tuned into my programs this past year. Much like other environmental education programs across the city, state and world, ALT was faced with cancelling all in-person programming when the pandemic hit, and there's still not a glaring light at the end of the tunnel. With safety as our top priority, we plan to ease back into in-person events as vaccines become more readily available and as COVID infection rates drop around our region.

This is not to say that we've taken a break or slowed down! In fact, I began this article with a thank you because almost 4,000 of our supporters tuned into our virtual programming from March 2020 to the end of December! We managed to still provide more than 100 virtual programs including storybook programs for Boy and Girl Scouts, community webinars, summer camps, and teacher professional development workshops. We made it work. Together.

On top of our virtual programs, we also initiated some passive programs that anyone could participate in at any time, on your own time. Launched in early 2019, our Nature Explorers Backpack program partnership with the Allegheny County Library Association, Western

Pennsylvania Conservancy, and Allegheny County Parks provided Allegheny County Library users with backpacks containing nature exploration items to use during lock-down. A virtual component to Nature Explorers Backpacks helped us keep information and nature activities flowing, and the creation of a storymap helped participants navigate to green spaces. Thanks to a generous grant from the Washington County Community Foundation, the Nature Explorers Backpack program will debut in Washington County libraries this month! Check in with your local libraries to discover which backpack themes are closest to you!

We also worked with the Sewickley Library to host seasonal Storywalks at Audubon Greenway. Families enjoyed a walk around the meadow reading nature storybooks together. Our colleagues and partners at Fern Hollow Nature Center and Mary Roberts Rinehart Park also had Storywalks, and families often spent the day visiting all three Storywalks. 2021 hopes to see more Storywalks coming your way.

Tune in to our website and events calendar to stay up to date on all of the programs we have in store for 2021! Some old favorites will be back, COVID willing, and some new and exciting programs are in development.

UPCOMING EVENTS

E Education Events

V Volunteer Events



Photo by Lindsay Dill.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP: Animal Architects – Using Nature’s Builders to Teach STEM

Virtual

April 8 | 6 - 8 pm

What is an architect and how can animals be architects without using pencils, computers, and blueprints? This hands on workshop will explore how cross curricular topics such as ecology and environmental science can be used to teach math and engineering. We will discover how the expertise of animal architects such as spiders, beavers, and birds can be utilized in an early childhood classroom to teach advanced STEAM concepts. PQAS hours available and ACT 48 hours available for an additional fee. Generous support from the PNC Charitable Trust allows us to offer this unique environmental education programming at a reduced cost.

Ages: Educators & Adults | Cost: \$5



Photo by Lindsay Dill.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP: Getting Little Hands on the Land

Virtual May 6 | 6 - 8 pm

We'll explore ways to encourage early learners to interact with the natural world around them through environmental education activities. Activities will be adapted to accommodate locations with a lot of green space or none at all to ensure that all children have access to investigating the outdoors. Topics explored will include gardening, hoop hikes, and more! PQAS hours available and ACT 48 hours available for an additional fee. Generous support from the PNC Charitable Trust allows us to offer this unique environmental education programming at a reduced cost. **Ages: Educators & Adults | Cost: \$5**



Photo by Lindsay Dill.

How to Prepare for the City Nature Challenge

Virtual

April 13 | 5 - 5:45 pm

Join us for an introduction to the app iNaturalist and a background on the City Nature Challenge occurring April 30-May 3. The City Nature Challenge occurs yearly and challenges cities around the world to document as much biodiversity in their area as possible. This year we are out to beat Philadelphia for the most biologically-diverse city in PA!

Ages: All | Cost: Free



Photo courtesy Flickr Creative Commons.

Curious Caterpillars Webinar

Virtual

May 5 | 5 - 5:45 pm

Join ALT's Senior Director of Education and Curriculum Julie on a webinar all about the fascinating world of caterpillars! Learn their vital role within the food web and ecosystem, and learn why the early bird would much rather have a caterpillar than a worm!

Ages: Adults | Cost: Free

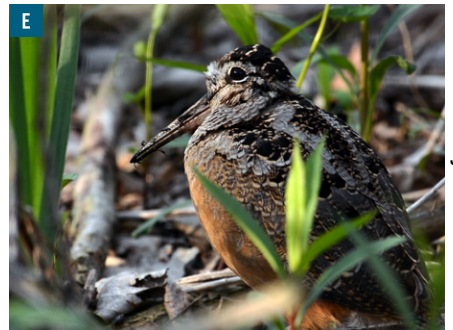


Photo by Wild Excellence Films.

Spring Migratory Bird Count

Wingfield Pines

May 8 | 8 - 10 am

Join ALT education staff in learning about the Spring Migratory Bird Count. Learn how to use binoculars and what species of birds to look for. After the program ends, you are free to bird Wingfield Pines on your own. For Covid-19 safety precautions, masks are required, physical distancing is enforced, and no walk-ins are accepted.

Ages: All | Cost: \$5



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

EVENTS & COVID-19 PANDEMIC | The health, wellness, and safety of all ALT visitors, volunteers, and staff are our top priority. As we continue to follow this fluid situation with COVID-19, we will adhere to recommendations from the PA Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control, and local authorities.

At the time this newsletter was created, the above events are scheduled to occur. We'll update event attendees as the situation develops to protect the health and safety of the public. We will make efforts to reschedule events, and cancel when necessary. We look forward to gathering at our green spaces as soon as it's safe to do so. To stay up-to-date, visit: alleghenylandtrust.org/coronavirus/



Photo courtesy Flickr Creative Commons.

Spring Wild Edibles Webinar Virtual

May 19 | 5 - 5:45 pm

Join ALT's Senior Director of Education and Curriculum, Julie, for a virtual lesson on spring time foraging. Learn about some of our local poisonous and edible plants as well as some with interesting medicinal properties.

Ages: All | Cost: Free



Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Mushroom Hike with WPMC Location TBA

June 9 | 6 - 8 pm

Join ALT staff and an Identifier from the Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club for a mushroom hunt and identification session. The use of the iNaturalist app for this walk is highly encouraged. For Covid-19 safety precautions, masks are required, physical distancing is enforced, and no walk-ins are accepted.

Ages: All | Cost: \$5

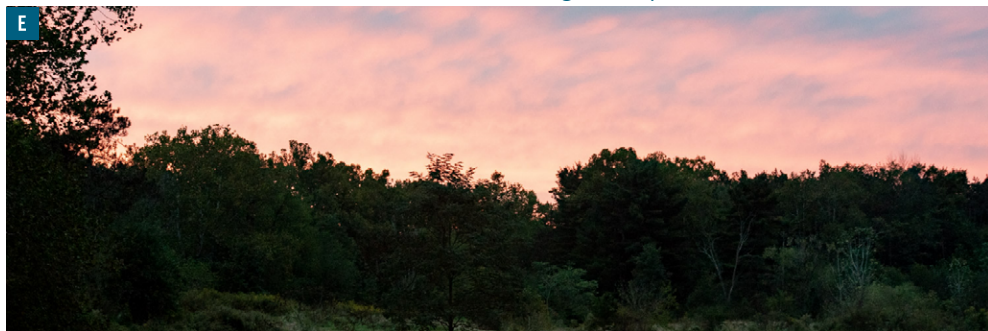


Photo by Lindsay Dill.

WILD About Fireflies

Fern Hollow Nature Center June 22 | 7:30 - 9 pm

Join the staff of ALT and Fern Hollow Nature Center in learning all about our fascinating fireflies! This in-person program is geared towards adults and educators. Educators can earn ACT 48 hours and PQAS hours for an extra \$5 fee. For Covid-19 safety precautions, masks are required, physical distancing is enforced, and no walk-ins are accepted. This program is generously supported by the PNC Charitable Trust.

Ages: Educators & Adults | Cost: \$5

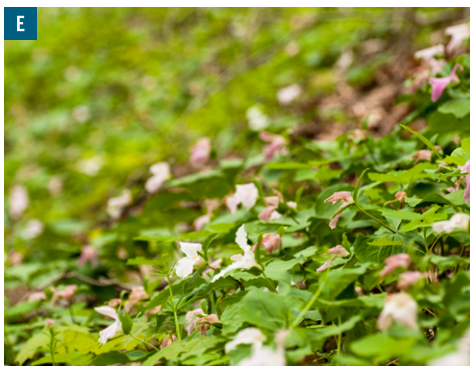


Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Wonderful Wildflowers Hike Barking Slopes

May 23 | 10 - 11 am

Join ALT Senior Director of Education and Curriculum Julie on a walk through Barking Slopes to enjoy the beauty of spring's wildflowers. Learn names, medicinal purposes, and edibility of some common native wildflowers. For Covid-19 safety precautions, masks are required, physical distancing is enforced, and no walk-ins are accepted.

Ages: All | Cost: \$5

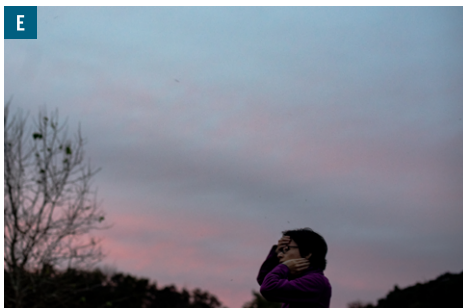


Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Summer Solstice Starlight Stroll Location TBA

June 19 | 9 - 10 pm

Take advantage of the longest day of the year to see a green space after dark! Topics vary and can include nocturnal and crepuscular creatures, astronomy, lore, and much more! For Covid-19 safety precautions, masks are required, physical distancing is enforced, and no walk-ins are accepted.

Ages: All | Cost: \$5



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ABOUT ALT

Allegheny Land Trust is a nationally-accredited land conservation nonprofit that has been helping local people save local land in the Pittsburgh region since 1993.

ALT has protected more than 3,000 acres of green space in dozens of municipalities to preserve our region's unique natural beauty, provide expanded outdoor recreational opportunities, protect and improve water and air quality, sustain biodiversity, and enhance the quality of life for all in our region. ALT's areas of strategic priority include Land Conservation, Land Stewardship, Community Conservation, and Nature-Based Education.

With conservation areas in 31 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

FOLLOW US:



Please recycle or reuse this newsletter when you're finished — use it in a collage of your plans for post-pandemic fun. Email us with your creative reuse of Vistas!

Vistas is underwritten by an anonymous donor. Thank you!

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FRONT COVER: A trillium flower blooms at an ALT conservation area.

BACK COVER: A morel fruits at an ALT conservation area.

Photos by Lindsay Dill.



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