



CONSERVING YOUR LAND

Practical options for permanently
preserving your special place



**ALLEGHENY
LAND TRUST**

Allegheny Land Trust (ALT)

is a non-profit organization that conserves and cares for local land for the health and well-being of current and future generations. We envision a region with abundant green space that is easily accessible and recognized as essential to the quality of life for all.



Green space, in addition to its recreational and aesthetic benefits, is a part of the solution to many of the pressing issues our region is grappling with today, including landslides, flash flooding, combined sewer overflow, and air and water quality. Its natural capacity to absorb and filter storm water, cleanse the air, provide accessible and healthy recreational opportunities, and contribute to economic vitality make strategic green space protection critical to the region's resiliency and sustainability.



CONNECTION WITH THE LAND

Many people here in Southwestern Pennsylvania have a special and personal relationship with their land. In addition to that deep emotional connection, they know that undeveloped green spaces — be they woodlands, fields, or farms — serve as a vital component to our region's quality of life by providing places for healthy outdoor recreation and food production, clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty.

Frequently these conservation-minded property owners have a desire to preserve their special land in its natural state forever.

If you are a landowner with that sense of personal connection to your land or if you simply understand the important role that green space plays and want to contribute in a very meaningful way to our region's future, please read on to learn about the ways you can work with Allegheny Land Trust to preserve your land today and for generations to come.





LAND CONSERVATION STORIES: Love at First Site

Tingle and Richard Barnes had been married a few years and had just welcomed their first child to the family in 1972 when they started thinking they might like a little more open space around them than their suburban neighborhood offered.

“It was just a thought for the future, something to talk about,” according to Tingle. “We had a nice house in a nice neighborhood so there really was no urgency, but one day I was perusing the real estate section in the paper and a listing caught my eye, so we decided to just check it out.”

It took only minutes for the bucolic 27-acre farm and its small, aged farmhouse in Indiana Township to capture their hearts. “We knew it was the place for us immediately” she said.

The nearly half century of life lived since that fortuitous visit has only deepened the Barnes’ connection to the special land that has been so good to their family. “Living on this land has kept us young,” Tingle said as she walked through the fields pointing out the regular tasks that both she and Richard relish.

There was a time a decade or so back with their two children newly out of the home and living out of state that the couple gave some brief consideration to moving elsewhere, but that notion was short-lived. “We were arriving home from a trip at dusk and we pulled up the lane to find our meadows and tree line absolutely aglow with millions of fireflies. We looked at each



Tingle and Richard Barnes

other immediately and said why would we go anywhere else?” remembers Richard.

And they were inspired to find a way to protect their special land forever. Tingle was familiar with the concept of conservation easements and contacted Allegheny Land Trust to learn more. In 2014 the Barnes’ donated a conservation easement to ALT to ensure the permanent preservation of their land.

“Over the years we have seen development dramatically change the character of the North Hills and we just don’t want that for the remaining pocket of farms. We felt it was important to do something today so that our land will be protected even after we’re not here to protect it ourselves,” the couple explained.

“Working through the easement process with ALT was simple and straight forward and 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.”





LAND CONSERVATION OPTIONS

There are several different and innovative conservation options that can be considered to permanently conserve your land. The viability of each will be based on finding alignment between your needs and desires as the landowner and Allegheny Land Trust's priorities and capacity at the time of consideration. Primarily, these options fall into two categories: **Fee Simple Ownership** and **Conservation Easements**.

Fee Simple Ownership

What is fee simple ownership?

Fee simple ownership means the land is owned outright.

Allegheny Land Trust has protected nearly 3,000 acres of green space in Southwestern Pennsylvania since its founding in 1993. Much of this land is owned and stewarded by ALT, and has been acquired over the years through donation, bargain sale, and market value purchases.

Is Allegheny Land Trust interested in donations of property for conservation?

Yes. Donating land for conservation is one of the finest legacies a person can leave to future generations, and ALT is grateful to the many landowners who have donated properties to create many of our conservation areas. We are very interested in working with landowners who are considering donating land for conservation and will work with them to explore the best options to do so. A donation of land can result in significant tax benefits to the donor since the appraised value of the donated land is eligible for a federal tax deduction as a charitable gift.

What is a bargain sale?

As the name implies, in a bargain sale land is sold to Allegheny Land Trust for less than its appraised value. This makes protecting the land more affordable and, thus, more viable for Allegheny Land Trust than a full market price sale — all while still generating cash for the seller. The difference between the appraised value of the property and the selling price is eligible for a federal tax deduction as a charitable gift.

Does ALT ever buy land for conservation at full market value?

Yes, in rare cases where the land offers exceptional conservation value as determined by ALT's Greenprint criteria the organization may consider a full market value acquisition. These acquisitions are limited by ALT's financial capacity at the time and the estimated potential for fundraising around that particular property. There are no tax benefits to the seller of the land. Because ALT is using private and public grants, we cannot pay more than appraised value.

Conservation Easement

What is a conservation easement?

A conservation easement is a binding legal agreement between a landowner and Allegheny Land Trust (or another land trust or governmental agency) that permanently limits the uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. It allows the landowner to continue to own, live on, and otherwise use their land as specified within the terms of the agreement. Since ownership of the property does not transfer as part of the easement the landowner retains ownership and can sell the land or pass it to heirs at any time in the future. When a landowner donates or sells a conservation easement, they give up some of rights associated with the land as specified in the language of the easement. These limitations placed on the land at the time of the easement are permanent and transfer with the land to any future owners.



What will the easement permit or restrict me from doing on my land?

Conservation easements offer great flexibility. No two easements are the same because they are customized at the outset to meet the personal needs of the landowner and the conservation needs of the easement holder (Allegheny Land Trust). For example, an easement on a property containing quality woodlands or good wildlife habitat might prohibit any further surface disruption or construction of buildings on the eased portion of the property, while an easement on farmlands would allow continued farming and the addition of agricultural structures. An easement may be structured to apply to all or a portion of the property. Easements do not require that public access to the property be permitted. The specific terms of the easement are arrived at through careful consultations between the landowner and Allegheny Land Trust.

How is the value of the conservation easement determined?

The monetary value of an easement is determined by a *Qualified Appraisal* conducted by a professional appraiser with experience in conservation easements. Many factors influence the value of easements including the existing demand for developable land in the area, zoning, topography, utility availability, and physical access to the property. While easement value can vary greatly among properties based on these and other factors, a range of 40%-60% the property's full uneased value is relatively common. The specific restrictions placed on the land by the easement will be part of the planning discussions between the landowner and ALT and can also have an impact the easement's monetary value.

How does Allegheny Land Trust typically acquire easements?

A landowner can sell a conservation easement at appraised value or at a reduced price, but most conservation easements are donated as a reflection of the owner's personal desire to preserve their special land. ALT's ability to purchase easements is limited by its financial capacity and access to funding at any given time.

Do conservation easements provide tax benefits to the landowner?

If the easement is sold at full appraised value, there are no tax benefits to the landowner. If the easement is donated or sold at a discounted price and is determined to protect important conservation resources and meets other federal tax code requirements, the value of the amount donated can qualify as a federal tax-deductible charitable donation that can be deducted in full or in increments for up to 16 years. In some municipalities, placing an easement on your property may result in property tax savings when the property is reassessed.

Some donors also find donating a conservation easement to be an extremely beneficial way to lower estate taxes if they intend to pass the property on to heirs in the future. Whether an easement is donated during life or by will it can make a critical difference in an heir's ability to keep the land intact.

Who is responsible for upholding the easement?

The property owner is responsible for adhering to the terms of the agreement, and Allegheny Land Trust is responsible for monitoring and enforcing the easement in perpetuity. Typically, a strong spirit of collaboration is formed between ALT and property owner(s) due to their shared interest in preserving the land. The easement runs with the land, so any future land owner is bound to its terms.



LAND CONSERVATION STORIES: Collaborating with Nature

“Many people work hard trying to control everything in their lives,” said Barb Z., “but life’s experiences have taught me that change is often beyond our control and that working with it – rather than resisting it— leads to happier outcomes.” A conservation easement donor, she credits a lifetime of partnering with nature to restore her beautiful land in Sewickley Hills with helping her to form this broader conviction about life.

“There are things I tried to do on this land, but sometimes nature had other ideas,” she laughed as she walked through the meadow, wetland, and woodlands of her 10-acre homestead describing the various successes and shortcomings in her 45 years of caring for this land. “But I have learned that it is always more productive to accept and work with nature’s changes.”

The land was cleared by settlers in the early 1800s and was farmland when her father purchased it in 1948. Barb was born on the land but moved away before her first birthday only to return as an adult in 1975 to find it to be mostly unproductive pasture and fields; and to unknowingly begin her long journey of bringing the land back to life.

The self-taught naturalist’s love for the land is apparent as she points out countless species of plants, wildflowers and trees – some of which she planted herself decades ago and some last week – that thrive in the natural landscape that she and nature have partnered to restore. “It’s not a huge piece of land, but I believe that all acts of conservation are meaningful parts of the bigger picture,” she explained.

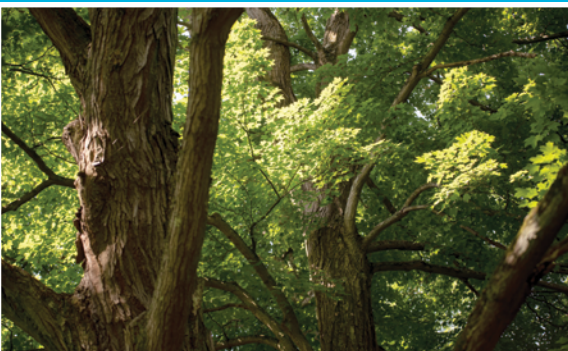


Barb Z.

The land has come full circle with its stream, pond, towering trees, and wetland meadows once again providing natural habitat for a vast array of wildlife, birds, and native plants – and, of course, a special home for Barb, her husband Jack, their two dogs, chickens and three active honey beehives.

“I won’t be able to control what nature has in store for this land in the future any better than I can today, but I can make sure that whoever owns the land after I’m gone will not be able to work against her,” Barb said explaining why she contacted Allegheny Land Trust to place a permanent conservation easement on the land in 2008.

“It is good to know this special place will be in good hands forever.”



“The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.”

- RACHEL CARSON

“A true conservationist is a man who knows that the world is not given by his fathers, but borrowed from his children.”

- JOHN JAMES AUDUBON

“A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself.”

- FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

“I think having land and not ruining it is the most beautiful art that anybody could ever want.”

- ANDY WARHOL

Take the next step to conserve your land

If you are interested in learning more about options for conserving your land, please contact our **Land Conservation Team**, at **412-741-2750** or **landconservation@alleghenylandtrust.org**.

KEEP IN TOUCH

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Allegheny Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) non-profit helping local people save local land in the Pittsburgh region. Ask your employer about matching your gift. Contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

The official registration and financial information of Allegheny Land Trust may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1.800.732.0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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