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An Allegheny Land Trust Publication

Summer 2022



notes

FROM THE LAND:

Connecting Parks & People Through Conservation

by Roy Kraynyk | VP of Land Protection & Capital Projects



(left) Visitors of Audubon Greenway watch wildlife along a stream. (right) Hikers explore the Dead Man's Hollow trail system. Photos by Lindsay Dill.

One of the attributes that ALT and our funding partners consider important are the connections that can be made by protecting land. Specifically, connections to other public parks or privately held green spaces, and connections between people and nature are of high priority.

Several recent purchases across three adjacent municipalities along the I-79 corridor in the North Hills are a good example of this. ALT protected five parcels in Franklin Park, Ohio Township, and Sewickley Hills Borough that combine to total 90 acres.

A parcel in Sewickley Hills is connected to Sewickley Hills Park, and the parcel in Ohio Township is adjacent to Ohio Township Municipal Park. Two parcels acquired in Franklin Park connect to green space already held by ALT now almost reaching Blueberry Hill Park. A previous acquisition by ALT in 2015 in the same area helps to connect Blueberry Hill Park to Acorn Park.

These connections create greenways that can host trails, provide migration opportunities for wildlife, protect sensitive habitat and ecosystems, and make getting outdoors very convenient for people living near them or visiting the

adjacent lands. They can also provide an opportunity to hike or ride your bike to a green space or a neighbor's house. In the case of the Ohio Township parcel, a high school cross-country team has expressed an interest in expanding running trails onto the property.

Other connections that protected green space can provide are those that can spontaneously occur between people when they meet each other on a trail. If they stop to chat, they may learn that they both live in the same neighborhood or have mutual friends, for example. Not only is ALT connecting green spaces for people, but we are also helping people connect with one another outdoors!

ALT is involved in a county-wide effort to establish connections between municipal parks, county parks, rail trails, and other singletrack trails meandering throughout the woodlands. Many of these trails are not protected and only exist due to the good graces of the landowner. As a consequence, they are vulnerable to the land being sold for non-conservation purposes. ALT prioritizes protecting the land most vulnerable to being developed so the trails and other scenic, environmental, and public benefits remain for those using them today and for generations to come.



science at home

Recommended Books to Support Your Environmental Literacy

by Julie Travaglini | Senior Director of Education & Curriculum

READING FOR KIDS

1. *If Bees Disappeared*
by Lily Williams
2. *A Drop Around the World*
by Barbara Shaw McKinney
3. *Green Green*
by Marie and Baldev Lamba
4. *One Earth*
by Eileen Spinelli
5. *The Last Wild*
by Piers Torday

READING FOR ADULTS

1. *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make our Lives, Change our Minds and Shape Our Futures*
by Merlin Sheldrake
2. *Braiding Sweetgrass*
by Robin Wall Kimmerer
3. *Our Wild Calling*
by Richard Louv
4. *The Hidden Life of Trees*
by Peter Wohlleben
5. *Black Faces, White Spaces*
by Carolyn Finney

Learn more about the outdoors in
webinars or on the land by attending
an event:

alleghenylandtrust.org/events



(left) Senior Director of Education & Curriculum Julie Travaglini examines native wildflowers at Dead Man's Hollow. (right) A young explorer gets their feet wet at the St. John's community conservation project site. Photos by Lindsay Dill.



Taking On Environmental Literacy

by Julie Travaglini | Senior Director of Education & Curriculum

When we think of literacy, we often think of books and reading fundamentals - from the authors and illustrators to the plots and story lines. But there is an entirely different type of literacy out there; one that ALT strives to foster daily through our mission: environmental literacy!

According to the North American Association of Environmental Educators (NAAEE), environmental literacy promotes an awareness of and concern for the environment, its associated problems, and the knowledge, skills, and motivation to find solutions to current problems as well as preventing new and rising problems and concerns. But why is environmental literacy so important?

It has been stated many times in many different ways that we cannot truly love and protect that which we don't value or understand. The more we connect with Earth's flora and fauna, the more motivated we will be to ensure its continued survival and success for future generations. If we never connect, we may never truly value it.

In fact, one of the most compelling moments in my environmental education career (and possibly life) came when I interacted with Sumatran Rhinos while working at the Cincinnati Zoo in 2008. To look into the eyes of a creature knowing it is one of the last few of

its species, and to know that my future children and grandchildren may only know this animal through stories and photos, is powerful. That moment of connectedness made it all become clear. Why I do what I do, and why I care about what I care about all made sense in split second of connection with this creature that calls home thousands of miles away. There are now no Sumatran Rhinos left in the Western hemisphere, they have all been sent to Indonesia in a desperate attempt to revive the species. I will likely never see that species of animal in-person again. That connection has steered me in life.

Lucky for us, the Earth provides no shortage of ways to learn about its wonders and increase our environmental literacy. As much time as I spend outside, and as much time as I have devoted to studying environmental topics and learning Latin names, there is always more to learn. In fact, I find something new to me on every walk I take. Sometimes I sit and wonder how I could ever be bored or sad again knowing there are so many more plants, bugs, mushrooms, and more out there for me to meet. It is overwhelming in the best possible way!

Check our newsletter and website calendar to attend ALT's upcoming events and increase your environmental literacy. From learning about the edibility of backyard plants to magnificent mushrooms, composting and nighttime folklore, there is always more to learn!

A young visitor explores the former St. John's Hospital site. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Managing Our Stormwater: Reimagining St. John's

by Alyson Fearon | Senior Director of Community Conservation & Resiliency

ALT has been working with Ethos Collaborative and the Brighton Heights Citizens Federation to deliver an urban green space capable of providing natural stormwater management on the site of the former St. John's Hospital. The land, located in Pittsburgh's Brighton Heights neighborhood, is a 3.71-acre grouping of six parcels that has been vacant for about 15 years and unused for about 20 years.

Several attempts at site redevelopment failed during that time, including a recent proposed Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority stormwater management project in early 2020. Now, with help of above-mentioned community partners, ALT's plan is to create a stormwater management area designed to replicate natural systems by using multiple techniques to manage rainfall including increased tree cover, ecological restoration, and developing rain gardens on-site while reserving several areas to include community-desired amenities.

While Brighton Heights is not completely devoid of parks and green spaces, due to the naturally steep and difficult topography, this portion of the neighborhood is isolated from the area's existing parks and green spaces for pedestrian access. This site provides a critical green space to this portion of the neighborhood, while being located near a flight of City steps and from four separate bus lines.

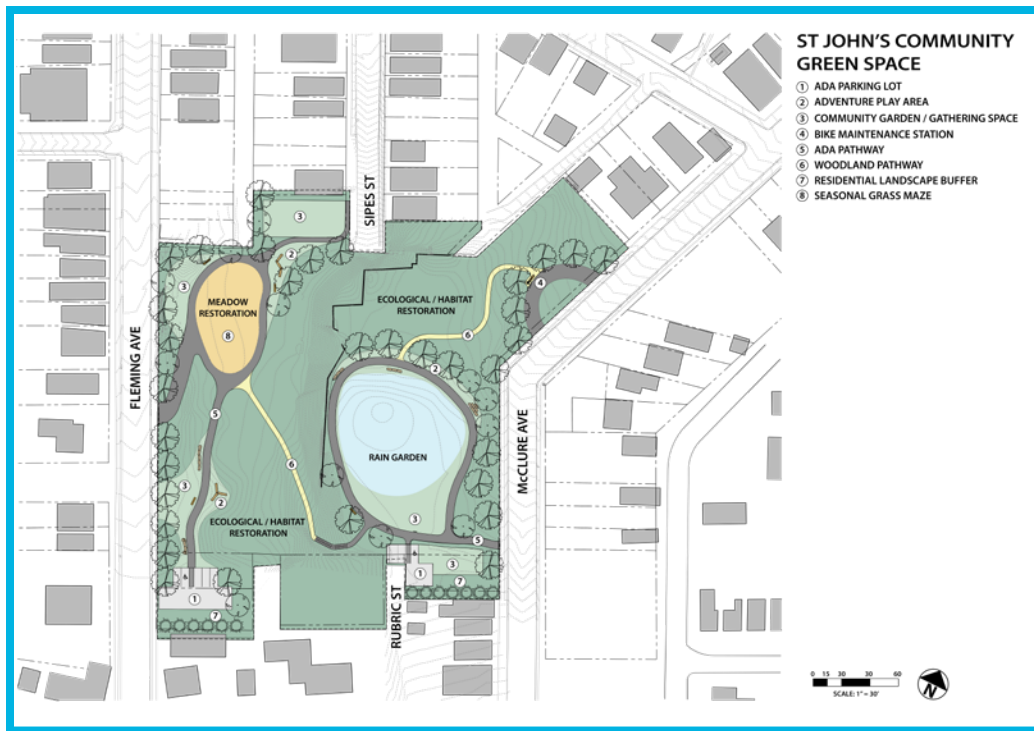
Through a community amenities survey process, residents expressed that they want to continue use of the site for passive recreation, like walking, birdwatching, and enjoying nature. Many use and want to continue using the space as a resting stopover along the bicycle path leading up past the green space.

Since the demolition of the old hospital buildings, local residents have been using the site for passive recreation; this site rehabilitation will formalize and increase the overall safety of on-site activities. Allegheny Land Trust's plan for the site will not only preserve the current uses, but enhance them by constructing sustainable trails, adding benches for formal seating, restoring native plants and trees to support bird habitat, providing all-ages environmental education opportunities, and creating an official bike rest, repair, and rack station.

The project has thus far received a \$125,000 Department of Community and Economic Development Watershed Restoration and Protection Program grant. We're forging ahead to find additional funding sources to help make this project a reality. We are also moving our expected ground-breaking timeline to spring 2023 as we need to have 100% of funding in place to meet Urban Redevelopment Authority's redevelopment requirements, and many of the grant programs we've applied for announce late fall to early winter.



To stay up to date on this project, you may contact afearon@alleghenylandtrust.org, keep an eye on this newsletter and check alleghenylandtrust.org/stjohns.



(left) Conceptual plan for the site of the former St. John's Hospital site.

(top left) Children play at and clean up the St. John's site. The land is already used informally by neighbors for pet-walking, local outdoor recreation, and more. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

(bottom left) St. John's is located along McClure Avenue, and is currently reverting to a forested lot with both native and invasive species. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

(top right) ALT conducted a community survey to gauge neighbors' hopes and dreams for the future use of the site. Survey respondents requested native habitat be planted on-site. Photo courtesy of Flickr Creative Commons.

(bottom right) Survey respondents also chose this option when imagining future uses for the site, indicating they'd like both a meadow and forested trail through the land to connect with adjacent sidewalks. Photo courtesy of Flickr Creative Commons.

CURRENT CONDITIONS



FUTURE PLANS



Where Are We Now?

A look at Allegheny Land Trust's existing and newly-protected lands, and current conservation projects in progress.

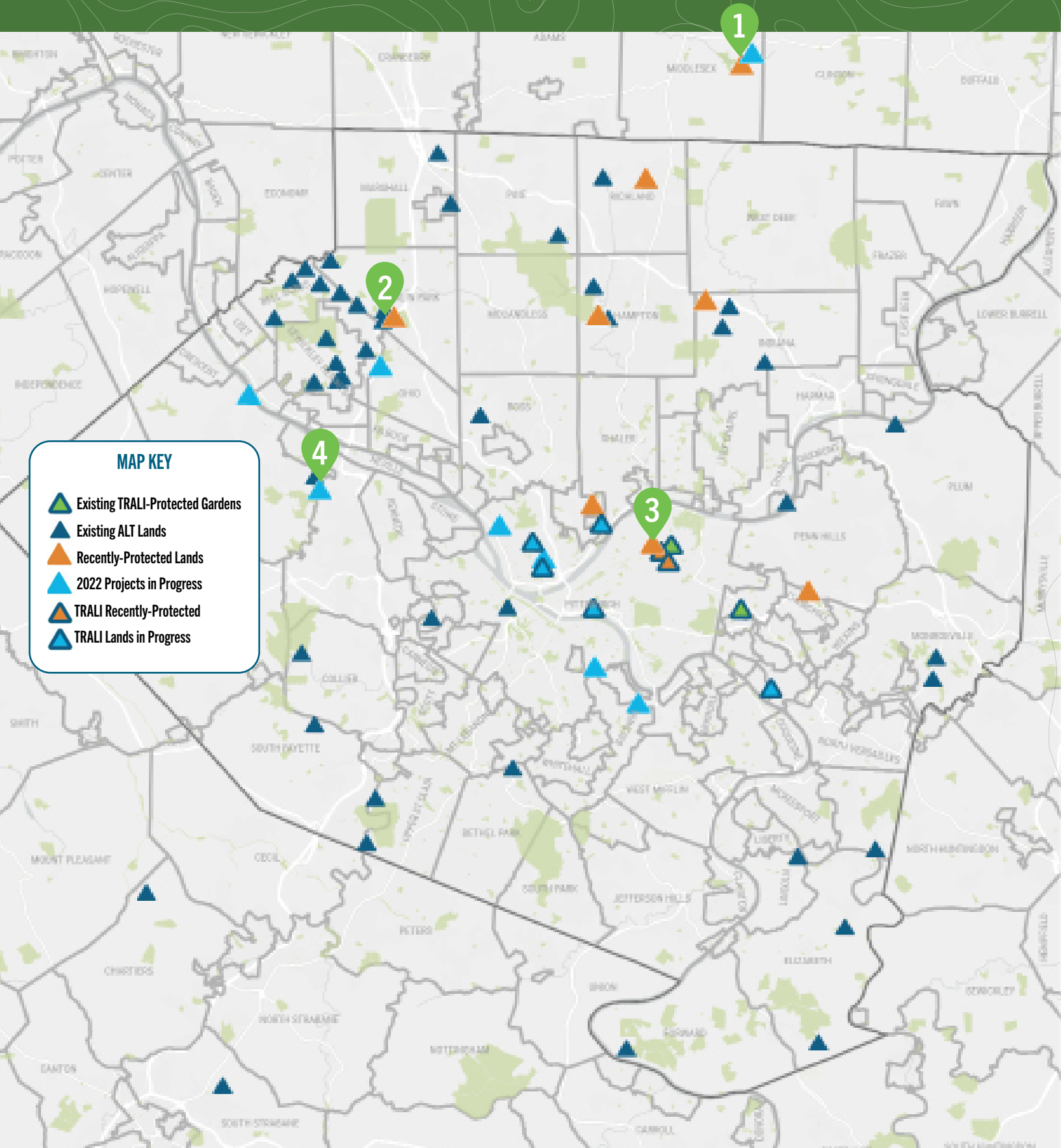


Photo courtesy of Glade Run Lake Conservancy.



1

Glade Run Lake Watershed | Middlesex Township, PA

Partnering to Protect Watersheds

Together with the Glade Run Lake Conservancy, we have identified, prioritized, and begun protecting sensitive lands in this watershed. During this fiscal year, we protected 172.5 acres as part of that plan. These green spaces will support conservation objectives such as the protection of wildlife habitat, biodiversity, and air and water quality.

Photo by Lindsay Dill.



3

Healcrest Green | Pittsburgh, PA

A Green Oasis in an Urban Landscape

Together with the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation, neighbors, and other community partners, we have been working to protect the former Healcrest Urban Farm land. We've completed the protection of Phase One, which has just received a brand new trail, and the effort continues as we work to protect the remaining parcels that would support wildlife habitat, community resiliency, and urban outdoor recreation opportunities.

Photo by Bryan Ritti.



2

Northwest Allegheny | Franklin Park Borough, Ohio Township, and Sewickley Hills Borough

Connecting Local Lands

This year, ALT protected 90 acres in three communities that add to the growing network of connected green space and support the health and well-being of northwest Allegheny County communities. These lands will now forever protect scenic beauty, clean water, fresh air, quiet tranquility, wildlife habitat, and close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities.

Photo by Lindsay Dill.



4

Montour Expansion | Moon Township, PA

Expanding Trailside Green Space

This spring, we launched fundraising efforts for the Montour Greenway Expansion land protection project. This project would add 14.5 acres to the conservation efforts of ALT, Hollow Oak Land Trust, and the Montour Trail Council. Adjacent to the Montour Greenway, the land supports a buffer around a popular regional trail and would preserve wildlife habitat, biodiversity, and air and water quality.



Featured Supporters:

THE BLOOMFIELD-GARFIELD CORPORATION

(left) Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC) Public Safety Outreach & Garfield Night Market Manager Kuwame Kinsel conducts trail-building work at the Healcrest Green. Photo by Madeline Weiss. (right) A summer view of Healcrest Green. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

by Lindsay Dill | Marketing Communications Director

For many neighborhoods in Pittsburgh and other cities, close-to-home green space may seem like a far-off dream. For the Garfield neighborhood, the visionary efforts of the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC) and neighbors allowed for that dream to become a reality.

Because of their early 2000s planning work, the BGC and Garfield neighborhood were poised and ready to take action when the Healcrest Urban Farm ceased operations and its herbs went to seed on vacant land along Hillcrest Street between North Pacific Avenue and North Atlantic Avenue.

In 2016, the BGC reached out to ALT to partner in protecting the former Healcrest Urban Farm land and implement the Garfield Greenzone plan laid out in the BGC's 2030 Plan. The BGC's goal was to create a good quality pedestrian environment, increase public open space, and create a framework that promotes preservation of ecological systems and overall sustainability for the benefit of the neighbors and neighborhood of Garfield. Through a strategic partnership with ALT, they were able to make significant strides toward that goal.

ALT will own and conserve the land in perpetuity, and BGC, through a memorandum of understanding, will take on direct stewardship of the site.

"Joining together and sharing resources in this way allowed us to accomplish good work toward mutual goals between BGC and ALT," said Garfield Greenzone Coordinator Madeline Weiss. "It was valuable to grow our network – you can get a lot more accomplished by reaching out to others."

In December 2021, the collaborative efforts between BGC, ALT, and the community led to the permanent protection of Phase One of the Healcrest Green community conservation project.

"We're excited and so are residents. Anytime I go by, I see neighbors of all ages enjoying the space," said Weiss. "Now we don't have to worry about the space being gone. We have more ability to go in there and make it safe and more usable for people in the community."

Now permanently protected, Phase One of the Healcrest Green project supports preserved wildlife habitat, biodiversity, unique scenic character, and opportunities for outdoor recreation and environmental education. Though only recently protected, the passion of the BGC and surrounding community has led to immediate, effective action.

"We're lucky in Garfield to have a lot of very engaged community members to come out and work hard with site clean-up, planting, and passion," said Weiss.

Clean-up efforts by the BGC and residents have already drastically improved the space, and the organization has already built a sustainable trail through the site as part of their Greenzone Plan. Additionally, the BGC's leadership has led to partnerships with the Student Conservation Association and the Environmental Charter School – Middle to improve the site and engage young learners with the outdoors.

"Through collaboration, we can make impactful projects that aren't overwhelming by combining resources and know-how," Weiss said. "It just makes perfect sense when you look at what we have and what others have to share."



To stay up to date on the next phase of the Healcrest Green project, visit alleghenylandtrust.org/healcrest.



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Many thanks to the sponsors who have joined us or renewed their support with us since our last edition of Vistas. To view a full list of our current sponsors, visit: alleghenylandtrust.org/our-sponsors

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

An explorer at Churchill Valley Greenway just before sunset. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Improving Churchill Valley Greenway

by Emilie Rzotkiewicz | VP of Stewardship

Since officially protecting Churchill Valley Greenway in 2021, we have been collaborating with local stakeholders to improve the land. Below is a summary of recent activity:

BASELINE STEWARDSHIP

We conducted our baseline stewardship activities, including boundary marking, contacting adjacent neighbors, and making ongoing efforts to address illegal dumping and dog off-leash violations.

VISION PLANNING

With LaQuatra Bonci, Oikos Ecology, and selected stakeholders, we developed a Conceptual Planning Report to strategically approach the site's restoration and trail development. As part of creating a more comprehensive management plan, additional public input sessions are planned for 2023. The report can be viewed on our website.

SIGNAGE

Signs have been installed on-site to help visitors find the land, understand rules and regulations and enjoy the green space. More signs will be installed to help with way-finding and site interpretation in the future.

VOLUNTEERS & HABITAT

Individual volunteers have helped improve the space by removing trash, cutting invasive species, mending muddy trails along Chalfant Run, and installing bluebird boxes.

BRIDGE REPAIR

We repaired some small stream-crossings bridges, and secured funding from the PA Department

of Community and Economic Development to replace decking on two steel bridges crossing Beulah Road. This major project should be completed by December 2022.

PARTNERSHIPS

We are working with Landforce, Chalfant Run / Thompson Run Watershed Association, Public Lands, Duquesne Light, Blackridge Civic Association, and several others to maintain and improve the green space. If your business or organization would like to volunteer, contact ALT stewardship staff.

EVENTS

Our environmental education and stewardship teams have hosted several events on-site to support all-ages learning and volunteering. In case you have not yet joined us, we encourage you to visit our website calendar for upcoming events.

Acquiring this special land was only the first step of this exciting project, and all of the above efforts have us energized to continue working with the community to maintain and improve Churchill Valley Greenway.

We hope you have been able to enjoy this community asset at an event or on your own for a hike. We hope to make a big impact over the next ten years to improve wildlife habitat, water quality, and trail sustainability at the site.



For more information visit:
alleghenylandtrust.org/green-space/churchill-valley-greenway

UPCOMING EVENTS

E Education Events

V Volunteer Events



Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Workday Series: Girty's Woods

Girty's Woods

July 7 | 5:30 - 7:30 pm

July 28 | 5:30 - 7:30 pm

Last year, the communities of Reserve, Millvale, Shaler, and beyond came together to help protect Girty's Woods forever. We were successful in our efforts to save the land, and now it's time to maintain and improve the land! Join us as we focus on clean-up efforts, implement aspects of a trail plan, and conduct property maintenance and improvement activities.

All Ages | Cost: Free



Photo by Chris Belcher.

Webinar Series

July 27 | Magnificent Moths

August 17 | Snakes of PA

September 14 | Fall Wild Edibles

October 5 | The Science of Spiders

October 26 | Batty for Bats

Looking to learn more about the outdoors? Join our environmental education team for webinars on a variety of topics relating to the natural world around us. Each webinar will feature a presentation on a different topic and will leave time for attendees to ask questions on or relating to that topic. These lessons are a great way to continue our nature knowledge from home, work, or wherever you have an internet connection. Each lesson runs from 5 to 5:45 pm

All Ages | Cost: Free



Photo by Lindsay Dill.

First Friday Hike Series

July 8 | 10 - 11:30 am | Audubon Greenway

August 5 | 10 - 11:30 am | Dead Man's Hollow

September 9 | 10 - 11:30 am | Bethel Green

October 7 | 10 - 11:30 am | Wingfield Pines

Start off each new month with a First Friday Hike! This series invites explorers to enjoy and learn outdoors with an environmental educator. July's hike will tune into summer's sights and sounds, August's will dive into Dead Man's Hollow's history, September's will explore the human impacts on the land, and October's will teach visitors about Wingfield Pines' ponds. Each hike's content is unique to the educator, attendees, and land - so join us once or every month to learn more!

All Ages | Cost: \$5



Photo by Lindsay Dill.

SAVE THE DATE | DAY OF GIVING

ALLEGHENY LAND TRUST 2022 DAY OF GIVING

September 8, 2022

Your gift will go twice as far in supporting our efforts to protect more land, maintain our green spaces, and provide environmental education to more communities during our upcoming Day of Giving.

Why give during our Day of Giving? Conservation of local land has become ever-more important as our regional challenges, coupled with the need for close-to-home green space in times of crisis, have made local protected land more indispensable. So, please, mark your calendar to help support Allegheny Land Trust as we continue helping local people save local land in our region.

You can contribute to our 2022 Day of Giving by visiting alleghenylandtrust.org/donate during our 2022 Day of Giving. Closer to the date, we will mail a letter to all current members along with a remittance envelope for your use.



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Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Campfire Cooking 101 Barking Slopes

August 31 | 5:30 - 7 pm

August 31st is National Eat Outside Day, so join ALT and PA Master Naturalist Kristen Haas in a campfire cooking class! We'll learn and cook some unique recipes over the fire, and participants will take home a list of recipes to make on their next camping trip. Kristen will be demonstrating some great ideas, tips, and tricks that the whole family will love.

All Ages | Cost: \$5

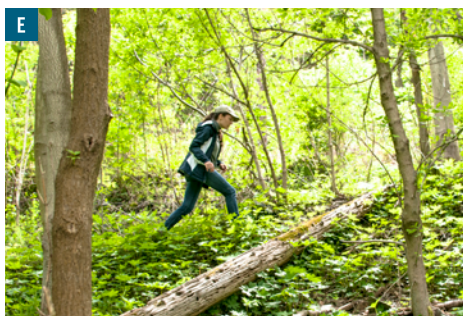


Photo by Lindsay Dill.

RAD Days: Fall Equinox Starlight Stroll Bethel Green

September 23 | 7:30 - 8:30 pm

Join an ALT Environmental Educator and explore Bethel Green after dark! This hike will focus on all the wonders of night time, from nocturnal animals to moon and equinox folklore.

All ages | Cost: \$5



Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Mushroom ID Hike Audubon Greenway

September 16 | 10 am - 12 pm

Join ALT staff and WPMC for a mushroom hike and ID table at Audubon Greenway. NOTE: We will not be foraging on this hike.

All ages | Cost: \$5



Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Not So Spooky Starlight Stroll Dead Man's Hollow

October 22 | 6:30 - 8 pm

Ever wonder why pirates wear an eye patch or how an owl can hunt in the dark? Join us on this family-friendly, not-too-scary night hike where we'll explore the science and stories behind many of our favorite fall creatures! Explore myths and legends, and learn about the creatures of the autumn night.

All Ages | Cost: \$5

For registration & more information, visit:
alleghenylandtrust.org/events

Our 2022 event availability and pricing are made possible in part by support from
Duquesne Light Company and Public Lands.

EVENTS & THE PANDEMIC | The health, wellness, and safety of all ALT visitors, volunteers, and staff are our top priority. We continue to adhere to recommendations from the PA Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control, and local authorities. We'll update event attendees with any necessary updates.





ALLEGHENY LAND TRUST

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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 3,600 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 Environmental Education.

With conservation areas in 33 municipalities, there is now an ALT conservation area within 8 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.



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Vistas is underwritten by an anonymous donor. Thank you!

@Allegheny Land Trust 2022.

FRONT COVER: A volunteer builds new, sustainable trail at Girty's Woods Conservation Area.

BACK COVER: Virginia bluebells bloom in spring at Dead Man's Hollow Conservation Area.

Photos by Lindsay Dill.



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