Western Reserve Land Conservancy
OUR LAND. OUR LEGACY.
www.wrlandconservancy.org



Farming is dangerous work



The change of the season from summer into fall is eagerly anticipated by many outdoor enthusiasts.

Andy McDowell
Western Field Director

For me, it sparks my adrenaline for another deer-archery season and making sure there is enough firewood for the upcoming blustery northern Ohio winter. For others, simply the colors of autumn and the cooler temperatures are the highlight of the four seasons.

For the farmer, however, it typically marks the busiest time of the year, and per-

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114 acres preserved in Huron County

Two Huron County properties, including one that has been owned and farmed by the same family for more than 100 years, have been permanently protected by donated conservation easements.



Judy, left, Margaret and Ron Linder preserved farmland that has been in the family for more than a century.

The Land Conservancy has accepted the easements from Margaret Linder, who protected 59 acres of farmland and woods, and Robert and Linda Markel, who preserved 55 acres of mostly forested property.

Both of the properties are located in Norwalk Township.

Andy McDowell, the Land Conservancy's western field director, praised the families for their commitment to conservation.

For more than a century, the Linder family has owned and farmed the property along the state Route 20 bypass and state Route 18.

Part of the original farmstead was lost when the bypass was built, and Margaret Linder, 92, wanted to preserve what was left of the family farm.

The property contains about 11 acres of woods and 48 acres of active agricultural land with four soil types, two of which

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Preservation is well worth the wait



Big Swamp Woods is now protected forever because of a partnership between a determined landowner, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History's Natural Areas Program and Western Reserve Land Conservancy.

Kate Pilacky
Associate Field Director

About 50 attendees were at the recent dedication ceremony in Fitchville Township in Huron County, including several of the naturalists who collected data for the grant application to preserve this area. The 80 protected acres are part of a 400-acre wetland complex.

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She captures farm life in words, photos

Connie Oney has a way with words and photos.

If you have been receiving the various newsletters and publications from Western Reserve Land Conservancy over the past several years, you have no doubt seen her beautiful photos she has graciously provided to us. She has the talent to deeply touch those who are fortunate enough to experience her work.



SPOTLIGHT
Connie Oney

Oney's "Farming in the Headwaters" story was included in the "Living in the Vermilion Watershed" book.

"The Vermilion River book is, of course, a great accomplishment for the editors and a gift to many communities," she

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Huron

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are considered prime farmland. Conventional row crops are farmed on the property by extended family members.

Two streams are located on the land, with one being a tributary to the Huron River and the other a tributary to one of Norwalk's reservoirs. Linder sought the advice of other family members during the easement review process, all of whom are active farmers in the area

The Markels, who since 1971 have owned the property northeast of Norwalk, near the Erie County line, were introduced to the Land Conservancy by Dean Sheldon, who in 2008 placed a conservation easement on his Huron County land.

The property is primarily forested, with limited agricultural land. The forested sections of the property contain two tributaries to the Huron River.

More than 130 plant species have been identified on the property, including several large butternut trees, a species recently delisted as Potentially Threatened in Ohio.

The property is located approximately 2.5 miles from land owned by the village of Milan and preserved in 2009; 2.5 miles from the Hahn farm preserved in 2008; and about 3.5 miles from the Ohio Division of Wildlife's 300-acre Milan Wildlife Area.

BIG SWAMP DEDICATION



About 50 people were on hand Sept. 12 for the dedication of Big Swamp Woods in Huron County, including Land Conservancy Vice President Eddie Dengg, left, Fitchville Township Trustee Joe Merrilees, Jim Bissell of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Firelands Chapter board member Tom Heydinger and Land Conservancy Western Field Director Andy McDowell.

Photos

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said. "I was so honored that my piece was included. I still get feedback about it."

Working on the Vermilion River book inspired Oney to pursue an idea that she has had over the years.

"I really never had a goal to write a book, but only to try and educate the general public as to what modern farming is really like," she said. "My 'thing' was photography, so that's the way I did it. I simply began to write titles for the photos but the writing took on a life of its own and my book is the result."

In 2009, Connie published her own book titled, "Cultivation of a Lifestyle: Preserving the American Dream." The book is a diary of one month on the Milky Way family dairy farm in Greenwich Township in Huron County. Her husband Gerald and their son Jeff run the farm.

"I think my favorite thing about farming is watching crops grow from planting to harvest," Oney said. "Especially corn and wheat. I love the smells of farming: warm, soft earth in spring, wheat being harvested, straw being baled and hay, too, but everyone likes that. On a hot summer evening we sometimes drive down a back road and there are cornfields on both sides – the smell of ripening corn at that time is wonderful, as is the dry odor of corn when it's being harvested."

The Oneys and their children, Jeff, Suzanna, Jamie, Joel and Kate, experienced a wonderful life juggling the joys and challenges of making a living off the land. Connie's book and the photos she has contributed to the Land Conservancy have done a great job illustrating life on the farm.

The Land Conservancy thanks Connie for her sharing her gift of words and photos that touch the lives of so many. Look for her book in local bookstores.

Pilacky

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This particular land protection project had a special significance for me and many others. More than 10 years ago, while in the formative years of Firelands Land Conservancy, we were notified about the sale of this special place and the imminent logging of an old growth forest and a large heron rookery.

At the time, the Firelands Land Conservancy was a young, all-volunteer organization with limited resources. Western Reserve Land Conservancy did not yet exist. The Clean Ohio Fund had not yet been voted into law to help fund land protection. This particular period was a very low point in my memory of the challenges of land preservation. The upland property was logged, divided up and sold as lots.

Seeing some of the faces of attendees of this event, I know the preservation of this special area affected the local residents and naturalists even more than it affected me. I did not live in this unique place.

But now, the exceptional wetland, relatively undisturbed, full of diverse plants, amphibians, birds and other vibrant life will forever be protected. The woods are recovering, blanketed with a lush carpet of trillium and a variety of other special wildflowers, some quite rare. Nature has a very forgiving way. Time after time I have seen the completion of projects that began in some ways years ago. Thank you so much to the members and friends of the Land Conservancy who sustain our important work.

Farming

From page 1

haps the most dangerous. In a recent article, farming and ranching was ranked as the third most dangerous job in the U.S. Many of us do not think about the dangers farmers face on a daily basis while producing the food we consume. Many farm families have been affected by farm-related tragedies and accidents, including my own.

That said, I want this column to end with wishing our region's farmers a safe and bountiful harvest season.

Panning for gold

July 11, 2010, Lorain County Metro Parks Vermilion River Reservation

About 100 people took part in the Land Conservancy's first gold-panning expedition in the Vermilion River — and some even found a few flecks of the precious metal. The lead guide was Grant Thompson, Lorain County Metro Parks naturalist and chair of the Land Conservancy's Firelands Chapter.

Families from all across the region attended the event, which was designed to promote awareness of the river's many outstanding natural resources.

Photos by Amanda Skingel-Synecky



Getting a hand from dad.





Some gold panners were all business, above, while others, left, took a much more leisurely approach.



Canoes and kayaks make their way into the estuary.

Canoeing on Old Woman Creek

August 7, 2010, Huron

Paddlers experienced one of Ohio's few remaining examples of a natural estuary when they took part in the Land Conservancy's annual Old Woman Creek canoe trip. It was sponsored by the Firelands Chapter.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Saturday, Oct. 9, noon– 5 p.m.** — The Land Conservancy will have a booth at "Fall into Nature," an event sponsored by the University of Akron and Bath Parks at the Bath Nature Preserve, 4240 Ira Road, Bath. There will be hayrides, a pumpkin patch, children's activities and prizes.
- **Saturday, Oct. 16, 5-8 p.m.** — Medina Summit Chapter's annual Hoot and Harvest Festival, Hill'n Dale Club, 3605 Poe Road, Montville Township. Bring a potluck dish. Hayrides, an owl walk, pumpkin painting and a raptor exhibit. Free. RSVP to kbihler@wrlandconservancy.org or (440) 729-9621.
- **Sunday, Oct. 17, 1 p.m.** — Firelands Fall Foliage Hike at Augusta-Anne Olsen State Nature Preserve in Huron County. Free. RSVP to kpilacky@wrlandconservancy.org or (440) 774-4226.
- **Sunday, Oct. 17, 3-6 p.m.** — The Land Conservancy's annual Fall Festival at the Geauga Park District's Sunnybrook Preserve , 12474 Heath Road, Chester Township. Games for children and a hike around the park. Hot dogs, fixings and s'mores will be provided; bring a dish to share. Free. RSVP to kbihler@wrlandconservancy.org or (440) 729-9621.

Western Reserve
Land Conservancy

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Our mission, our vision

Western Reserve Land Conservancy seeks to preserve the scenic beauty, rural character and natural resources of northern Ohio. We want to help create a network of interconnected natural areas, working land and green space throughout the region. We envision northern Ohio as a stunningly beautiful and healthy place to live, work and play.