

*Stewardship*

# LANDLINE

2025



Western Reserve  
Land Conservancy

land • people • community



## LAND STEWARDSHIP: What's the plan for 2025?

Welcome to new landowners who worked with Western Reserve Land Conservancy in 2024 to permanently protect your amazing properties! You have joined a group of over 600 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 951 unique properties totaling 77,117 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.

Early spring is a busy and exciting time for the land stewardship team as we plan for the coming field season. As you can imagine, it takes a significant amount of coordination to complete our annual stewardship work. So, what's the plan for 2025? Believe it or not, Shane, George, Sarah, and I have already planned what month and week we are going to visit your property. Of course, the date may change based on scheduling with you, but without planning ahead, we can easily fall behind when we have over 900 properties and 77,000 acres to visit, let alone the hours of office time it takes to complete a follow-up! And not only does the team visit every existing protected property during the calendar year, but we also complete Baseline Documentation Reports (BDRs) for every new property that we protect each year—typically about 20 to 30 properties. The BDR process consists of at least one site visit and a detailed follow up report containing narrative, photos, and maps documenting the conservation values of the property. We are also working to meet our goal of installing 10-20 new Land Conservancy road signs each year. Please let us know if you would like a sign!

In addition to our traditional conservation easement stewardship work, Dale, Andrew, and Kate have big plans in 2025 for our Signature Parks and Preserves. Some exciting projects include planting over 40 acres of pollinator habitat at South Farm – Sherwin Preserve and Grand Valley Ranch; installing nearly a mile of hiking trails at Oberlin Preserve; and continuing our transforming work at Ashcroft Woods Conservation Area to restore about 15 acres of early successional habitat for rare species in Ashtabula County. Our restoration projects at Ashcroft Woods and Grand Valley Ranch were recently selected to be featured as field trips during the national Land Trust Alliance conference, which will be held in Cleveland in September!

As you can see, we have a lot of work ahead of us for 2025. Please reach out to us if you are interested in learning more about our stewardship program. We hope you enjoy this edition of the Stewardship Landline, and we look forward to seeing you on our stewardship visits in 2025. Thank you for your support and enduring partnership in conservation!



**PETE MCDONALD**  
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:

- 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 practice for all land trusts throughout the country.
- 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 steward know if you want to meet for the visit this year.
- Let us know before our visit if you need a copy of your conservation easement or baseline documentation report. We can bring these to our visit, mail them, or email them to you.
- Let us know in advance about any questions you would like addressed during the visit. Call the land steward for your 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 and the Land Conservancy agree that the activity complies with the terms of the easement. This helps prevent misunderstandings and ensures the continued protection of your property. When in doubt, give us a call. We're always happy to hear from you.



*Pictured From Left to Right: Dale Dunford + Ruby, George Warnock, Pete McDonald, Shane Wohlken, Sarah Kitson, Andrew Haugh  
Not Pictured: Kate Pilacky*

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# CONSERVATION SPOTLIGHT: 2024 Year in Review

*by Shane Wohlken*



Land protected for Summit Metro Parks in Summit County

The Land Conservancy enjoyed another incredible year protecting important natural and agricultural areas in 2024, including 22 properties totaling over 2,998 acres. This brings the total protected properties held in northern and northeastern Ohio by the Land Conservancy to 951, covering over 77,117 acres! Each of these properties will be visited by our stewardship team once a year to ensure that the easements are being upheld. We completed projects in 14 counties, in 22 different municipalities, with 19 different landowners, and with 8 different public partners. The Land Conservancy also purchased a 175-acre property in Ashtabula County to add to its Signature Preserves.

Working with individual landowners to protect their land is always extremely rewarding, especially when we help to preserve crucial farmland throughout our region and secure family legacies. Here are a few highlights from the past year:

## LANDOWNERS CONSERVE THEIR THIRD FARM IN MEDINA COUNTY

The protection of the 47-acre Swingle farm, the third farm protected by the Swingle family, fulfills the dream of Charles Swingle Sr. and Charles “Chick” Swingle Jr. to protect about 150 acres of their farmland in Medina County. Their first farm was protected in 2016 and the second was protected in 2019. Sadly, Charles and Chick both passed before seeing their dream fully realized, but Chick’s sister, Patty Reiser, took on the long and emotional task of seeing her father and brother’s wishes fulfilled. Despite many obstacles, Patty stayed steadfast in her dedication to protect not only the farmland that they cherish, but their family heritage. All three farms were protected through the Ohio Department of Agriculture’s Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (LAEPP).

## CRAWFORD COUNTY WAS VERY POPULAR THIS YEAR FOR PROTECTING LARGE TRACTS OF FARMLAND

Jerry and Mary Wurm worked with the Land Conservancy to preserve their second farm in Crawford County. The 138-acre farm protected this year compliments the 80-acre farm that they protected 2023. In addition to protecting 218 acres in Crawford County, Jerry and Mary have also protected 741 acres of farmland through seven agricultural easements in four other counties! In the northeastern portion of Crawford County, the Schroeder family granted agricultural easements on two of their farm properties totaling 359 acres. Both properties are part of Walnut Grain Farms, a family-owned operation that spans over 13,000 acres across multiple counties. In a wonderful example of networking and collaboration, the Schroeders were introduced to the Land Conservancy through Jerry Wurm, who leases his preserved farmland to the Schroeder family. In the southwestern corner of Crawford County, Fred and Carol Miller partnered with the Land Conservancy to preserve two agricultural properties totaling 164 acres. The protected farms are part of Miller Scioto Farms, a family-owned operation totaling over 1,000 acres. Conservation is a passion of the Miller family, and they hope to expand on what they started in the years to come.

## 117 ACRES OF PRIME FARMLAND PROTECTED IN PORTAGE COUNTY

A 117-acre conservation easement was granted by David and Polly Winchell in Portage County. The farm was purchased in 1956 by David’s parents, and David and Polly are only the fourth owners of the farm. They farm their land for soy and hay while also keeping 6-12 dairy cows. The easement was funded through LAEPP. On a fun sidenote, in 1924, a clay tile from the farm was used to encase a time capsule buried at the base of the clock tower in Garrettsville in 1824. The capsule was opened in 2024 to celebrate Garrettsville’s 150th Anniversary. A new time capsule was buried in the same place to be opened in 2104.

## LANDOWNER PROTECTS AGRICULTURAL LAND AND UNIQUE NATURAL AREAS IN PORTAGE COUNTY

Bob and Barbara Haska granted a conservation easement on their 163-acre property located adjacent to West Branch State Park in Portage County. This easement was preceded by two agricultural easements totaling 36.5 acres that they granted to the Land Conservancy in 2023. The property contains a wonderful variety of habitats including agricultural field, old field habitat, early to mid-successional forests, a large pond, wet meadow, steep slopes, and even an old grove of apple and chestnut trees—but the one of the real gems of the property is an amazing outcropping of Sharon conglomerate ledges that extend along a portion of the steep slopes overlooking the Michael J. Kirwan Reservoir.

## CERTIFIED ORGANIC FARM PROTECTED IN WAYNE COUNTY

Dean and Janice Falb worked with the Land Conservancy to protect their certified organic farm in Wayne County. The agricultural easement was funded through LAEPP. The Falb family farm their land for corn, hay, and cover crops, and pasture 60-70 grass-finished beef cattle. The farm has been in the Falb family since the early 1900’s. Dean is the third generation to work the land, with his son taking over day-to-day operations, ensuring the long-lasting legacy of the Falb family.



Falb Farm in Wayne County



Winchell Farm in Portage County



*Protected hellbender habitat in Belmont County*

**2024 was a very good year, not only protecting beautiful farmland, but working with partners, including park districts, municipalities, and private non-profit organizations, to create or expand parks and preserves throughout northeastern Ohio. Here are a few of the highlights:**

**LAND PROTECTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ASHTABULA COUNTY METROPARKS**

The Land Conservancy worked with the Ashtabula County Metroparks with the acquisition of the 266-acre Mill Creek Preserve in Ashtabula County located near the Lampson Reservoir Metropark, which the Land Conservancy helped the park district acquire in 2013. The park district had been looking to acquire a suitable property to provide primitive camping opportunities to the public. The Land Conservancy purchased the property from the Buchan family on behalf of the park district and reconfigured the original parcels that were part of the old Buccaneer Campsites to create two new properties, a 36-acre piece that contains all the existing camp buildings where camping will be permitted and a 230-acre piece that will remain largely undeveloped and allow for passive public park uses. The Land Conservancy was able to secure funding to acquire and protect the 230-acre portion of the Property through the Clean Ohio Conservation Fund (Clean Ohio), the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA), and the Skylar Raine Schams Conservation Fund.

**THE LAND CONSERVANCY HELPS CAPTINA CONSERVANCY PROTECT IMPORTANT HELLBENDER SALAMANDER HABITAT**

The Land Conservancy helped Captina Conservancy, an accredited Land Trust founded in 2010 to promote and preserve the biodiversity of Captina Creek and other regional watersheds, to protect 105 acres along Captina Creek and Bend Fork in Belmont County. Both creeks support a unique habitat for the state-endangered eastern hellbender salamander, which has been documented on the adjacent property. The acquisition and conservation of the property was accomplished using settlement funds pursuant to a consent decree imposed by the EPA for alleged damages to natural resources. The Land Conservancy entered into a Consulting Agreement with Dover in June of 2023 to conserve at least 170 acres of state-endangered eastern hellbender habitat within the Little Beaver Creek, Cross Creek, Captina Creek, and/or Yellow Creek watersheds. The Land Conservancy agreed to fund the fee title acquisition of the Property on behalf of Captina. In return, Captina donated a conservation easement on the Property to the Land Conservancy to satisfy 105 acres of the 170 acres required by the Dover Agreement.

**THE LAND CONSERVANCY HELPS A NEW PARK DISTRICT IN AUGLAIZE COUNTY ADD MORE LAND**

The Land Conservancy assisted the Heritage Trails Park District in adding 69.7 acres to their fledgling park district in Auglaize County in Western Ohio. The park district successfully passed its first levy in November of 2023 and is exploring plans to develop their two parks with a trail system, parking area, teaching shelter, and a bridge to connect to the Towpath, Buckeye Trail, and the North Country Trail located across the Miami-Erie Canal, which extends about 1,700 linear feet along the western boundary. The acquisition of the Property was fully funded through a combination of funds from Clean Ohio and the U.S. Forest Service Community Forest Grant.

**CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY GRANTS AN EASEMENT TO PERMANENTLY PROTECT KINGSVILLE SWAMP**

Cleveland Museum of Natural History (CMNH) granted a conservation easement to the Land Conservancy on their 83.5-acre Kingsville Swamp property in Ashtabula County. The property is adjacent to a 29-acre property that the Land Conservancy assisted CMNH in acquiring and protecting in 2021. The property contains diverse habitats for fish and wildlife such as wet meadows; high-quality hardwood, mixed hardwood, and pine wetland forests; buttonbush swamp; and open water wetland. Approximately 59 acres of category 3 forested and scrub/shrub wetlands and 21 acres of mid-successional forest can be found on the Property. This project was funded through NAWCA.

**THE LAND CONSERVANCY HELPS TRUMBULL COUNTY METROPARKS ADD LAND**

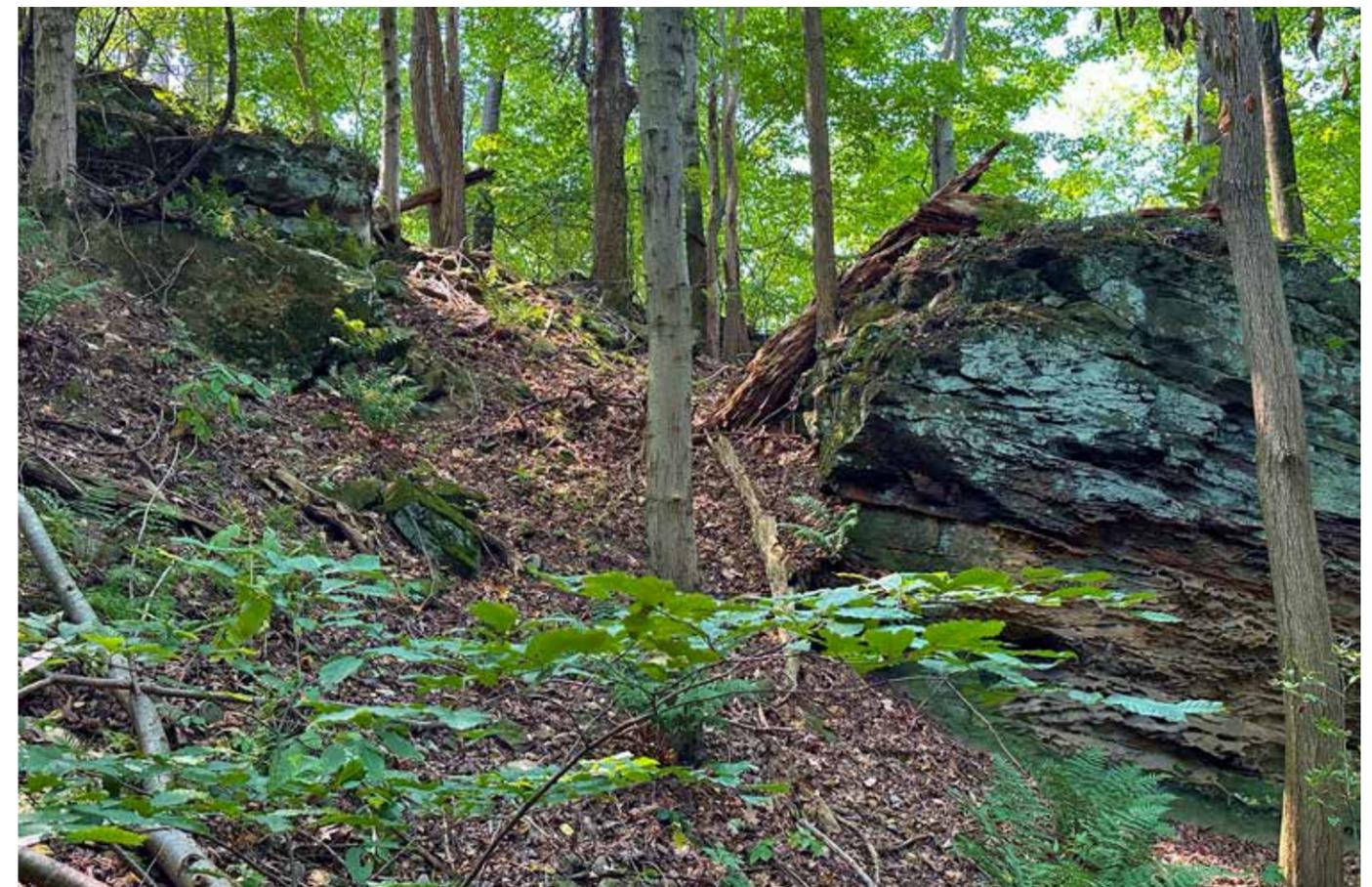
The Land Conservancy helped Trumbull County MetroParks acquire 117 acres in Trumbull County. The Western Reserve Greenway Bike Trail, a 16.7-mile paved pedestrian/cyclist trail that travels north/south through Trumbull County, runs along the eastern boundary, making this Property a great addition to the MetroParks for a future passive park. The Property contains agricultural fields, early successional forest habitat—including areas of wet meadow, emergent marsh, scrub-shrub, forested wetlands, Category 3 wetlands, and 5,625 linear feet of streams. The acquisition of the Property was fully funded through a combination of funds from Clean Ohio and NAWCA. Clean Ohio also funded restoration and improvements on the Property that will convert the fields to pollinator habitat and create a trail system to connect to the Greenway Bike Trail.

While the projects completed with our partners in 2024 are too numerous to list in detail in this article, we wanted to acknowledge these additional projects that we completed through collaboration. Together with Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District, we protected a 622-acre property in Coshocton County; with Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Natural Areas and Preserves, we protected a 228-acre property in Ashtabula County; with the Village of Kelleys Island, we protected a 13.5-acre property adjacent to their 18.5-acre Quinn Preserve that will be used as a passive park preserve; with Kirtland Hills Village, we protected the 64-acre forested property that surrounds their offices and enrolled the forest into a Carbon Credits program; and with the Village of Hunting Valley, we protected about 10 acres of land along Chagrin River Road that adds to over 2,200 acres of contiguous open space, extending about 7.6 miles in the Chagrin River valley. The Land Conservancy also purchased and protected an 87-acre property in Summit County with the intent to eventually transfer it to Summit Metro Parks.



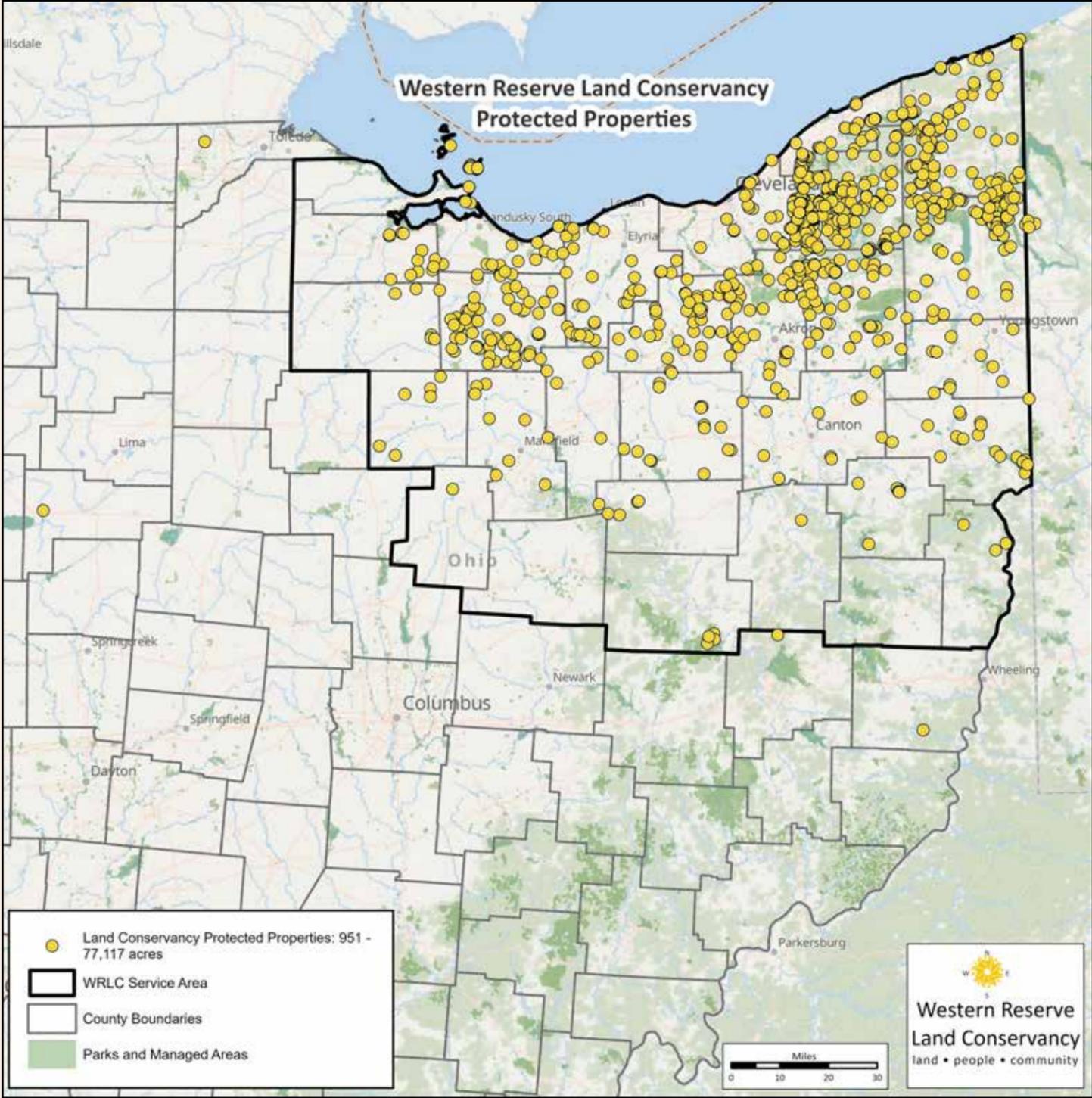
*Forest protected by Kirtland Hills Village in Lake County*

**We welcome our new landowners to the growing Land Conservancy family and thank our legacy landowners for their ongoing support. We could not preserve Ohio's unique landscapes, from rolling farms, to high quality forests, to essential waterways and tributaries, without your desire to work with us to protect those landscapes in perpetuity! Thank you for generously partnering with the Land Conservancy to help us provide the people of our region with essential natural assets—like clean water, working farms, wildlife areas, and parks—through land conservation and restoration.**



*Rock outcroppings protected on private land in Portage County*

# BY THE NUMBERS



### Properties by Major Watershed

Watershed Name	Properties	Acres
Ashtabula River	9	987
Black River	32	3371
Chagrin River	218	9420
Conneaut Creek	4	370
Cuyahoga River	112	6330
Frontal Lake Erie*	41	3771
Grand River	150	12930
Huron River	63	6877
Lake Erie Island	9	212
Mahoning River	60	4770
Mohican River	12	2516
Muskingum River	6	4196
Ottawa River	1	229
Rocky River	35	2003
Sandusky River	13	1484
Scioto River	2	280
Shenango River**	78	10034
St. Marys River	1	70
Tuscarawas River	42	2686
Upper Ohio River***	27	1379
Vermilion River	26	2505
Walhonding River	10	670
<b>Total</b>	<b>951</b>	<b>77117</b>

\*41 properties located on streams close to the Lake Erie shoreline  
 \*\*73 properties and 9,203 acres in the Pymatuning Creek watershed  
 \*\*\*23 properties and 1,013 acres in the Little Beaver Creek watershed

### Properties by County

County	Properties	Acres
Ashland	5	402
Ashtabula	118	11850
Auglaize	1	70
Belmont	1	106
Carroll	7	633
Columbiana	23	974
Coshocton	4	3993
Crawford	6	741
Cuyahoga	113	2325
Erie	23	1809
Geauga	158	10234
Guernsey	1	56
Holmes	5	745
Huron	73	7513
Jefferson	3	259
Lake	43	2380
Lorain	34	4255
Lucas	1	229
Mahoning	9	1037
Medina	44	1674
Mercer	5	842
Morrow	1	194
Ottawa	5	124
Portage	69	4645
Richland	9	1882
Sandusky	12	1751
Seneca	5	425
Stark	11	954
Summit	44	1705
Trumbull	101	12063
Tuscarawas	1	185
Wayne	16	1062
<b>Total</b>	<b>951</b>	<b>77117</b>

### Properties by Property Type

Property Type	Properties	Acres
Private Farm	338	38275
Private Preserve	383	18758
Public Park	106	11754
Publicly Owned Preserve	124	8331
<b>Total</b>	<b>951</b>	<b>77117</b>

### Properties by Ownership Status

Ownership	Properties	Acres
Privately Owned*	733	57790
Publicly Owned	218	19327
<b>Total</b>	<b>951</b>	<b>77117</b>

\*Includes properties owned by the Land Conservancy

### Properties Owned and Managed by the Land Conservancy

Properties	Acres
106	6988



## KNOW YOUR CONSERVATION EASEMENT: Why should I care about encroachments on my conservation easement property?

by Pete McDonald

One of the most common issues our land stewards observe on conservation easement (CE) properties is encroaching activity from neighboring landowners. In this article, we describe types of encroachments we observe; why it is important to care about encroachments and address them in a timely manner; and some ways to resolve encroachments.

One of the most common encroachments is when neighbors mow over the property line and maintain part of what they may think is their lawn on your property. We have seen lawn encroachments that range from a few square feet to over an acre. Another encroachment we frequently observe is the dumping of waste over the property line including yard waste (sticks, branches, grass clippings, discarded landscaping plants, and soil) and even household garbage or farm waste. Some dumps contain small piles of organic material that will break down by the following year, while other dumps develop into large piles that are long lasting and disturb the natural habitat. Other common types of encroachments are trails (walking, horseback riding, biking, ATV, etc.) from neighboring properties; temporary

structures like small playground sets, compost bins, and kids' forts; and cutting of trees and vegetation. Some encroachments we have observed that are more permanent in nature include sheds, garages, fences, decks, raised garden beds, ponds, timber harvests, and driveways, all of which are either partially or completely on the CE property.

Some CE landowners may wonder why the Land Conservancy is concerned about minor encroachments. A landowner might say, "I have good relationships with my neighbors, so what's the big deal—especially with some of these minor issues? Why should I care?" While the Land Conservancy does not aspire to be the "boundary police" for CE properties, we do have an obligation to ensure that the terms of the CE are upheld. Additionally, we have a duty to protect the conservation values of a CE property and the integrity of the ownership of the property in perpetuity. Through our experience, we have also seen encroachments cause significant issues for landowners and the Land Conservancy; therefore, we believe that it is best to resolve all encroachments with a reasonable approach and in a timely manner. Leaving encroachments unresolved may lead to potential negative impacts on the conservation values of CE properties (nature habitats, farmland, parks, etc.), unnecessary conflicts with neighbors, loss of property value or even loss of land, and legal and financial problems that impact both CE landowners and the Land Conservancy.

To illustrate how minor issues can escalate and cause significant problems, we provide some examples here. A narrow, low-impact walking trail encroachment can turn into an ATV highway with 12" ruts, soil compaction, and erosion issues. A neighbor may unknowingly expand their yard by mowing well onto your property... and then a fire ring appears... and then a playground set... and then a garden shed... and then when you approach the neighbor about it, they are distraught or angry because the encroachment



area has become an area their family uses, enjoys, and considers their yard space. In extreme cases, Ohio law provides a mechanism by which neighbors who have used a portion of your land for over 21 years can try to claim ownership of that land through adverse possession. To claim ownership through adverse possession, a neighbor must generally show that they have used and controlled your land exclusively, without permission, and in an obvious (open) way for 21 years or more. Adverse possession is not common and is difficult to prove, but the Land Conservancy has been involved in several adverse possession lawsuits on conservation properties. CE landowners and the Land Conservancy have spent tens of thousands of dollars to deal with these issues. Not addressing an encroachment can also negatively impact the value of your property when you want to sell because buyers will see the encroachment as a potential liability.

The best way to address encroachments is to prevent them in the first place. A great way to do this is to mark your boundaries with easily identifiable permanent markers, including informational signs, installed at locations along the property line. Markers should be placed based on a legal survey and/or official survey pins found on the property. Ideally, you want to be able to see from marker to marker when the leaves are off the trees so that it is easy to prove that the activity crosses onto your property. Also, get to know your neighbors and walk your property boundary regularly. If an encroachment arises, address it as soon as possible so that the activity does not expand in scope as time goes on. How you approach your neighbor to address the issue will depend on your relationship, but a kind and neutral approach works for most people whether you reach out in person or in writing.

If an encroachment seems minor to you and you want to allow your neighbor to continue the activity, then check with the Land Conservancy to see if this is possible. If the Land Conservancy can allow for the activity to continue, usually because it is not negatively impacting the conservation values overall and is temporary in nature, then we will request that you have a signed agreement with the neighbor. The signed agreement formally granting permission for the encroaching activity can help to avoid violations, confusion as to property ownership and costly litigation. The signed agreement can be as simple as a letter or more formal such as a license agreement or recorded easement. With that said, you should contact your attorney for legal advice and determine the best approach. Major encroachments like buildings, timber theft, and significant destruction of CE property should be handled on a case-by-case basis with the Land Conservancy. Removal of buildings, restoration of land, and payment to landowners and the Land Conservancy by the neighbor for damages to the conservation values, among other things, may be necessary.

Overall, while addressing encroachments as described in this article may seem overly formal, it will be worth it in the long run by preventing unnecessary conflicts with neighbors, avoiding expensive legal disputes that could result in the loss of property and/or property value, protecting the conservation values of your property, and ultimately upholding the terms of the conservation easement!

## NATURE NOTES: Serviceberry

by Sarah Kitson



Serviceberry (*Amelanchier spp.*) is a genus of small, deciduous, multi-stemmed trees or shrubs in the rose family. They have white spring blossoms and red to purple fruits in the summer. These tiny fruits are edible for humans and many native species. The small oval leaves have finely toothed margins and downy undersides. They have varied fall color, ranging from yellow to orange, to red. There are over 30 species worldwide, with the majority of species native to North America.

Serviceberries are also known as Shadblow, Shadbush, and Juneberry among other names. There are many folk stories surrounding the variety of common names. Some say "serviceberry" comes from the flowers blooming in the early spring when church services were once again accessible after long winters where travel was difficult. Spring blooming also lines up with the ground thawing enough for funeral services to resume. "Shadblow" and "shadbush" may come from the fish that run and spawn while the plant's fruits ripen. "Juneberry" is likely because in many areas, the tree's fruit ripens during the month of June. These common names are used interchangeably and often vary by region.

Serviceberries are excellent native plants for landscaping. They don't get too large and are attractive year-round with their spring blooms, summer berries, fall color, and winter silhouettes. Along with native wildtypes, there are also many cultivars available. Cultivars are cultivated plants that have been selected for specific traits. It is important to understand what traits have been selected for when choosing a cultivar, so your landscaping can still benefit wildlife with pollen, nectar, and fruit.

Photos: Prairie Moon Nursery





## PUBLIC PARK SPOTLIGHT: The West Woods

*by Shane Wohlken*

In September of 2020, Western Reserve Land Conservancy helped Geauga Park District secure and protect a 64-acre parcel located adjacent to The West Woods, a park located in Russell Township, with a conservation easement. The 64-acre addition helped expand the park to about 956 total acres. Funding for the property was provided in part through a Clean Ohio grant provided by Ohio Public Works Commission, Geauga Park District, private donations, and the Land Conservancy. To date, the Land Conservancy has helped create or add land to nine park properties totaling 1,459 acres that are owned or managed by Geauga Park District.

The park is known for its spectacular mature forests, sandstone ledges, the historic Ansel's Cave, and a gorgeous section of Silver Creek. Visitors can explore The West Woods Nature Center with its hands-on interpretive displays; a wildlife viewing deck; amenities like two reservable picnic shelters, two reservable primitive campsites, and restrooms; nine trails—including five open to horses—totaling about seven miles; and the Affelder's House, a beautiful facility in the woods that can be reserved for special occasions.

The park district recently completed construction of the 1.2-mile Tulip Trail that loops through the new 64-acre addition and passes the second largest tulip tree in the state of Ohio. The tree, which was discovered by the Land Conservancy during the process to protect the property and quickly brought to the park district's attention, stands approximately 175 feet tall with a crown spread of 89.15 and a circumference of 181.2 inches. The tulip tree was the winner of the Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District's Big Tree Contest in 2022.

The unique habitats found throughout the park, including wetlands, mature forests, reclaimed farm fields, Sharon conglomerate sandstone ledges, and a section of Silver Creek—which is a high-quality cold-water tributary of the Chagrin River—provide excellent opportunities for birdwatching, discovering nature, identifying plants and animals, and enjoying quiet contemplation. The extensive trail system is perfect for year-round activities including hiking, running, dog walking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and on some trails, horseback riding. Three of the trails around the nature center are paved or partially paved, providing wheelchair access to the beautiful outdoors. A wildlife viewing deck located within easy walking distance from The West Woods Nature Center provides

gorgeous views of Silver Creek. If you are lucky, you might even catch a glimpse of the industrious beavers that make the creek their home or playful river otters passing through. Birds are abundant throughout the mature forests, including tanagers, warblers, thrushes, vireos, flycatchers, woodpeckers, and owls. When you visit, be sure to make the hike to Ansel's Cave, a unique natural feature that includes sandstone ledges carved and shaped by a tributary of Silver Creek the flows over a waterfall and through the ledges.

The West Woods is located at 9465 Kinsman Road (S.R. 87), Russell, OH 44072. The park is open from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. and The West Woods Nature Center is open from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. To discover more parks throughout northern Ohio that the Land Conservancy has helped create and/or protect, check out our website at [wrlandconservancy.org/parks-preserves/](http://wrlandconservancy.org/parks-preserves/).



Second Largest Tulip Tree in Ohio

# LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION RENEWAL

*by Pete McDonald*

You may have noticed that we recently shared news that our accreditation status has been renewed by an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance! The accreditation seal is a mark of distinction in land conservation. It is awarded to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence. Each accredited land trust completes a rigorous review process and joins a network of organizations united by strong ethical practices. This trusted network of land trusts demonstrates fiscal accountability, strong organizational leadership, sound transactions, and lasting stewardship of the lands they conserve.

Demonstrating that we have a robust, organized, and well-funded conservation easement stewardship program is one of the key requirements for achieving land trust accreditation. To become accredited, the Land Conservancy must provide evidence that we meet the Land Trust Alliance

Standards and Practices for stewardship. Some of those standards include making annual visits to all protected properties every year and documenting those visits in writing; maintaining and following policies and procedures for resolving violations on properties, issuing approvals, and meeting with new landowners as properties change ownership; and having the resources and funding to ensure that our stewardship program can stand the test of time. We are happy to report that our stewardship program remains strong!

The seal is awarded by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance. The volunteers who serve on the Commission represent a diverse group of land conservation and nonprofit management experts from around the country. For more information, please visit [landtrustaccreditation.org](http://landtrustaccreditation.org).



Credit: David Liam Kyle

## 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:

*Eric Daiber*

*Dorothy S. Drockton*

*Christina Livers*

*William "Bill" Siderewicz*

*Marjorie W. Townsend*

*We apologize for any errors or omissions. If a name has been omitted or listed incorrectly, please contact the Land Conservancy by calling 440-528-4150.*

## SOME SUPPORTERS LEAVE LAND TO THE LAND CONSERVANCY

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 estate-planning 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:**

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**Western Reserve  
Land Conservancy**

land • people • community

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FUNDING FOR THIS PUBLICATION WAS GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY THE SANDRA L. AND DENNIS B. HASLINGER FAMILY FOUNDATION

## **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.