Western Reserve Land Conservancy

land - people - community

Stewardship LANDLINE 2024

CONSERVATION EASEMENT STEWARDSHIP & MUCH MORE

Welcome to new landowners who worked with Western Reserve Land Conservancy in 2023 to permanently protect your amazing properties! You have joined a group of over 550 owners of parks. natural areas, farms, and urban green spaces that are protected in perpetuity with conservation easements held by the Land Conservancy. To date, we have protected 932 unique properties totaling 73,599 acres! This publication is our annual printed newsletter created specifically for you. In this edition of our Stewardship Landline, you will find important announcements and information about our stewardship program. We hope you have the time to read through the articles and reach out to our staff if you have any questions or simply want to touch base. We also stay in touch with landowners by email with our quarterly Stewardship Messenger publication. Please let us know if you are not receiving the Stewardship Messenger, and we'll make sure to put you on the email list.

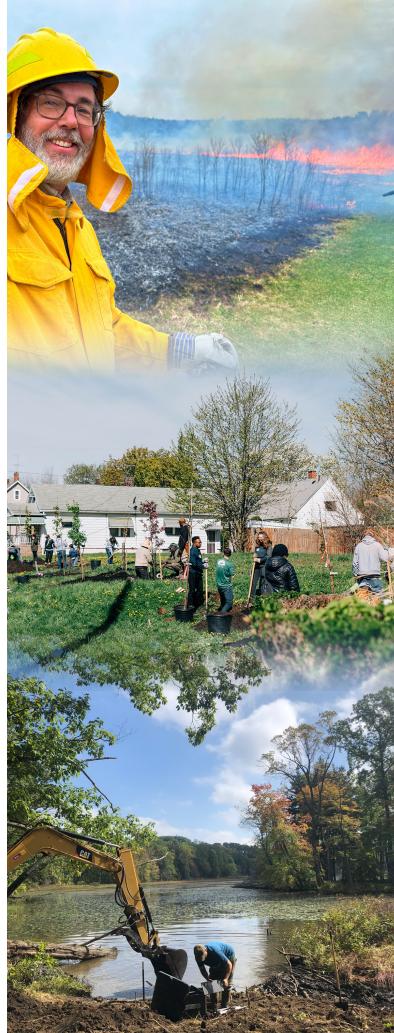
Western Reserve Land Conservancy is the largest land trust in Ohio, which means we complete more annual visits to permanently protected properties than any other organization in the state. Conservation easement stewardship has been the core of our "stewardship" work since we were founded in the 1980s. This type of stewardship work is extremely important because the conservation restrictions on your property last forever. 70% of our protected properties are privately-owned, which means our relationships with private property owners are critical to conservation efforts in the region. Our conservation easement stewardship work is the way we uphold our promise to landowners, supporters, and the public that land will stay protected in accordance with the wishes of the original landowner. If we were to abandon this program or allow significant changes to conservation easements that are not permitted, trust in our organization and the conservation restrictions would quickly erode. Our dedicated conservation easement stewardship team has over 50 years of collective experience with the organization, and we remain a voice for the land no matter who owns the protected property as time goes on!

With that said. I have had the opportunity over the years to watch our "stewardship" work expand dramatically. We have a seasoned urban team (Thriving Communities) assessing housing stock for urban planning purposes; planting trees and caring for the urban tree canopy; creating and restoration urban green spaces; and much more. We also complete many habitat restoration projects every vear associated with our new land protection projects and on land we own. This past winter alone we planted (frost-seeded) over 100 acres of pollinator habitat on several of our Signature Preserves. Our team now includes staff dedicated specifically to stewarding parks and preserves owned by the Land Conservancy. It seems like most of the Land Conservancy's staff is working on "stewardship" in one way or another, and it is wonderful to see! Please reach out to us if you are interested in learning more about the rest of our stewardship work that you may not be as familiar with.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the Stewardship Landline, and we look forward to seeing you on our stewardship visits in 2024. Thank vou for your support and enduring partnership in conservation!

Pete Mr Danald

Director of Land Stewardship



CONSERVATION EASEMENT STEWARDSHIP VISITS

Our Land Stewardship Team has started annual visits to conserved properties. These visits help us build a record of responsible stewardship, documenting changes to your properties over time related to the terms of the conservation easement. Here are some things to keep in mind about our stewardship program:

- practice for all land trusts throughout the country.
- steward know if you want to meet for the visit this year.
- can bring these to our visit, mail them, or email them to you.
- region if you have questions.



CHANGES ON YOUR PROPERTY?

Are you selling your property? In accordance with your conservation easement, please notify us prior to the sale of your property. This allows us to arrange a meeting with the new landowner and begin our stewardship partnership. Also, most conservation easements include a Land Conservancy Stewardship Fee at the time of sale. These fees are critical to funding our program and protecting your land in perpetuity.

Are you planning big changes to your property? Are you planning on building a home, harvesting timber, adding a barn, digging a pond, or any other major activity permitted by your conservation easement? If so, please notify us as many major activities require written notice and approval by Western Reserve Land Conservancy.

Prior notification helps to assure that both the landowner Parks and Preserves Manager and the Land Conservancy agree that the activity complies with the terms of the easement. This helps prevent misunderstandings and ensures the continued Andrew Haugh protection of your property. When in doubt, give us a call. Stewardship Specialist We're always happy to hear from you. 419.467.5027 or ahaugh@wrlandconservancy.org

• We will visit your property once a year to ensure that your conservation easement is being upheld in perpetuity. Annual visits are a requirement for maintaining our status as an accredited land trust, and these visits are a standard

• Expect that we will call you about a week ahead of time to schedule a visit. While you do not need to meet us for the visit, we always enjoy catching up in person, and hiking the property with you is even better. Please let your land

• Let us know before our visit if you need a copy of your conservation easement or baseline documentation report. We

• Let us know in advance about any questions you would like addressed during the visit. Call the land steward for your

Top Row: Shane Wohlken, George Warnock, Andrew Haugh | Bottom Row: Dale Dunford, Pete McDonald, Sarah Kitsor Not Pictured: Kate Pilacky (pictured on page 11)

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RVATION GHT ear in Review by Shane Wohlken

owned by the same family for at least 150 years. The The Land Conservancy enjoyed another banner year protecting important natural and agricultural areas legacy of the Rohrer farm has now been protected in in 2023 including 33 properties totaling over 2,670 perpetuity! acres. This brings the total protected properties held in northeastern Ohio by the Land Conservancy to 923 THE LAND CONSERVANCY EXPANDS INTO covering over 73,599 acres—almost the size of the City **CRAWFORD COUNTY FOR THE FIRST TIME** of Charleston, SC! Each of these properties will be Jerry and Mary Wurm added to their already visited by our stewardship team once a year to ensure preserved 820 acres of farmland with the addition of that the easements are being upheld. We completed an 80-acre farm located in Crawford County (the Land projects in 18 counties, 27 different municipalities, 18 Conservancy's first protected property in Crawford different landowners, and 7 different public partners County). Jerry and Mary have now granted eight including park districts, townships, villages, etc. conservation easements in five counties! Two properties were purchased to expand Ashcroft Woods Conservation Area and Grand Valley Ranch, FARMS ARE PRESERVED IN SANDUSKY Signature Preserves owned by the Land Conservancy, AND SENECA COUNTIES, ADDING TO and another four properties were purchased with THE OVER 4,000 ACRES OF PRESERVED the purpose to eventually transfer them to public **FARMLAND IN BOTH COUNTIES** partners.

Two conservation easements granted by Bob and Deb Bumb totaling over 114 acres, one in Sandusky 2023 was a very good year working with farmers to County and Seneca County, marks the 28th and 29th protect their agricultural land throughout our region conservation easements granted by the Bumb family. and in counties new to the Land Conservancy. Here They have now protected over 2,944 acres of agricultural are some highlights: land throughout north-central and northwestern Ohio. Another two conservation easements granted by Keith and Natalie Edwards preserve a combined 180+ acres LANDOWNER CONSERVES HIS FARM TO of Maple View Farms in Sandusky County. This brings **ENSURE HIS FAMILY'S LEGACY IN MEDINA** them up to four conservation easements totaling a little COUNTY over 1,199 acres of protected farmland. The Edwards' The 61-acre Rohrer Farm located in Medina County son Kent entered a national competition for wheat is a family farm owned and preserved by Bob Rohrer yields held by the National Wheat Foundation and that goes back generations to 1836. The farm has finished third in the nation and first in Ohio with 169.4 been designated a Sesquicentennial Farm by the Ohio bushels per acre.

Departments of Agriculture, meaning that it has been



Rohrer Farm in Medina County



LANDOWNER PROTECTS HER HISTORIC FARMSTEAD IN PERPETUITY IN SUMMIT COUNTY

Amy Nichols protected her 20-acre farm, known locally as the Shaw Farm, in Summit County. She is the 6th generation steward of the farm! The historic farmstead was built in 1860 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. She is very proud of her family's history farming the land and is happy to protect it in perpetuity while much of the farm land around her is developed with large residential homes and developments.

PROTECTS FARM, ADDING FAMILY LAND TO A 2,000-ACRE CONSERVATION **CORRIDOR IN LORAIN COUNTY**

The 115-acre Walker Farm located in Lorain County was conserved by Iva and Terry Walker to complete the desire of their mother Dorothy to preserve the family farm. The farm is uniquely located within a conservation corridor that includes Findley State Park to the east, Lorain County Metroparks' Wellington Reservation to the West, a conservation easement property to the south, and the Wellington Wildlife Area farther to the south. The conservation corridor, with the Walker Farm, totals nearly 2,000 protected acres in southern Lorain County.

LONG-TIME RESIDENT OF MUNSON PROTECTS GORGEOUS PROPERTY IN **GEAUGA COUNTY**

A life-long resident of Munson Township donated conservation easements on two properties (totaling

84 acres) that have been in the family for generations. These privately owned properties contain spring-fed streams, ravines, agricultural fields, hardwood forests, and a lifetime of treasured memories of maple sugaring, farming, and rambling about on these beloved lands. With the conservation of these two properties, the Land Conservancy has now protected over 10,000 acres of land in Geauga County! We have reached this milestone in only two other counties (Ashtabula and Trumbull).

THE LAND CONSERVANCY HELPS TO **BRING FRESH PRODUCE TO A FOOD DESERT IN CLEVELAND**

While protecting rural agricultural land is essential for the health and well-being of our local communities and our country, it is just as important to ensure that residents in urban areas have access to healthy, fresh food as well. We continue to work with closely with our urban partners to ensure that urban food deserts become a thing of the past. The Land Conservancy helped assist in securing the Woodhill Community Garden which is owned by the City Land Bank and leased to Calvary Hill Church of God in Christ at the corner of Rosehill Road and Woodhill Avenue in the City of Cleveland. The goal of the community garden is to grow enough fresh produce to supply residents in the neighborhood. This is particularly important since there are no grocery stores within walking distance of the residents in the neighborhood.

Working with individual landowners to protect their land is extremely rewarding, but protecting some of

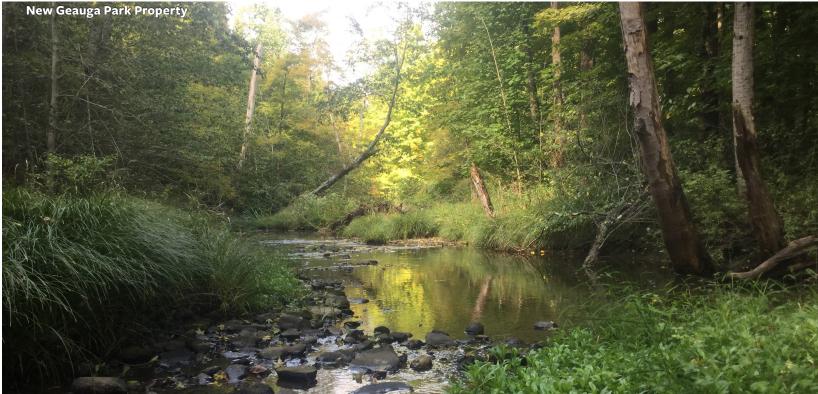
the most unique and fragile habitats in our region requires working closely with our many conservation partners. Here are a few highlights from the past year: **GEAUGA COUNTY**

IN **MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**

The Land Conservancy, in partnership with Geauga LAND IN SUMMIT COUNTY PROTECTED Park District, has protected 183 acres of high quality PARTNERSHIP WITH CLEVELAND mature upland forest, wetlands, meadows and ponds in Hambden Township. The property also includes The Land Conservancy worked with the Cleveland approximately 7,350 feet of Bates Creek, a tributary Museum of Natural History to secure an 18-acre of Paine Creek. At least 16 rare, threatened, and wetland woods located in Summit county. While endangered species have been documented on the the property is a small piece of the conservation property. The Land Conservancy secured funding to puzzle, it helps complete the larger picture that is the acquire and protect the property through the Clean Ohio Conservation Fund and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Museum's 344-acre Singer Lake Bog and Willowdale conservation easement properties located adjacent to Service's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The this smaller piece. property was transferred to Geauga Park District to be developed as a public park for passive recreation.

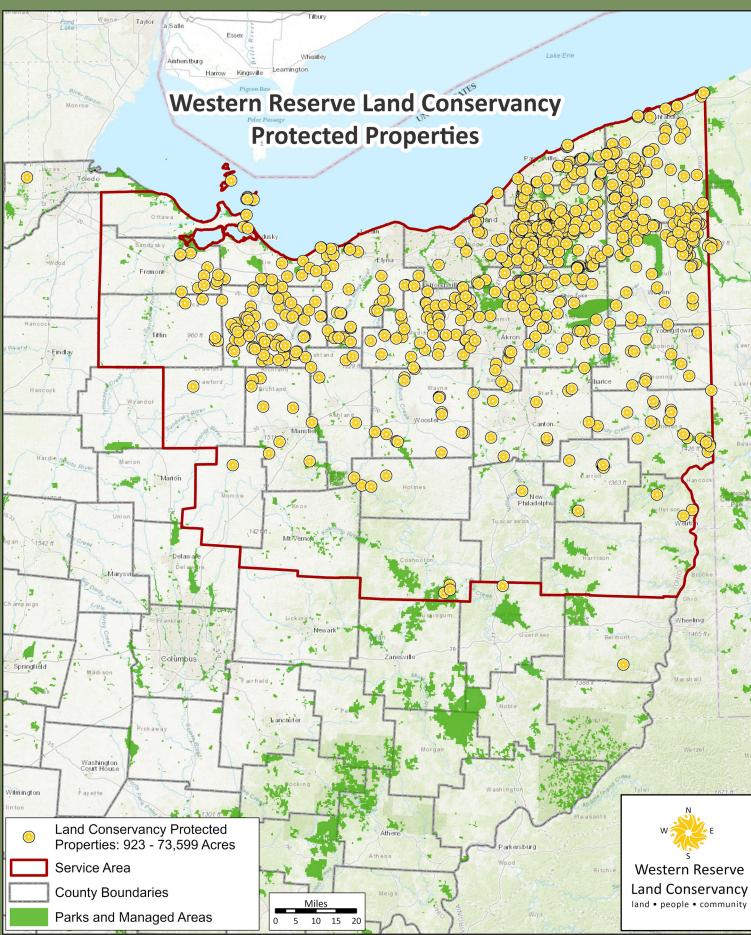
LAND CONSERVANCY HELPS THE PROTECT A RECLAIMED COAL STRIP-**MINE IN COSHOCTON COUNTY**

We welcome our new landowners to the growing The Land Conservancy assisted the Muskingum Land Conservancy family and thank our legacy Watershed Conservancy District (MWCD) in the landowners for their ongoing support. We could purchase and protection of a reclaimed coal stripnot preserve Ohio's unique landscapes, from rolling mine that was owned by American Electric Power in farms, to high quality forests, to essential waterways Coshocton County. The Land Conservancy prepared and tributaries, without your desire to work with us to and submitted a successful funding application to protect those landscapes in perpetuity! Thank you for the Clean Ohio Conservation Fund (Clean Ohio) on generously partnering with the Land Conservancy to behalf of MWCD for the acquisition of the land. This help us provide the people of our region with essential property adds 609 acres to the 1,827-acre Coshocton natural assets - like clean water, working farms, Forest project completed in 2020 and the 933-acre wildlife areas, and parks - through land conservation Coshocton Forest Extension project completed in 2021. The acquisition and protection of this site and restoration. creates a 7,177-acre block of protected land owned by MWCD in southern Coshocton County.



THE LAND CONSERVANCY HELPS GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT TO PROTECT LAND IN

BY THE NUMBERS



Properties by Major Watershed Properties Acres Watershed Name Ashtabula 584 River 31 3323 Black River 215 9347 **Chagrin River Conneaut Creek** 370 5785 Cuyahoga River 109 39 Frontal Lake Erie* 3601 147 12524 Grand River 63 Huron River 6877 199 Lake Erie Island 8 58 4490 Mahoning River 12 Mohican River 2516 Muskingum River 3574 5 229 Ottawa River 34 1964 Rocky River Sandusky River 909 Scioto River 194 Shenango River** 78 10034 70 St. Marys River 40 2519 **Tuscarawas River** Upper Ohio River*** * 26 1349 26 2505 Vermilion River 636 Walhonding River Total 923 73599 *39 properties located on streams close to the

Lake Erie shoreline **73 properties and 9,203 acres in the Pymatuning Creek watershed ***22 properties and 983 acres in the Little

Beaver Creek watershed

Properties by County				
County	Properties	Acres		
Ashland	5	402		
Ashtabula	113	11074		
Auglaize	1	70		
Belmont	1	106		
Carroll	7	633		
Columbiana	22	944		
Coshocton	3	3371		
Crawford	1	80		
Cuyahoga	112	2316		
Erie	22	1796		
Geauga	156	10235		
Guernsey	1	56		
Holmes	4	684		
Huron	73	7513		
Jefferson	3	259		
Lake	42	2316		
Lorain	34	4255		
Lucas	1	229		
Mahoning	9	1037		
Medina	42	1587		
Mercer	5	842		
Morrow	1	194		
Ottawa	5	124		
Portage	65	3820		
Richland	9	1882		
Sandusky	11	1664		
Seneca	5	425		
Stark	11	954		
Summit	43	1617		
Trumbull	100	11946		
Tuscarawas	1	185		
Wayne	15	983		
Total	923	73599		

Properties by Property Type

· · ·		
Property Type	Properties	Acres
Private Farm	324	37058
Private Preserve	380	18610
Public Park	96	9695
Publicly Owned Preserve	123	8236
Total	923	73599

Properties by Ownership Status

Ownership	Properties	Acres
Privately Owned*	715	56274
Publicly Owned	208	17325
Total	923	73599

*Includes properties owned by the Land Conservancy

Properties Owned and Managed by the Land Conservancy

Properties	Acres
100	7228



KNOW YOUR CONSERVATION EASEMENT: The Importance of Notifications by Sarah Kitson

Although every conservation easement is unique, most of them have notification requirements. Prior notification helps our stewardship team work with you to ensure that your planned changes do not conflict with the terms of your conservation easement. This can be especially important when the changes you plan on making are expensive, longlasting, or if they will impact a large area of your conserved property.

Most Major Reserved Rights require you to notify us prior to making changes. Major Reserved Rights typically include things like building envelopes, habitat restoration, agriculture, energy infrastructure, and sustainable forestry. By notifying us prior to executing a Major Reserved Right, we can work with you to ensure that the project is permitted by the terms of the easement. Some examples of how we do that include completing a site visit to make sure that a planned house addition is within your Existing Building Area before you break ground; walking a proposed green energy project area to ensure

that the permitted infrastructure does not impact sensitive habitat; or reviewing your forestry plans and completing any necessary approvals required by vour conservation easement.

Most conservation easements also require you to notify us when you decide to transfer your property. This notification allows us to answer any questions you or your representatives might have. It also helps us plan for a meeting with the buyers shortly after the sale so we can get to know them and explain our stewardship program. We can also work with your title company to ensure that the Stewardship Fee is paid, and your conservation easement is incorporated into the deed by reference if required.

Although each easement outlines when notification is required, we encourage you to reach out to us whenever you plan on making a big change to your property so that we can work with you to ensure that the terms of the easement are upheld, and the conservation value of your property are protected.

NATURE NOTES: Salamander Habitat by Sarah Kitson

Ohio is home to many species of salamanders. Although they look lizard-like, salamanders are amphibians that rely heavily on connected aquatic and terrestrial habitats to complete their life cycle. Most salamander species in Ohio lay their eggs in or near water. Similarly, most salamanders have an aquatic larval stage comparable to tadpoles.

Because of their unique habitat requirements, many of Ohio's salamanders thrive on the varied landscapes found within undisturbed forestland. Downed logs provide cover from predators and retain moisture. Leaf litter and organic soils house many of the insects that salamanders feed on. The fish-free vernal pools that dot the forest floor provide important breeding and larval habitat for many species. Cool forested streams house aquatic salamanders under stones.

During the first warm rain in the springtime, you may be able to experience a salamander migration. Most of Ohio's Ambystomatid salamanders, also known as mole salamanders, venture out of the soil where they spend most of their time and gather in vernal pools to breed. Because they have fully functioning lungs, you can see them coming up for air while they are swimming. During the spring and fall (and if conditions are right in the summer), terrestrial Plethodontid salamanders can be found under logs and rocks. Aquatic salamanders spend their time in streams and springs. These lungless salamanders breathe through their skin and hide under cover objects to stay moist.





Those who own forested land can assist salamanders by helping to nurture and restore connectivity between forested and aquatic habitats. This can include leaving downed logs and large rocks in place, allowing forest canopy to grow over streams instead of mowing up to the edge of the water, and leaving fall leaves in place where possible instead of bagging and removing them from your property.

If you ever handle a salamander, it is important to remember that these creatures are sensitive. Make sure your hands are clean and do not have lotion, bug spray, or sunscreen on them. These substances could harm salamanders because they easily absorb chemicals through their skin. You should also decontaminate your gear between walking through wetlands on different properties. This helps prevent the spread of diseases that can impact these susceptible species.

PUBLIC PARK SPOTLIGHT: Oberlin Preserve by Sarah Kitson

Located about 1 mile southwest of Oberlin's city center, you will find Western Reserve Land Conservancy's beautiful 63-acre Oberlin Preserve. With few prairie areas in the region, the preserved property provides a unique glimpse at native grasses, forbs, and pollinators. Kate Pilacky, Firelands Associate Field Director for Western Reserve Land Conservancy, has led the prairie restoration and management efforts. Since its initial restoration planting in 2017, hundreds of native wildflower plants, over 200 native trees, and 30 acres of prairie and wildflower seed were planted by corporate and community volunteers, as well as students from Oberlin College. The prairie habitat is managed with strategic mowing and controlled burns. Notable prairie species include big bluestem, nodding wild rye, blazing star, swamp milkweed, rattlesnake master, prairie dock, Virginia mountain mint, blue false indigo, and compass plant.

The southern portion of the Oberlin Preserve has been known historically as the "Oberlin Great South Woods" and includes additional wet woodlands, wet sedge meadow, and forested vernal pools. These habitats provide shelter, food, and nesting areas for birds, amphibians, small and large mammals, and other wildlife. The site has been host to scientific research and biological surveys as far back as 1888, according to records at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

The Oberlin Preserve was once owned by John and Delilah Copeland, notable Black political figures who left North Carolina and moved to Oberlin in the 1840s to seek safety and better opportunity for themselves and their children. John and Delilah's son, John Anthony Copeland, took part in two nationally significant antislavery events in the years leading up to the Civil War, including the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue of 1858 and the raid at Harpers Ferry in 1859, for which he was executed. Currently, an "Underground Railroad Freedom Garden" is being grown on the property which features native trees, shrubs, and plants that may have played a role in the lives of enslaved people who traveled north seeking freedom.

The Oberlin Preserve includes a parking area located at 425 W Hamilton Street, Oberlin, OH 44074 connected to a soon-to-be completed ADA compliant trail to a pavilion surrounded by restored prairie habitat. The prairie contains looping trails with Kestrel, Chimney Swift, and Bluebird nesting structures. Shaded benches are present. In the southern portion of the Oberlin Preserve, a boardwalk and overlook off of the Ramsey Right-of-Way Trail enables visitors to better access a rich vernal pool full of wildlife. Kate Pilacky shared, "The Oberlin Preserve is a jewel for folks who enjoy hiking in a variety of habitats and listening to the sounds of nature. We are so looking forward to having a trail through the woods installed sometime in 2024." The preserve is open from dusk until dawn. Although any time of year is a good time to visit, the prairie flowers are on full display in the late summer months. This work could not have been accomplished without all our partners in conservation including our various public funders, private donors, and numerous volunteers. For more information about Oberlin Preserve visit the Land Conservancy's website at **https://** wrlandconservancy.org/special_project/oberlin-preserve/.



SATELLITE MONITORING by Sarah Kitson

Every year we complete stewardship monitoring for each property over which we hold conservation restrictions. We typically walk the property for these visits, often meeting with the landowner and discussing any changes or upcoming plans. We also have a volunteer pilot who flies over properties and takes photographs that our stewardship team reviews. Recently, we have also begun utilizing satellite imagery for monitoring conserved land.

We work with a company called Upstream Tech to purchase satellite imagery taken on a known date within the monitoring year. The imagery has high-definition sub-meter resolution, allowing us to note changes or encroachments. We try to use imagery from those times of the year when the leaves are off the trees so that we can easily see all portions of the property. We upload boundaries of each conserved property, along with helpful Reserved Area boundaries such as an Agricultural Area. Natural Area. or Building Area. to the Upstream

Tech website and overlay them over current satellite imagery. We can use the tools provided by Upstream Tech to document changes over time.

We prioritize satellite monitoring for properties that are larger, don't have any issues to address, and where landowners don't typically meet us for the visit. This allows us to be efficient with staff time and spend fewer hours driving, which is great for cutting mileage expenses, lowering our fuel emissions, and reducing our carbon footprint. Of course, satellite imagery and aerial flyovers are not a full substitute for walking the property. We love to meet landowners and walk properties together, and at a minimum we are required by land trust standards and practices to get boots on the ground at least once every five years. We value our time spent with landowners the most, so please feel free to request an in-person visit at any time regardless of any changes we have made with our monitoring methods.

2023 Pollinator Restoration



Interpretation CENTER

41.61016, -81.39484

NOTE

Invasive vegetation was cleared in preparation for native pollinator habitat restoration.

Image, top **CAPTURE DATE** June 05, 2021

SOURCE Truecolor USA NAIP (1m) **U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm** Service Agency

Image, bottom **CAPTURE DATE** May 07, 2023

SOURCE Truecolor Nearmap (0.5m) ©Nearmap 2023



You have made the most lasting gift of all by donating a conservation easement. But some landowners wonder how else they can help. As part of your estate planning, you may choose to leave your property to Western Reserve Land Conservancy and become members of the Land Conservancy's White Oak Legacy Society. The White Oak Legacy Society is a special group of Western Reserve Land Conservancy supporters who have made a lasting commitment

to land protection and urban revitalization through a variety of estateplanning tools, including bequest in a will or trust, life estate, charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, IRA designations, and gifts of life insurance.

For more information contact Stella Dilik, Chief Development Officer, at 440.528.4150 or sdilik@wrlandconservancy.org.

AREA 11.11 acres

REMEMBERING OUR LANDOWNERS AND THEIR LEGACIES

At Western Reserve Land Conservancy, it is our privilege to work with landowners across the region to permanently conserve and steward cherished local landscapes. We foster strong and lasting partnerships and friendships with generations of landowners. We feel a true sense of loss when landowners pass away. Through the work that we do to conserve land in perpetuity, it is our commitment to remember, honor, and celebrate the tremendous legacy of those landowners who are no longer with us. We recently said goodbye to these remarkable landowners:

Phil Balderston Wilbur Browand Beverly Christen Sue Grimm Fran Meyers Janet Peters Ken Seliga Marjorie W. Townsend

We apologize for any errors or omissions. If a name has been omitted or listed incorrectly please contact the Land Conservancy at 440.528.4150.

SOME SUPPORTERS LEAVE LAND TO THE LAND CONSERVANCY



Western Reserve Land Conservancy

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LAND. PEOPLE. COMMUNITY.

Western Reserve Land Conservancy is Ohio's largest land trust and noted to be one of the top in the country. Our talented staff is dedicated to preserving natural areas, farmland, and coastal lands in northern and eastern Ohio and working statewide to help cities devastated by the foreclosure crisis.

Our Mission: Provide the people of northern and eastern Ohio with essential natural assets through land conservation and restoration.

Our Vision: Thriving, prosperous communities nourished by vibrant natural areas, healthy cities, and working farms.