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

Fall 2011

Landline

A Western Reserve Land Conservancy newsletter celebrating land conservation in Ashtabula, Geauga and Lake counties



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Brett Rodstrom

Brett Rodstrom's passion for the outdoors has led him to a career in which he helps preserve some of northern Ohio's natural treasures.

Growing up on the Grand River, Rodstrom, is an avid angler and recreational hunter, and serves as the Land Conservancy's northeast field director, helping to permanently protect and restore property in Ashtabula, Geauga and Lake counties. In his role with the Land Conservancy, Brett has become the go-to person on land conservation issues ranging from conservation easements on private family lands to the acquisition of sensitive properties which ultimately become public parks and wildlife areas.

See RODSTROM page 2

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Project targets Grand River invasives

The Nature Conservancy and partner organizations, including Western Reserve Land Conservancy, are working to restore more than 531 acres of wetlands and streams in the Grand River watershed by mapping and treating invasive plants with funding through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

The project has included work in Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, and Trumbull counties.

It is part of a three-year, large-scale endeavor to restore important habitats along Lake Erie and its tributaries. In the Grand River watershed, TNC's partners include the Land Conservancy, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife, Geauga Park District and Lake Metroparks.

Most of the work involves control of invasive species including common reed grass (also known as phragmites), reed canary grass, non-native cattail, garlic mustard purple loosestrife and others, which are expanding rapidly in wetlands and streams throughout the Lake Erie Basin, according to experts. These plants take over an area quickly, crowding out native plants, eliminating wildlife habitat, and sometimes changing the way water flows over the land and into the lake.



The Land Conservancy-owned Ashcroft Woods property is one of the places where invasive plants are being removed. The tract, which includes a heron rookery, is in southern Ashtabula County.

"We appreciate the collaborative approach TNC is taking toward controlling invasive species in the Grand River watershed," said Brett Rodstrom, northeastern field director for the Land Conservancy.

The project also has a research component that includes determining the presence, abundance and distribution of invasive species throughout the Grand River watershed.

"Managing our lands for invasive species and other threats has been an important part of our work for decades," said Karen Adair, TNC's Northeast Ohio Project Manager. "Using what we've learned over the years at the smaller preserve scale allowed us to create this project that works to restore a much larger landscape in a strategic and connected way. The primary goal of all the partners on this project is to benefit, improve and protect the entire Grand River watershed and ultimately Lake Erie."

Work is being done on both TNC-owned land as well as property preserved by others, including Ashcroft Woods, the Land Conservancy-owned 883-acre parcel near Orwell in Ashtabula County.

LTA president praises Land Conservancy's work

One of the nation's top conservationists described the Land Conservancy as "an extraordinary civic institution" and applauded the preservation work done by the organization in northern Ohio.

Rand Wentworth, president of the Washington, D.C.-based Land Trust Alliance, of which the Land Conservancy is a member, spoke Sept. 9 at EverGreen EverBlue, the Land Conservancy's annual benefit. This year's event, which was held at the recently preserved Stoneybrook Farm in Hunting Valley, drew a crowd of more than 600 people.



Rand Wentworth spoke at EverGreen EverBlue.

LTA is a national organization representing more than 1,700 land trusts.

"(The Land Conservancy) is at the top of the list," Wentworth said.

Wentworth had earlier toured some preserved properties with Rich Cochran, the Land Conservancy's president and CEO. The properties included the Adam's-Haley's runs urban greenway project in Akron, farmland and some of the preserved land in the Chagrin River valley. Wentworth said the formation of the Land Conservancy through the merger of eight local land trusts in 2006 and the addition of Grand River Partners three years later "bore extraordinary fruit."

He added, "It is just amazing to see what you are accomplishing."

Wentworth, who was vice president of the Trust for Public Land before joining LTA in 2002, is a graduate of Yale University and holds an MBA in finance from Cornell University. He told the EverGreen EverBlue audience that the preservation of our natural areas and working lands is "the greatest legacy any of us can leave." The Land Conservancy, he said, is an example of "neighbors working with neighbors" for the community's good.

Rodstrom

From page 1

Brett was the land protection coordinator for Grand River Partners when that group merged with Western Reserve Land Conservancy in 2009. Before that, the Painesville native was a stormwater specialist with Lake Soil and Water Conservation District where he worked to reverse the devastating impacts of stormwater on local primary and headwater streams.

Rodstrom, a graduate of Painesville Riverside High School, holds a degree in environmental science from Allegheny College where he focused on stream ecology and environmental policy.

Brett and his wife, Tiffany, live in Concord with their Brittany spaniel, Pablo.

"I'm excited to be part of an organization that can provoke real change in how we protect and manage the natural and agricultural resources of Northeast Ohio," Rodstrom said. "It's extremely rewarding to not only protect our regions natural resources and waterways, but to also help families steward their land and pass it on to the next generation."



Thomas



Owen



Davis



Leslie



Boehnlein



Schiffman

Bob Owen promoted

Bob Owen has been named the Land Conservancy's new general counsel, replacing the retiring Ed Meyers. Owen, who lives in Chesterland, has been on the Land Conservancy legal staff since 2006. He is a graduate of Hiram College and Cleveland-Marshall College of Law.

The Land Conservancy also welcomes:

- Die-hard Florida Gators fan and Shaker Heights resident **LeAnn Davis**, our new conservation attorney. The Florida native worked for six years as a real estate attorney at Thompson Hine in Cleveland.
- **Robin Darden Thomas,** land bank program director for Thriving Communities Institute. The Parma resident's career in public service includes stints as interim treasurer and chief deputy treasurer of Cuyahoga County.
- Conservation project manager **Jeffery A. Schiffman**, who has worked in site acquisition in the private and public sectors. Jeffery was raised in Oberlin in Lorain County and now lives in Shaker Heights.
- Medina County native **Paul Boehnlein**, our new GIS and conservation planning specialist. Paul comes from the Muskingum Watershed District, where he was a GIS Technician.
- **Joe Leslie** of Aurora, our new land acquisition specialist. Joe comes to us from Howard Hanna, where he created a successful real estate practice.

Hell Hollow Geology Tour

August 13, 2011

Lake Metroparks' Hell Hollow Wilderness Area



More than 50 people took a guided hike through the Paine Creek gorge in the Hell Hollow Wilderness area in Leroy Township. Volunteer geologists Paul Ruez and Pat Biliter showed hikers unusual rock formations, fossils, a double fault line and some of the creatures that inhabit the gorge. The event was organized by the Land Conservancy's Grand River Chapter.









Friends greet Ed at a surprise retirement party at the home of Trustee Kathy Leavenworth.

One of the good guys takes down his shingle



Ed Meyers

Ed Meyers, who in 2003 left private law practice to head the legal team for what would become the largest land conservancy in Ohio, has retired.

Meyers had been a partner with the law firm of Arter & Hadden for 30 years before joining the staff of the Chagrin River Land Conservancy, one of eight local land trusts that merged in 2006 to form Western Reserve Land Conservancy. As the Land Conservancy's general counsel, he headed the legal team that oversaw the protection of more than 23,000 acres.

"It is impossible to express how grateful we are to Ed," said Rich Cochran, the Land Conservancy's president and CEO. "He has been a stalwart at the Land Conservancy. He and (his wife) Fran are part of our family in a deep and special way."

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.

CONSERVATION CALENDAR

- **Oct. 15, 5-8 p.m.:** The Medina Summit Chapter's annual Hoot 'n' Harvest Festival at the Hill 'n' Dale Club, 3605 Poe Road, Montville Township. Bring a potluck dish to share; the Land Conservancy will provide hot dogs and fixings. There will be hayrides, pumpkin-painting and a campfire, as well as an owl walk. RSVP khibhler@wrlandconservancy.org.
- **Oct. 26, 7-9 p.m.:** Rocky River Watershed Council presents information on the current status of land protection in the Rocky River Watershed and future priorities for preservation at the Cleveland Metroparks Rocky River Nature Center, 24000 Valley Parkway, North Olmsted.
- **Nov. 12**: 'Fly the Alley' fly fishing expo at The Lodge at Geneva-on-the-Lake, 4888 North Broadway (state Route 534), Geneva-on-the-Lake. Day passes are $15; weekend packages are available through the lodge. Visit www.flythealley.com.

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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.