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

Fall 2011

Landline

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



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Andy McDowell

Andy McDowell grew up working on farms and operating old-style Farmall tractors in western Pennsylvania. His late father, Red, worked for a local International Harvester dealer and spent his entire life working on farm machinery. Andy would tag along on many evenings with his father to head out in a field somewhere repairing an old tractor, baler or corn picker. That background has helped him establish solid relationships with farmers across northern Ohio.

McDowell, the Land Conservancy's western field director and liaison to farmland preservation relationships, has had tremendous success working with landowners in the Firelands

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Preserving a way of life

Five Land Conservancy-backed farms in line for AEPP funding

Five northern Ohio farms with applications sponsored by the Land Conservancy have been recommended for funding under the state's Clean Ohio Agricultural Easement Purchase Program.

The five farms, which are in Lorain, Ashland, Richland and Ashtabula counties, total 762 acres.

The two farms in Richland County are the first to be accepted into the program. In addition, one of the farms recommended for funding resulted from the Land Conservancy's first AEPP application in Ashland County.

"I am very pleased with the results of the 2011 round of applications regarding the Land Conservancy's submissions, particularly for those in our western region," said Andy McDowell, the Land Conservancy's western field director. "I particularly enjoy having applications accepted in a county that has not previously seen success in the AEPP, such as Richland County in 2011. Additionally, the AEPP is a good program that helps to boost local economies and agriculture, since the funds received by farmers are typically reinvested back into their operations."

Statewide, 41 farms were recommended for the AEPP, the farmland preservation component of the Clean Ohio initiative to protect rural greenfields and reclaim brownfields. A total of $6.4 million from the Clean Ohio Fund will be used to purchase agricultural easements on these farms to permanently preserve them.



The five Land Conservancy-sponsored farms recommended for AEPP funding total 762 acres.

Farmers cannot directly apply to the program. They must use a local sponsor, such as a land trust, to make an application. The Land Conservancy sponsors farms throughout its 14-county service region.

This year, the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Office of Farmland Preservation received 190 applications from 35 counties. An agricultural easement is a voluntary and legally-binding restriction placed on a farm. The easement limits the use of the land to predominantly agricultural activity.

The land remains under private ownership and management and stays on the tax rolls.

$5,000 still needed for book reprint

Our Firelands Chapter needs another $5,000 to reprint "Living in the Vermilion Watershed." To donate, send checks to Western Reserve Land Conservancy Firelands, M.P.O. Box 174, Oberlin, OH 44074 and mark it "Vermilion book reprint."

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."

Andy

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region – Erie, Huron and Lorain counties.

The Land Conservancy has permanently protected more than 5,000 acres in this region since 2006, when the former Firelands Land Conservancy merged with seven other local land trusts to form Western Reserve Land Conservancy. Among Andy's celebrated conservation projects was the preservation of the 1,018-acre Babcock farm in Lorain County.

Andy, an environmental education graduate of Slippery Rock (Pa.) University, worked as a Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks naturalist and a vice president of exhibits and building operations for the Great Lakes Science Center in Cleveland before joining the Land Conservancy in 2006. He also worked as an adjunct professor at his alma mater community college where he instructed forestry and wildlife management courses.

He also served five years as a firefighter/EMT with the Slippery Rock Volunteer Fire Company & Rescue Team where he specialized in situations involving water rescue, search and rescue, wilderness medicine and agricultural rescue.

Andy, wife Jennifer, daughter Ashley, 3, and son Duncan, 6 months, live in North Ridgeville. McDowell is an avid outdoorsman who enjoys hunting, fishing, traditional archery, canoeing, camping and maintaining old tractors.



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.

Gold-panning in the Vermilion

July 10, 2011

Lorain County Metro Parks Vermilion River Reservation



More than 100 would-be prospectors from across northern Ohio tried their hands at gold-panning in the Vermilion River. Thanks to Grant Thompson, Lorain County Metro Parks naturalist and chairman of our Firelands Chapter, for guiding the event.



The Land Conservancy's Jim Rokakis, right, an Oberlin College graduate, was the featured speaker at the Sept. 8 Firelands Association for the Visual Arts event in Oberlin. The FAVA Gallery hosted an art exhibit by Chuck Mintz titled, "Every Place I Have Ever Lived: The Foreclosure Crisis in Twelve Neighborhoods." The event was the closing week reception for the exhibit.





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.