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An Allegheny Land Trust Publication

Winter 2022



Conserving Our Region Together

by Christopher J. Beichner | President & CEO

Pennsylvania's conservation community experienced a momentous year when Governor Wolf and the State Legislature agreed to a record \$640 million for new and expanded conservation programs in the state budget. This included new funding for state parks, forest conservation and habitat restoration, and the creation of a new Clean Stream Fund to support cleaning polluted waterways, replacing aging infrastructure, and restoring critical habitats.

ALT is thankful for the many advocates who supported the increased conservation funding, and we appreciate the leadership of WeConservePA and the Growing Greener Coalition who are leading advocates in Harrisburg ensuring critical conservation programs are recognized and supported by our elected officials.

We anticipate seeking a portion of these new funds to support ALT's mission as we are set to embark upon several significant stewardship projects at the Churchill Valley Greenway related to water quality and stream restoration. We plan to increase our efforts to conserve more land to balance the rate of green space consumption in Allegheny County. And we intend to provide education opportunities to the next generation of conservationists on the causes and

impacts of climate, habitat loss, and poor water quality.

While increased state conservation investments are important for our mission, it is critical we have support from local residents and people like you, who not only support what we do, but who also directly benefit from our shared results.

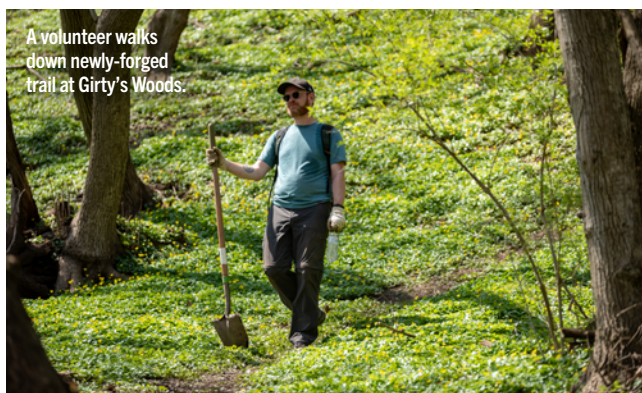
We plan to conserve about 235 acres by the end of 2022 in 11 different municipalities, and there are approximately 300,000 people who live within a 3-mile radius of these newly-conserved lands. They will experience cleaner air, higher property values, access to passive recreation, and many other benefits.

Those who enjoy Churchill Valley Greenway will soon witness the installation of new pedestrian bridge decking to increase safety and hundreds of native trees being planted as part of our reforestation efforts in 2022 and throughout 2023.

For these reasons, we need your help to reach our year-end goal to raise \$50,000 by December 31st to ensure we can conserve and care for these lands by the end of this year, but also to ensure we can secure, protect and care for several hundred more acres in 2023. We cannot be effective or provide community impact without your help!



A young explorer enjoys Healcrest Green, which ALT protected in 2022.



A volunteer walks down newly-forged trail at Girty's Woods.



ALT staff hike Churchill Valley Greenway during planning sessions to improve the green space. Photos by Lindsay Dill.

WAYS TO GIVE

CLICK

alleghenylantrust.org/donate

MAIL

Use the enclosed self-addressed envelope to send your gift:
416 Thorn Street
Sewickley, PA, 15143

MATCH

Ask your employer if they match charitable contributions.



science at home

Top 5 Ways To Prepare Yourself And Your Yard For Winter

by Julie Travaglini | Senior Director of Education & Curriculum

1. CHANGE YOUR FURNACE FILTER

Improve your air quality for you, your house plants, and the plants you brought indoors to overwinter. By changing your filters, you're avoiding the spread of old gunk and allergens.

2. LEAVE THE LEAVES

Leaves become compost and create healthy soil! Also, leaves provide invaluable overwintering habitat for butterflies, moths, native bees, salamanders, wood frogs, and more of our native creatures.

3. MESS IS BEST

Leave flower stalks, stems, and seed heads for the many insects, such as solitary bees (more than 90% of our native bees are solitary) who rely on these hollow stems to survive the winter.

4. GET INTO WINTER SOWING

Winter is a great time to start some native wildflower seeds. Check with your county Penn State Master Gardener chapter on tips and tricks for starting your 2023 native plant garden in the winter.

5. BE A BIRD BRAIN

Non-frozen water can be hard to find for birds in the winter. Provide a heated bird bath, or a bird bath equipped with a water wiggler to provide fresh water during the harsh winter.

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

alleghenylandtrust.org/events



(left) Attendees of an ALT First Friday Hike guess plant identifications from their hike at Devil's Hollow. Photo by Lindsay Dill.
(right) A StoryWalk placed along Audubon Greenway's trails. Photo by Julie Travaglini.



Unpacking A Year of Learning

by Julie Travaglini | Senior Director of Education & Curriculum

It's hard to believe that another year is wrapping up. Summer is always so busy for the Education Team that it goes by in an instant, and before I know it, it's time for everything pumpkin spice (though, to be fair, I would start drinking pumpkin spice coffee as early as July 5 if it was socially acceptable).

As we break out our sweaters and enter our "slow season", a term I use very loosely, it is time to reflect on all that we accomplished as an Education Team in 2022.

We provided more than 100 people with the resources and equipment to live more sustainably through our Sustainability at Home Series. This series was wildly successful and we plan to host it again in 2023 with expanded capacity!

We continued to provide free monthly webinars on a wide range of topics. Our most popular were Fall Wild Edibles and Invasive Species of Pittsburgh. While these webinars started during COVID, they've become a beloved addition to the Education Team.

Our 2022 First Friday Hikes explored various ALT properties for the second year,

and lots of you braved a downpour to learn about the wildflowers of Barking Slopes.

We found hundreds of mushroom species on our walks with the Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club, and we documented hundreds of species across Kingdoms during the City Nature Challenge.

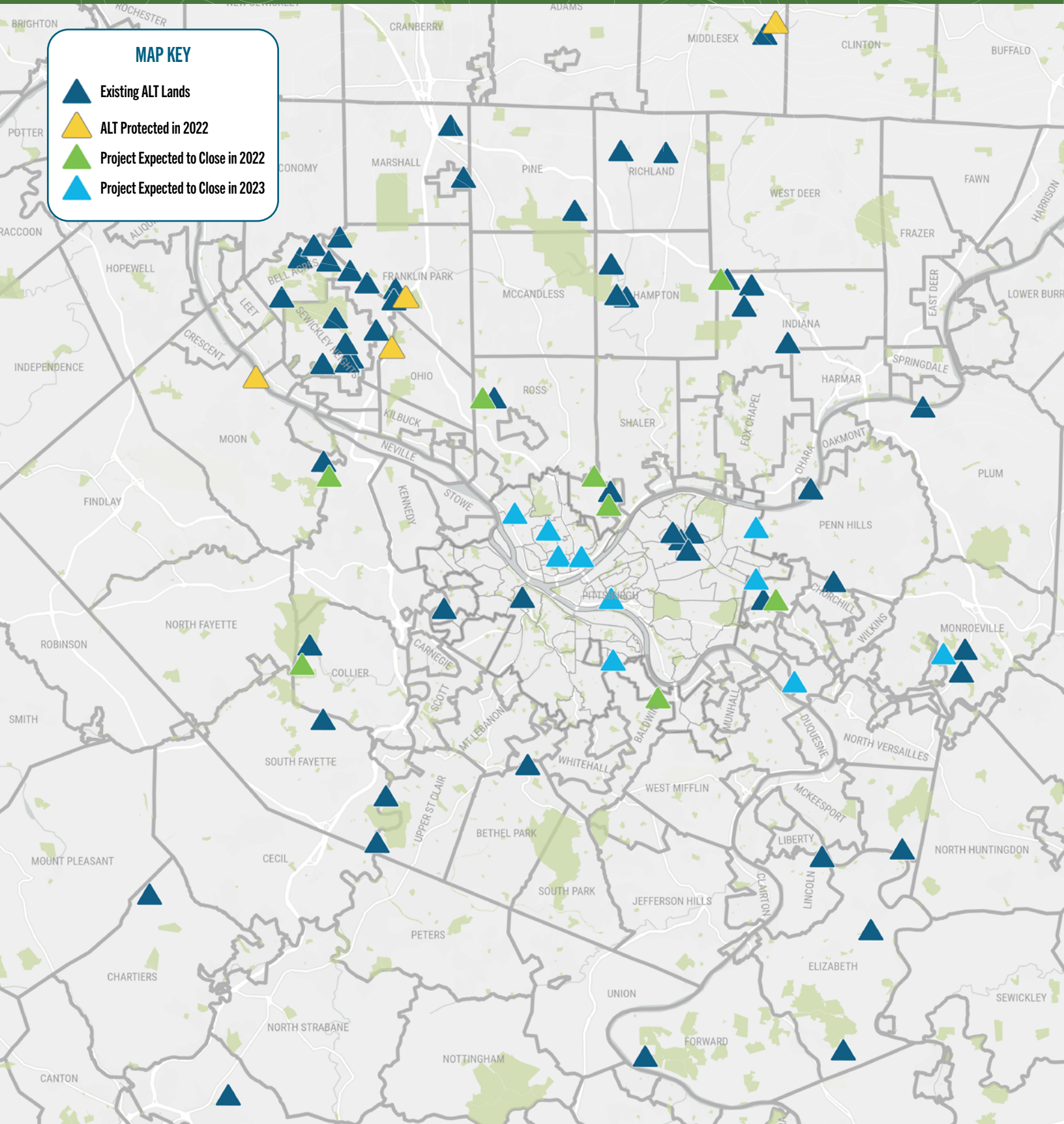
All of this was made possible by sponsors including EQT Foundation, Duquesne Light Company, Public Lands, AARP Pennsylvania, and others. They provided generous financial support to keep our programming at a low cost to reduce barriers to entry.

Finally, none of this would have been possible without YOU! Not only do you show up in all sorts of weather to our programs, but your generous donations to ALT's Environmental Education Team allow us to do what we do year after year.

We're looking forward to sharing knowledge with you all in 2023 with more of our great established programs and new, improved programming to come!

A Map of Our Lands

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



notes

FROM THE LAND:

Land Protection to Benefit Communities Today
and for Generations to Come

by Casey Markle | Conservation Associate



(left) A community-forged trailhead at the Staunton Heights conservation project currently under contract. Photo by Roy Kraynyk.
(right) ALT Conservation Associate Casey Markle on a site visit of a potential 18-acre Girty's Woods expansion. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

As time goes on, so does the urgency to protect our precious land. During this past year, I have learned so much more about the importance of land protection in Allegheny County, the dedicated conservationists who manage projects, and the tireless support from members of communities who make land protection possible.

Growing up in rural Pennsylvania, I spent a lot of time taking in nature. There's something therapeutic about just taking a second, looking around at the trees, hearing the wind and the chirping of birds, and my favorite—stepping into a cold, clear creek to look for crayfish! I want to protect these things not only for myself, but also for the next generation.

Beyond our recreational enjoyment, green space has many other conservation values including water resource management, biodiversity, agriculture, preserving history and culture, and education. Each property we protect is unique, having one or more of these values.

The magnitude of suburban sprawl in Allegheny County poses a great challenge to maintaining the balance between green space and development. Without protecting green spaces, we lose precious land that is important to life. That is why it is crucial to act now.

This past year, many of ALT's projects form connections to previously protected land, including 64 acres in Sewickley Hills

Borough and Ohio Township, 53 acres in the Glade Run Lake watershed, a 24-acre expansion of Blackburn Woods, a 10-acre extension of Hays Woods, a 15-acre extension of Montour Greenway, and a nearly 18-acre expansion of Girty's Woods. See the map on previous page for reference.

Additionally, ALT also took on entirely new projects, including a scenic 12 acres in Moon Township along the Ohio River, a 39-acre conservation easement in Indiana Township protecting a landowner's green space in perpetuity, and a community garden in Wilkesburg Borough as part of our Community Conservation Initiative.

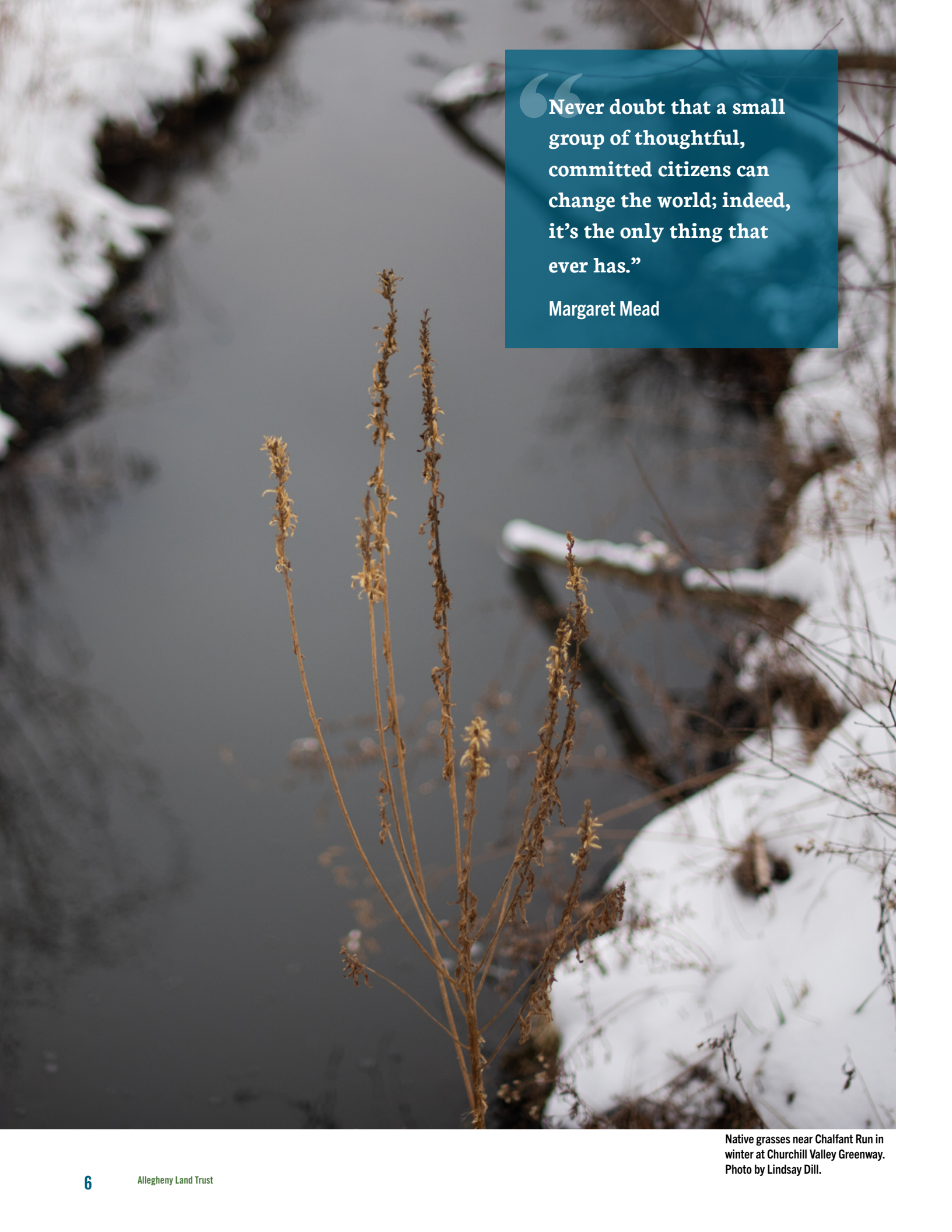
ALT expects to have successfully protected over 235 acres of land by the end of 2022.

Land protection in Allegheny County is growing, but our work is not done yet. We have many exciting projects on the horizon including the Reserve/Shaler project and a Parks Connector project in Monroeville, which will protect more than 40 and 95 acres of land, respectively.

This has been a great year for land conservation, and we couldn't have done it without the generosity of our supporters. As we look toward conserving more land in 2023, consider donating to our Year-End Giving Campaign. Your continued support will ensure we can protect land now, and for generations to come.



To learn more about current projects, visit alleghenylandtrust.org



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

Retooling for the Future

by Christopher J. Beichner | President & CEO

I don't typically start these articles with an inspiring quote, but thinking about the topic of ALT's future, maybe this is a good time for one. Our nation's sixteenth President, Abraham Lincoln, was quoted as saying, "The best way to predict the future is to create it."

This is a fitting observation. This could apply to one's career goals. In my first job after college, I was promoted five times in eight years, in part, because I created my own future by developing new skills and value. This could also apply to ALT's mission and our goal to conserve green space while 2,000 acres are being consumed every year. By doing nothing, Allegheny County's remaining green space will be gone. We need to create our future.

And we can create that future by designing an organization and community who will work together and rally around a common goal to conserve and care for as much green space as possible to ensure current and future generations will gain value from the positive benefits of conservation.

To create that future, ALT must continually reevaluate what we do in the present to ensure we can achieve these lofty goals. That is why the organization has gone through a staff retooling in recent months to best position us for that future.

Some of what has driven the staffing changes has been the transition of long-time leader, Roy Kraynyk, from our full-time VP of Land Protection and Capital Projects to a part-time Advisor position. This is a transition for Roy as he eyes

retirement after a very long and fruitful career, including over 20 years at ALT as our second Executive Director from 2000 to 2012 and as Vice President of Land Protection and Capital Projects from 2012 to 2022. Congratulations to Roy and his tremendous career, but his work is not done yet!

With this change, we have promoted Alyson Fearon from Senior Director of Community Conservation & Resiliency to Vice President of Land Conservation. Alyson began with ALT as an intern in 2017 and quickly created her own future within the organization by bringing tremendous value.

ALT has seen steady growth over the years in budget, staffing, programs, volunteer support, and in conserved lands. With these past increases and forecasting of modest growth in future years, we have created a new Senior Vice President and COO position to lead our internal operations including human resources, technology, facilities, risk management, and other general operations. I have promoted Emilie Rzotkiewicz into this new position from her previous role as Vice President of Stewardship. Emilie had been assisting me in various internal capacities in prior years, and it was an opportune time to move her into this new, full-time opportunity.

With Emilie's promotion, we also promoted Caitlin Seiler from Director of Volunteers to Vice President of Stewardship. Caitlin started with ALT in 2014 and has seen a steady rise in responsibilities and effectiveness with how she has handled our volunteer programs and overall stewardship tasks.

I am exceptionally fortunate to have seasoned leaders on the team who have risen to the occasion countless times to show their dedication and value to ALT. While these are big changes, and we will be in a transition period until everyone is settled into their new roles, we are doing our best to predict the future by creating it in strategic and thoughtful ways.



Roy Kraynyk
Advisor



Alyson Fearon
Vice President of Land Conservation



Emilie Rzotkiewicz
Senior Vice President
& Chief Operations Officer



Caitlin Seiler
Vice President of Stewardship



We are hiring for vacancies created by our staff re-tooling. To learn more, apply, and share ALT job opportunities, visit alleghenylandtrust.org/job-opportunities.



Featured Supporter:



(left) Mark A. MacKay appreciating the sights and sounds of the outdoors. Photo courtesy of the MacKay Family. (right) A bridge and snowy field at Churchill Valley Greenway. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

by Lindsay Dill | Marketing Communications Director

For the MacKay Family, conservation and the enjoyment of the outdoors are the spice of life. Whether in their own yard, at a close-to-home green space, or spending a summer weekend at Conneaut Lake, they have always enjoyed immersing themselves in the outdoors. Their enthusiasm and values were passed on to their son Mark.

“Mark had a passion for conservation, and for helping others to enjoy all the natural world has to offer,” Neil MacKay said. “He always wanted to help people who were less fortunate than him and provide them with opportunities to enjoy the outdoors.”

Mark understood the importance of strong communities and the urgency of protecting the environment. These deep personal interests led him initially to the Peace Corps, and then to a long and productive conservation career with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

When he passed away at the age of 46 in 2017, Mark left behind a legacy of conservation and outdoor appreciation, and the MacKay family felt more resolute than ever about the need for everyone to have the opportunity to experience all the natural world has to offer.

So, when Allegheny Land Trust (ALT) launched the public campaign to permanently protect Churchill Valley Greenway in 2019, it caught the MacKays’ attention. They made an initial contribution to the local fundraising campaign, and when the campaign was still facing a large gap one year later, they made a significant donation in Mark’s honor to help ensure that the Churchill Valley Greenway would remain protected forever. Thanks to the support of the MacKays and many others in the community, the former country club is now a

permanently protected green space enjoyed by thousands of visitors every week.

Now, Neil carries on his dedication to the greenway by physically working on the land. Many mornings, you can find him maintaining the greenway’s trails and improving its natural habitat.

While the MacKays were happy to help support the campaign to protect the land and enjoy hands-on work to steward it, they didn’t stop there.

The family worked with ALT to create the Mark A. MacKay Conservation Internship. Each year, the ten-week internship will provide one passionate, knowledgeable student of the environment an opportunity to work with ALT staff, partners and volunteers at Churchill Valley Greenway to maintain and enhance the land, restore native plant and wildlife habitat, improve the visitor experience, conduct educational and scientific programming and be the daily face of ALT. The intern may also lead other special conservation-related projects as deemed appropriate by ALT and the family during the internship at the Greenway.

“We are happy to honor Mark and continue his work through this internship to foster the next generation of conservationists,” Neil MacKay said. “We look forward to seeing the seeds of change sown by all future individuals who take part in this internship program.”

The work that we do here at ALT takes so much support from so many people in so many different ways. We’re grateful for the MacKays and all of our supporters across the region who contribute in their own ways to help us “help local people save local land”.

Engage with the Outdoors

The first MacKay Conservation Internship Program will be hired for the summer of 2023. Interested parties should keep an eye on ALT’s website for application details early in March 2023: [ALLEGHENYLANDTRUST.ORG](https://www.alleghenylandtrust.org).

OUR BUSINESS SPONSORS

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 business sponsors, visit: allegHENYlandtrust.org/our-sponsors

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- Abeille Voyante Tea Co. - *Supporting*
- Frank's Pizza & Chicken - *Supporting*
- Neville Chemical Company - *Supporting*

RENEWING

- Lanxess - *Platinum*
- BNY Mellon - *Silver*

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



Volunteers build brand new trail at Girty's Woods. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Doing Good in Girty's Woods

by Caitlin Seiler | VP of Stewardship

Last Spring with an impressive outpouring of community support, we forever protected the 155-acre Girty's Woods conservation area in Reserve Township adjacent to Millvale Borough. The enthusiasm carried immediately over into caring for and improving the land, so our stewardship team set right into planning for improvements and long-term care of the woods. In January 2022, we worked with consultants to complete an ecological assessment and a sustainable trail plan, and this Spring volunteers got to work on implementation.

TRAILS

On Earth Day, over 30 volunteers began the first phase of building new trails from Frederick Street. Over 10 workdays, volunteers contributed more than 250 hours of work. Now, the 1.25-mile trail is nearly complete and will eventually connect with the trailhead at Irwin Lane. This new trail establishes a more accessible trailhead on Frederick Street. Although there isn't enough space for a designated parking lot, street parking is available on both sides of the road, it's a short walk from downtown Millvale, and visitors can immediately access sustainable woodland trails rather than walking on a rough, gravel access road. The trail plan includes recommendations for building and maintaining four miles of trail and is a fully volunteer-supported project. We received a grant from Athletic Brewing to purchase new tools, but we will still need a lot of help for building and maintenance as we work through implementation. We hope to have your support on the trails during the next volunteer season!

TREES

Girty's Woods saw its fair share of use and abuse prior to becoming an ALT-protected conservation area and, as a result, the woods are fragmented by open access roads, canopy gaps from logging, and intense levels of invasive species infestations. In other conservation areas, our approach for forest management is to protect the best spaces where there is high quality habitat, prevent invasive species encroachment, or remove invasive species to replace them with natives. Due to the large overlapping amount of invasive species areas at Girty's Woods, it would be an overwhelming task to attempt to manage them. Our approach for improving habitat here is to re-establish a large canopy. Over the next several years, we will be planting large canopy trees like oaks, tulip poplars, and pine with deer protection and working to protect those trees as they grow.

When we protect land, we protect it forever. As a nationally accredited land trust, we uphold standards of excellence by both maintaining and improving our lands according to rigorous standards. We hope all get to enjoy Girty's Woods through its transition, and we hope to have more tending hands join us on the land as we restore this already-amazing woodland habitat back to its full health for the benefit of current and future generations.

Innovative Ways to Give Back

by Tom Dougherty | VP of Development & External Affairs

We are thankful for the committed and growing group of people who choose to support our work by making personal financial contributions. Most of these supporters make standard “cash” donations made through check or credit card.

Depending upon your personal financial situation and goals, there are other creative ways that you can provide financial support now or in the future. Here are some additional opportunities to discuss with your financial advisor, tax professional, or other advisor:

GIFTS OF STOCK

A gift of appreciated stock is a tax-wise way to support ALT because the full value of the stock can be donated without you or ALT paying taxes on its appreciated value.

GIVING FROM A DONOR-ADVISED FUND

Give to ALT during your lifetime from an established donor-advised fund and/or designate ALT as a future beneficiary of your fund.

GIFTS OF LAND

There are many ways for a real estate gift to support ALT's efforts. These include direct conservation of the land if suitable, resale to generate funds (if land is not appropriate for protection), or to generate on-going revenue. Gifted land value is eligible for a federal tax deduction.

BARGAIN SALE OF LAND

Selling your land for less than the appraised value allows ALT to raise grant dollars to pay the balance for the land, and the gifted land value is eligible for a federal tax deduction.

GIFTING FROM YOUR IRA

If you are 70½ or older, you may make direct charitable contributions from your IRA. Check with your financial planner or tax advisor for details.

ALT AS YOUR BENEFICIARY

Another popular way to make a planned gift is to name ALT a beneficiary of all or a portion of your retirement plan assets, other investments, life insurance, or bank accounts. It's as simple as filling out a form and can provide tax benefits.

ALT IN YOUR WILL OR REVOCABLE TRUST

Anyone can make a gift in their will or revocable trust. The benefit of this method of giving is that you can make a lasting impact on the future of our region without impacting your immediate finances. You can adjust this pledge of support during your lifetime should circumstances change.

Please note that the above suggestions are not intended to be financial planning, legal, or tax advice. Please consult your planner, lawyer, or accountant to determine if these forms of giving would be appropriate for your circumstances.



A visitor of Dead Man's Hollow takes in the scenery of the green space.
Photo by Lindsay Dill.



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

UPCOMING EVENTS

E Education Events

V Volunteer Events



Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Christmas Bird Count

Wingfield Pines

December 17 | 8 - 10 am

Become a citizen scientist learning how to use field guides and iNaturalist to identify and catalogue birds with the Audubon Society's annual Christmas Bird Count. Then, submit your data to Audubon to help scientists track and monitor bird migration.

All Ages | Cost: \$5



Photo by Christopher J. Beichner.

Webinar Series

January 4 | Backyard Birding

January 18 | Owls of PA

February 15 | Spring Ephemerals

March 1 | Invasive Species of PA

Continue gaining nature knowledge from home, work, or wherever you have an internet connection. Each webinar focuses on a different topic and will leave time for attendees to ask questions. Lessons run from 5 to 5:45 pm.

All ages | Cost: Free

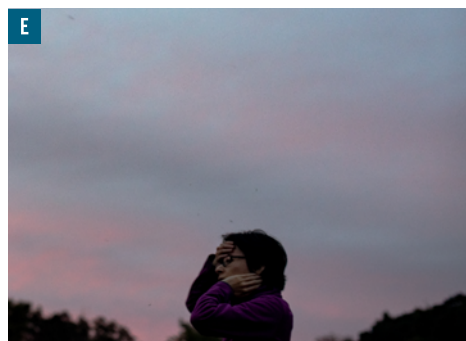


Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Starlight Stroll Series

December 21 | 5 - 6 pm | Bethel Green

March 20 | 7:30 - 8:30 pm | Wingfield Pines

Visit our green spaces after dark! Each starlight stroll will explore on wonders of the night, nocturnal animals, and a different focus. December's hike will explore the Winter Solstice, and March's hike will discuss the Spring Equinox.

All ages | Cost: \$5



Photo by Lindsay Dill.

First Friday Hike: Invasive Removal

Bethel Green

March 3 | 10 - 11:30 am

Start off each new month with a First Friday Hike! This hike invites explorers to enjoy and learn outdoors with an environmental educator. Each program's content is unique to the educator, attendees, and land - so join us once or every month to learn more!

All Ages | Cost: \$5



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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.





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 3,700 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 36 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!

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FRONT COVER: A winter view of Churchill Valley Greenway.

BACK COVER: The rings of a felled tree at Girty's Woods.

Photos by Lindsay Dill.



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