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

Spring 2011

Landline

A Western Reserve Land Conservancy newsletter celebrating land conservation in Erie, Huron and Lorain counties

A constant in a world of change



Andy McDowell
Western Field Director

I have never seen the world so full of change in all of my 41 years.

Economics, politics, stocks, gas prices, housing, jobs, the Middle East….wow. So much at one time that most of us can't even begin to wrap our minds around everything taking place now, much less its implications for the future.

We all know everything changes and change is inevitable. Sometimes the changes are quick and swift and other times slow and barely noticeable. Fortu-

See CHANGE page 2

Family preserves nearly 700 acres

A Huron County family has permanently protected 686 acres — some of which it has owned since the 1830s – in cooperation with the Land Conservancy.



Sharon and Howard Smith

Howard and Sharon Smith of Sherman Township have placed conservation easements on three properties in Sherman and Peru townships in west central Huron County, southwest of Norwalk and north of Willard. The non-contiguous parcels contain farmland and natural areas.

Howard Smith has a grain-farming operation on the preserved properties, which contain prime agricultural soils and are farmed with a high regard for conservation.

"Howard and Sharon own some of the most beautiful farmland and natural areas in western Huron County that I have seen," said Andy McDowell, the Land Conservancy's western field director.

Sharon Smith said she and her husband "wanted to preserve the beauty of the farmland and woods for future generations. Also, we wanted to make sure that it wasn't developed in the future."

The largest of the three properties is a 462-acre tract along the West Branch Huron River in Peru Township.

Another property, a 131-acre parcel in Peru Township, has been in Howard Smith's family since the 1830s.

CONSERVATION CALENDAR

- **March 24, 7-8:30 p.m.:** Land Conservancy program at the EHOVE Education Center in Milan for those interested in preserving their land.
- **April 30, 10 a.m.:** Firelands Spring Wildflower Walk at Firelands Scout Camp, 13782 Gore Orphanage Road, five miles west of Oberlin. Dan Styer is the guide. Wear appropriate footwear. Plan on a two-hour hike.
- **May 7, 1-4 p.m.**: Garlic mustard pull at Wendtwood, Columbia Township.
- **May 21:** Conservation Rocks at the Beachland Ballroom and Tavern in Cleveland.

For more details, go to:
www.wrlandconservancy.org

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A giant in the environmental community



SPOTLIGHT
Jack Smith

If you have an interest in anything having to do with birds or nature in Lorain County, chances are you have been touched by the handiwork of Jack Smith of Elyria, who works tirelessly on behalf of the natural world.

The Oberlin College graduate was first inspired by attending Sunday afternoon hikes lead by the much-loved Oberlin botany professor George Jones, who Smith said "had a great knowledge about nearly everything."

Later, Smith and some other individuals started out leading hikes with the Cleveland Museum of Natural History through Elyria's Cascade Park. The group then applied to the

See SMITH page 2

Cochran receives conservation honor



Rich Cochran, who started as the lone employee of what is now Western Reserve Land Conservancy and now heads an organization that has preserved nearly 23,000 acres in northern Ohio, has been named the recipient of the 2010 Conservation Award by The Cleveland Museum of Natural History. Cochran, the president and CEO of the Land Conservancy since 1996, was honored during an awards ceremony. He was presented with the award on behalf of the Museum's Board of Trustees.

Good news: Tax incentives renewed



The Land Conservancy is applauding the renewal of a federal tax incentive for private landowners – especially working family farmers – who protect their land with a voluntary conservation easement.

The Land Conservancy endorsed the move by Congress to renew the incentive, which had expired at the end of 2009. The tax incentive has helped the Land Conservancy work with willing landowners in our community to preserve about 23,000 acres of productive agricultural lands and natural areas.

Conservation-minded landowners now have until December 31, 2011 to take advantage of a significant tax deduction for donating a voluntary conservation agreement to permanently protect important natural or historic resources on their land. When landowners donate a conservation easement, they maintain ownership and management of their land and can sell or pass the land on to their heirs, while foregoing future development rights. For more information, call (440) 729-9621 or send e-mail to info@wrlandconservancy.org.

Change

From page 1

nately, change is often a good thing. By the time you receive this newsletter I will be experiencing a version of the quick and swift change – but a good one – with the addition of a baby boy to the household.

Future generations will be rejoicing that many people today have resisted certain changes, changes that would have irreversible consequences in the future. Naturally, I am speaking of the land and the landowners who choose to preserve it. The Firelands Office is approaching 5,000 acres of preserved land, and the Land Conservancy as whole has protected more than 23,000 acres. This is land that will only see the changes dealt to it by nature or by those who nurture it to produce the food we all eat.

This is land that will only see the changes dealt to it by nature or by those who nurture it to produce the food we all eat.

Thus far I have found most, but not all, of the landowners I work with are from an older generation, often the last of America's "Greatest Generation." They have seen, experienced and have witnessed tremendous change.

Being the youngest child of parents from that generation, I have unequivocal respect for them and of their foresight. In my mind, many of them are America's unsung heroes. Heroes who had the foresight to know that not everything needs to change.

Smith

From page 1

National Audubon Society to become a local Audubon chapter, one of the first in northern Ohio. Smith and several other folks founded Black River Audubon in 1958 and he became their first treasurer. Black River Audubon had about 30 members when it first started; today the number of members has grown to more than 800. Jack was also on the board of Audubon Ohio for 10 years, serving as president for four years.

Smith joined the Firelands Land Conservancy board in 2003 when it was a young, all-volunteer organization and watched it grow exponentially. Jack remains active on the Western Reserve Land Conservancy Firelands Chapter board, and his great knowledge and insight about the region and wildlife is invaluable to the organization.

"I am so very pleased at all the land we have preserved over the years. I am very proud of what we have been able to accomplish," said Smith, whose thoughts about the preservation of the 454-acre Firelands Boy Scout Camp on the Vermilion River bring a twinkle to his eye.

Smith is a retired investment counselor whose family firm was one of the largest in Lorain County. He convinced the Black River Audubon board to use bequests to set up three trusts; one of them, the Conservation trust, has been instrumental in various projects throughout the region.

Through Black River Audubon, he and other concerned individuals started the Bluebird Conservation Project about 30 years ago. Since that time, more than 300 bluebird boxes have quietly appeared around Lorain County. Birds and nature have found a great friend in Jack.

Firelands Winter Hike

January 13, 2011
Bacon Woods, Vermilion



About a dozen people took to the Bacon Woods area of the Vermilion River Reservation for a hike on a sunny, not-too-cold Sunday. The participants were rewarded with the sighting of at least three bald eagles, including one immature bird, above, that was photographed by Terry Nickolette. The Firelands Chapter of Western Reserve Land Conservancy thanks those who made this winter walk a big success.

The next scheduled hike will be at 10 a.m. April 30, when Dan Styer will lead us on a Spring Wildflower Walk at Firelands Scout Camp, 13782 Gore Orphanage Road, just west of Oberlin.





Have you remembered the Land Conservancy in your will?

White Oak LEGACY SOCIETY

Find out how you can make a lasting commitment to future generations by including Western Reserve Land Conservancy in your estate planning. For information on our White Oak Legacy Society, call (440) 729-9621, e-mail rkoonce@wrlandconservancy.org or visit www.wrlandconservancy.org.

NEWS FROM THE LAND CONSERVANCY

'Conservation Rocks' is May 21



Mark your calendars for May 21, when the Land Conservancy will stage its second "Conservation Rocks" concert at Cleveland's Beachland Ballroom and Tavern. This year's event will feature musicians who also work in the field of conservation in northern Ohio, including our own Pete McDonald (pictured).

Visit www.wrlandconservancy.org for more information.

Two join Land Conservancy





Koonce **Gay**

Director of Development Robert Koonce and Manager, Corporate and Foundation Relations Erin Gay are the newest members of the Land Conservancy team. Robert, a Cleveland native, and Erin, who is from Houston, both worked for University Hospitals Health System before joining the staff.

In addition to a wealth of fundraising experience, Robert brings a love of the outdoors and a sense of humor. He and his family live in Cleveland Heights.

Erin, who lives in Shaker Heights, was a senior communications specialist at UH before joining us. Her work here will combine her passions for writing and the environment.

Moreland Hills mulling HQ plan



The Land Conservancy is seeking permission from the Village of Moreland Hills to put an addition on a Chagrin River Road home and move its headquarters there. The property is adjacent to the village's Forest Ridge Preserve and across the street from the Cleveland Metroparks Polo Fields. We will keep you posted as the project progresses.

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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.