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An Allegheny Land Trust Publication

Spring 2023



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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 2022:

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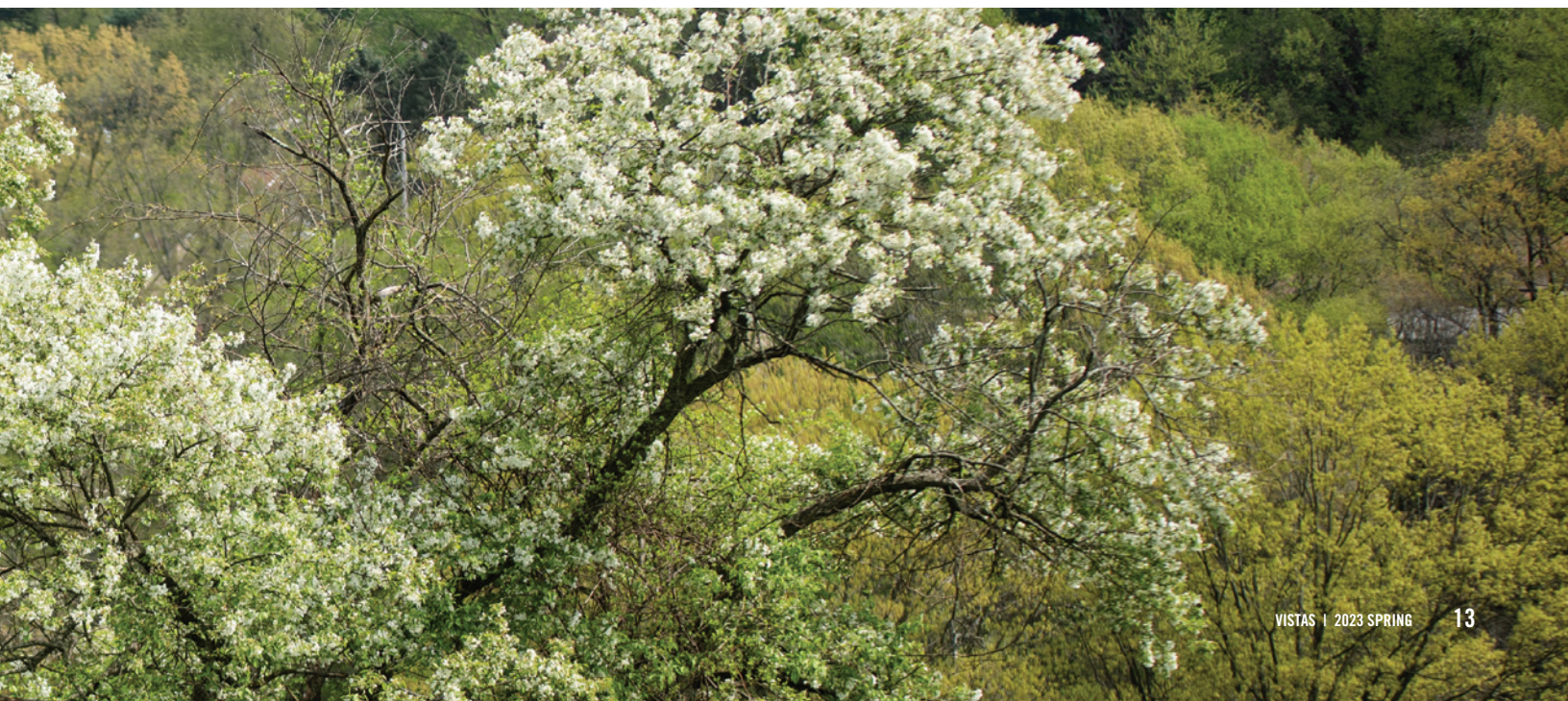
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We do our best to run accurate reports to list all of our supporters; sometimes human and technological errors get in the way. If you were a 2022 member or donor, but do not see your name listed, please contact us so we can recognize your support. Thank you!





A family enjoys a creek running through Venango Trail.

Leaving a Legacy Through Planned Giving

by Tom Dougherty | VP of Development & External Affairs

ALT and our supporters share in the belief that permanently conserved and sustainably stewarded land is one of the greatest gifts we can leave to future generations. Many supporters have chosen to continue their commitment to local conservation beyond their lifetimes by making a planned gift to ALT.

These special supporters have designated a monetary gift or gift of land to ALT in their will or have named ALT as a beneficiary on their life insurance policy, retirement plan, or other investments.

If you are considering making a planned gift to ALT you can learn more by visiting our website, or by sending me a note at tdougherty@alleghenylandtrust.org. I'd be more than happy to discuss ideas with you.

If ALT is already included in your estate plans, please let us know. We have created The Conservationist Society to express our appreciation to the special supporters who have chosen to include us in their estate plans and have made us aware of their intentions to do. So if we're already in your plans please complete and return the simple form found at the link in the bottom of this article so that we can include you in the Conservation Society.

Now is an especially impactful time to make us aware of your planned giving intentions because an anonymous donor has pledged to make an immediate \$500 donation to ALT for every person/family that declares their planned giving intentions before June 30, 2023.

Please note the giving 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.

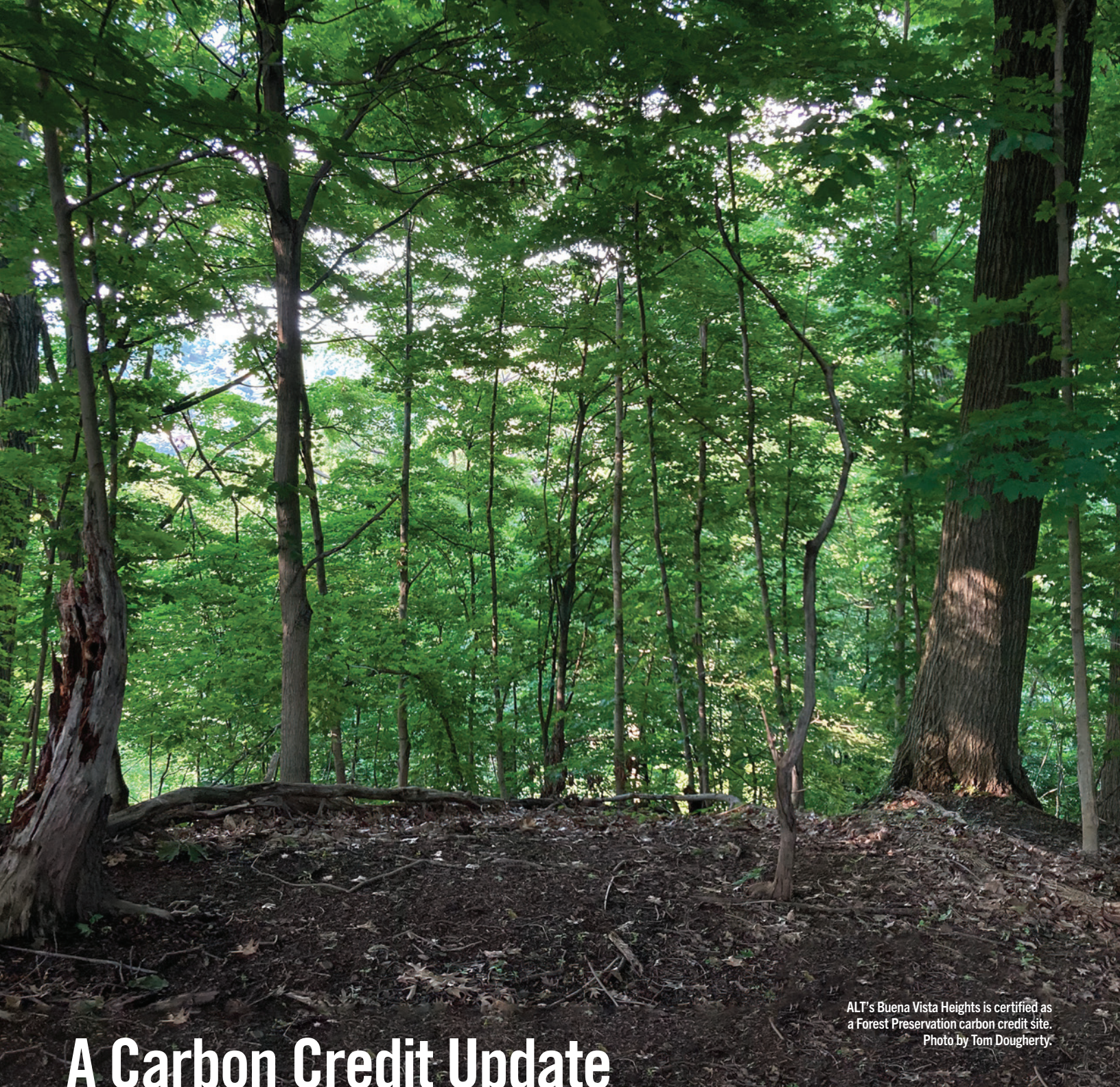


ALT team members cross a bridge at Churchill Valley Greenway.



For more information, visit alleghenylandtrust.org/conservationistsociety or scan the QR code.

To discuss, contact Tom Dougherty at tdougherty@alleghenylandtrust.org.



ALT's Buena Vista Heights is certified as a Forest Preservation carbon credit site.
Photo by Tom Dougherty.

A Carbon Credit Update

By Alyson Fearon | VP of Land Conservation

We are pleased to share that our 34-acre Buerkle Woodlands conservation area is officially certified as our next Forest Preservation carbon crediting project, generating 4,908 carbon credits. For comparison, the total for our last certified property, the 24-acre Buena Vista Heights, was 13,966 credits issued over three years, 11,320 of which we have marketed and sold.

Our carbon credit income is critically important to cover gaps in project funding for large projects where community campaigns

receive less support such as Buena Vista Heights, or where land prices are high as was the case for Buerkle Woodlands.

We have a selective screening process for these projects to ensure the credits we issue have been verified and meet and exceed transparency standards. We are proud to announce that ALT has received an AAA-rating for Buena Vista Heights by BeZero, an independent ratings and risk agency.



notes FROM THE LAND

“NOTES FROM THE LAND” TRANSITIONING TO “LAND CONSERVATION”

By Alyson Fearon | VP of Land
Conservation

For years, Roy Kraynyk has reflected on all aspects of our work and his wanderings in land conservation. As you may have read in our digital publications, Roy has moved to part time and is now ALT's Advisor. Alyson Fearon is now ALT's Vice President of Land Conservation; with their transition, we will also be transitioning our “Notes from the Land” to a “Land Conservation” section where we describe ALT's current land conservation and community conservation efforts. We hope you enjoy reading!



ALT's recently-conserved Reserve & Shaler project.

Reflecting on 2022's Closings

By Alyson Fearon | VP of Land Conservation

We had another banner year in 2022 with a significant slate of closings right up to the last day in December. It has been an exciting start to 2023 closing on two properties that we had been negotiating for some time, that expanded Blackburn Woods by almost 25 acres.

Nearby, we finalized the Buerkle Woodlands project in May 2022, adding just under 55 acres near to Audubon Greenway. Buerkle Woodlands was also selected to be our next certified forest preservation carbon project. Also, we expanded the Glade Run Lake conservation area when we closed on the Jones Estates property, protecting the stream right before it enters the lake. This property is adjacent to the large conservation easement that was our first project in partnership with the Glade Run Lake Conservancy.

In early fall, we worked with neighbors to preserve a woodland property stretching from a hilltop down to the Ohio River in Moon Township.

Then, in early December we closed on two TRALI community garden projects in Wilkinsburg, preserving the first two parcels in the Stone Soup Community Garden, and expanding Garden Dreams by accepting ownership of the corner parcel at Holland and Center Ave. Ownership of the corner parcel is critical in achieving Grow Pittsburgh's plans for the site, and we expect to see news on the final plans later this year!

We continue to add protected land to our Hemlocks project adjacent to North Park, and plan to close out four new projects this year to expand our list of protected parcels to more than 60 in the neighborhood!

By mid-December, we closed on a conservation easement in Indiana Township, which is the immediate neighbor of an existing 34-acre easement, bringing combined protected land to approximately 79 acres! We are grateful for the relationships developed in the community that have allowed us to protect several easements in Indiana Township, preserving the character of the community.

Later in December, we closed on two properties, which were critical expansions of previously protected land. The first connects with Hays Woods and is approximately 11 acres. The second expanded Girty's Woods by almost 10 acres and includes the potential for a future critical access point in the Millvale community.

Soon after was the closing of the Reserve-Shaler project, a partnership that resulted in a young farmer acquiring farmland while ALT protected the critical upland habitat. The success of these projects would not have been possible without the continued support from Shaler Area High School and the community as a whole. We are grateful for these opportunities to work with the community to conserve more green space!



Apples grow at a recently protected ALT community conservation project.



ALT is proud to now conserve these lands, and already has three major conservation projects under contract this year. To learn more, visit: alleghenylandtrust.org/current-projects.



An ALT staff member takes in the views at a recently conserved 10-acre parcel that expands Girty's Woods.



Visitors hike through the tunnels of Dead Man's Hollow during an ALT event.

Dead Man's Hollow Conservation Area

by Caitlin Seiler | Vice President of Stewardship & Volunteers

For nearly 20 years, ALT has protected the special, mysterious lands of Dead Man's Hollow Conservation Area. Our work began there in 1996 when we preserved the land for its environmental benefits to air and water quality, high quality habitat, a diverse range of flora and fauna species, and the opportunities for recreation it would create for surrounding communities.

Since conserving the land, our stewardship team - which wasn't staffed until 2006 - has made improvements to the area where we could. We've made various bridge repairs, bench installations, partnerships with Boy Scouts to build kiosks or trail signs, and more. With a well-staffed team and state funding in 2014, we were ready to develop a comprehensive plan to improve access and user experience at the area while highlighting what makes it a special place to visit and a critical piece of green space to protect.

Guided by a team of consultants and input from the public, the plan included recommendations for community outreach and management of the ecologically sensitive areas. The plan's primary focus was on expanding the trail system and updating signage. Since 2014, we have been working to implement many of the recommendations.

We partnered with avian ecologists to assess the bird activity and target locations for restoration. In 2017, our wildflower population was designated as a DCNR Wild Plant Sanctuary. Our education team hosts community programming bringing many visitors of all ages and experience to the Conservation Area each year.

Our stewardship team, with the support of hundreds of volunteers and thousands of hours of volunteer work, have continuously worked to reroute unsustainable trails and build new trails following the recommendations of the plan. The trail system was a heavy focus for the plan as many of the existing trails were identified to be unsustainable with steep slopes and erosion issues. Another important part of the trail system, and what the public input requested, was better connections throughout the property and access to interesting features.

In 2019 we received DCNR funding to implement the final phase of the trail and install new interpretive and wayfinding signage. This critical funding allowed us to contract a trail builder to build the final connecting piece, the Haunted Hollow Trail, which also involved highly technical and challenging components like steep slopes and cementing large rocks for water crossings.

Last year we were thrilled to announce that all phases of trail building at Dead Man's Hollow have been completed. Now we can announce that the wayfinding and signage has been installed! Here is what you can expect to see when visiting the Hollow:

- New kiosks with updated maps and accurate rules and regulations.
- Interpretative signage throughout the property with information on habitat, conservation, history, and more.
- Painted trail blazes aligning with color coordination on provided maps.
- Additional maps and wayfinding signage to help navigate around confusing areas and avoid unofficial trails which lead off property.
- Connections to all three primary trailheads throughout the green space.

The plan was designed to be implemented in 10 years and completing the trail recommendations ahead of schedule has been a monumental effort we could not have done without the help of volunteers, community support, and the hard work of ALT staff. Our work, however, is not done.

One of the things that makes our trails so amazing, also makes them challenging to manage. Traversing deep into the woods, the trails are often at the mercy of nature. Trees fall, bridges deteriorate, and unpredictable landslides occur. During trail development, we discovered spring seeps which make the trail section much more wet than anticipated and will need addressed. Some areas have trail tread which needs further establishment and there are also areas we can continue to improve for access and enjoyment of the space. Now that the trails are built, managing them will be an endless effort, with much reward! We rely on the help of volunteers to inform our team of needs on the property, and to lend a hand with maintenance when possible. Moving fallen debris, weed whacking tall grass, trimming back shrubs or branches, and reporting large fallen trees or major damage are all tasks volunteers can help with.

You can look forward to trail improvement projects on Allegheny Land Trust lands as we work to build trails at Girty's Woods and improve the boardwalk, signage, and access at Wingfield Pines. Check our calendar of events for opportunities to lend a hand!



Reach out to stewardship@alleghenylandtrust.org for more information on volunteering.

Find an interactive Google map of Dead Man's Hollow's trail system here:



The trails of Dead Man's Hollow are now blazed to help explorers navigate their hikes.
Photo by Caitlin Seiler.





Tingle Barnes tends to her fields, on which she placed a conservation easement with ALT.

Featured Supporters:

ALT EASEMENT OWNERS



Conservation easements provide native plant habitat that supports pollinators. Photo by Caitlin Seiler.

by Lindsay Dill | Senior Director of Marketing & Community Engagement

When Tom Armstrong was a boy, he and his brother John would run through their family's Indiana Township land over rolling hills through meadow grasses and tall trees. Looking from the top of their hill across the valley, they could see a sea of green on a large, forested hillside. Today, standing on that same hill, the view is of sprawling development on that steep hillside; the hues of green are gone.

"It makes me cringe," Tom said. "We wanted to see our corridor remain as it is. It's important to the future of the planet, and it's beautiful land that should be preserved."

The Armstrongs began researching ways to protect their family's land. During their process, their neighbors were working on the same goal and placed an easement on their land with ALT. Following their research and conversations, the brothers expanded their neighbors' efforts and used an easement to protect their land forever.

An easement is a formal legal, recorded agreement between landowner and land trust serving to protect the land from certain uses – most commonly development and other uses that can impact the land's natural attributes, in perpetuity.

The Armstrong's land is one of five easements that ALT now holds in Indiana Township. Each landowner has a similar story, but a unique easement with ALT. The success of easements in the township grows as each landowner shares their story with others considering leaving a conservation legacy.

For Tingle and Richard Barnes, the view of "millions of fireflies" on a summer night cemented their plans to not only put an easement on their land, but also to talk with as many neighbors as possible to protect their farmland community.

"Knowing that our land will be protected forever gives us a deep

sense of satisfaction. Now we encourage others in our area to look into protecting their land to help preserve the rural character that makes our area so special," Tingle said.



Richard Barnes walks through his barn. ALT holds a conservation easement on the Barnes' land.

Susan Orenstein and her neighbor were working to conserve their beautiful farmland properties when her neighbor needed to move in with family. Susan watched her neighbor's land, which they thought was protected through Clean and Green Enrollment, get subdivided and sold. She wanted to save her land from that fate and put an ALT easement on her land.

"As I now watch swatches of open land and forests in the county, and nearby in the township, be plowed under and excavated into wildlife-unfriendly, barren developments, I am so glad I have the easement," Susan said. "The ALT Conservation Easement has been such a

win-win-win, combining the protection of natural spaces - in a way more powerful than Clean and Green - collaborating with the like-minded staff of ALT, and providing a tax benefit as well."

A critical component to saving local land is working with people who want to do so. Whether you, your family, or a neighbor own land that contributes to quality of life for the region, you can take action to ensure it's forever conserved to benefit generations to come.

"It's now so satisfying in the afternoon, when the sun is hitting, to walk on the thick, mossy trail; it feels like a carpet. If you just look into the valley it's lovely and very special, and it's important we keep it that way."



To learn about easements and more ways to conserve your land, visit: alleghenylandtrust.org/ways-to-protect-your-land/



more to learn

5 Ways You Can Live More Sustainably

by Julie Travaglini
Senior Director of Education & Curriculum

1. Plant Native Plants

Support our region's biodiversity and pollinator population by planting native species - it will help more than 400 species of bees that call our region home!

2. Compost

Food waste makes up a huge percentage of our landfills. Recycle your food scraps for your garden!

3. Utilize a Rain Barrel

Keep storm water out of our already-overwhelmed system while reducing your own water bill by using rainwater for your plants.

4. Eat Local

Whether this means growing your own food or shopping at the local farmers market, eating locally grown foods is always best. It takes literal TONS of water to grow and ship fruits and veggies across the country.

5. Garden Chemical-Free

Resist spraying flowers, gardens, and yards with pesticides. If critters are eating your native plants, it means they're a healthy part of the ecosystem! If you need to control a pest, spot treat or remove them. For example, pluck bothersome caterpillars and place them in your bird feeder; the birds will thank you!

EDUCATION



A residential rain barrel.
Photo by Arlington County
via Flickr Creative Commons

An educator displays the underside of a fern at Devil's Hollow



WORKING TOWARD THE COLLECTIVE GOOD

by Julie Travaglini | Senior Director of Education & Curriculum

Hearing about the gloom and doom of the climate crisis can be daunting. After a barrage of news about the climate crisis and all of the ways we are destroying the planet it can feel like everything is above our ability to fix, that we, as individuals, will never be enough to make a difference. For me, it can often feel like too much; my brain and spirit need to rest.

But there is good news! There are plenty of small things that we as individuals can do to make a difference.

We can compost food waste. Food waste makes up a huge percentage of our landfills, and most of it can be composted. Composting not only cuts down on the volume of our trash, but it transforms food waste into usable nutrients for your garden!

We can also all recycle more effectively by properly following local recycling guidelines. Check your local municipality's website to learn about the materials you can recycle and how best to do so.

By making efficient use of our home heating and cooling, we can reduce pressure on the electrical grid and save ourselves a significant amount of money on heating and cooling bills! You can do this by ensuring your home's cracks are sealed with caulking, your house is insulated, your usage of heating and cooling is not more excessive than you need to be comfortable each season, and your thermostat is properly scheduled for the times of day when you and your family are home, away, and asleep.

Checking in on your water usage is another great way to save money while helping the planet. Try holding off on laundry until you have enough for a full load. If your washer has an autosensing water function, use it! This means it will sense the size of your load

and adjust water usage accordingly, instead of automatically using an entire washer full of water.

These are just a few of many ways we can make a difference at home.

If you're interested in living more sustainably, check out our Sustainability at Home Series! Generously funded by EQT Foundation, the series features six workshops on how to reduce your carbon footprint through composting, raising your own bees and chickens, using rain barrels, growing your own food, and more!

The best part about it is that it will provide you with the tools and resources you need to start immediately. Coming to the rain barrel workshop? You'll receive a rain barrel. Coming to the native plants workshop? You'll receive a \$100 gift card to the local native plant nursery. At every workshop, you'll walk away with what you need to make a difference.

It is important to remember that we are collectively working towards a goal of a better, healthier planet. The planet doesn't need a small amount of people doing conservation perfectly and living off the grid, it needs as many people as possible doing their best everyday to make a change. Together, we can make a difference!

UPCOMING EVENTS

E Education Events

V Volunteer Events



FIRST FRIDAY SERIES

June 2 | 10 - 11:30 am | Barking Slopes

Start off each new month with an ALT First Friday Hike! This monthly event series invites explorers to enjoy and learn about an ALT green space with an environmental educator. June's will visit pawpaws and zebra swallowtails. Each hike's content is unique to the educator, attendees, and green space - so join us once or join us every month!

Ages 2-Adult | Cost: \$5



AARP PA: 50+ WALKING SERIES

June 3 | 9:00 - 10:30 AM | Churchill Valley Greenway

June 16 | 6:30 - 8:00 PM | Bethel Green

Join an Allegheny Land Trust educator on our 50+ Walking Series, sponsored by AARP Pennsylvania. Geared for those ages 50 and up, we will hike ALT's properties over moderate terrain and distances, taking plenty of breaks to stop and learn about our local flora and fauna. Experience the beauty of these local spaces and learn how they contribute towards building a more livable community for people of all ages.

All Ages | Cost: Free



Photo by Chris Beichner.

WEBINAR SERIES

June 7 | 5:00 - 5:45 PM | Fabulous Fireflies

June 21 | 5:00 - 5:45 PM | All About Bees

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.

All Ages | Cost: Free



VOLUNTEER WORKDAYS

Churchill Valley Greenway

June 19 | 6:00 - 8:00 PM

Girty's Woods

June 3 | 10:30 - 1:00 PM

Join ALT's stewardship team and fellow volunteers as we care for our conservation areas. Workday activities vary and may include planting trees, managing native and invasive species to improve habitat, maintaining and improving trails, trimming back growth, removing debris, and sharing skills and needs for throughout the year.

All Ages | Cost: Free



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

Registration is required for all environmental education programs.
Walk-ins are only permitted for our volunteer events.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

Ages: Adults & Educators

ACT 48 and PQAS hours may be available; visit each workshop's page for more information.



Growing Up WILD

June 12 | 10:00 - 12:00 PM

This workshop builds on children's sense of wonder about nature and invites them to explore wildlife and the world around them. Through a wide range of activities and experiences, Growing Up WILD provides an early foundation for developing positive impressions about the natural world and lifelong social and academic skills.

Cost: \$5



WILD About Pollinators

June 22 | 10:00 - 4:00 PM

June 23 | 9:00 - 3:00 PM

We will explore the importance of pollinators and learn some games and activities appropriate for k-12 audiences. All participants will receive the Project WILD curriculum guide as well as a goody bag!

Cost: \$5



MUSHROOM HIKES

June 2 | 1:00 - 3:00 PM | Barking Slopes

June 16 | 6:00 - 7:30 PM | Fern Hollow

Join us mushroom hikes with Western PA Mushroom Club (WPMC). Attendees will learn how to spot and identify common local fungi. Please note we will NOT be foraging on these hikes.

Ages 3-Adult | Cost: \$5



Photo courtesy of
Flickr Creative Commons.

AARP PA: CREATING BACKYARD HABITATS

June 5 | 6:00 - 7:00 PM | Frank Sarris Public Library

Join ALT Senior Director of Education and Curriculum Julie for a talk on Creating Backyard Habitats, sponsored by AARP Pennsylvania. Geared for those ages 50 and up, we will explore how you can support and sustain native wildlife, no matter how much space you have! Experience the beauty of these plants and learn how they contribute towards building a more sustainable and livable community for people of all ages.

All Ages | Cost: Free



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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 38 municipalities, there is now an ALT conservation project 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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FRONT COVER: Chalfant Run
flowing through Churchill
Valley Greenway in the spring.

BACK COVER: Dryad's Saddle
Fungi growing at an Allegheny
Land Trust green space.

All photos by Lindsay Dill
unless otherwise noted.



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