Western Reserve Land Conservancy
OUR LAND. OUR LEGACY.
www.wrlc.cc



Spring 2010

Landline

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

Thanking those who preserve



Andy McDowell
Firelands Field Director

Two thousand nine was a great year for land protection for the Firelands Field Office.

The diversity of properties and the geographical distribution was exceptional. From Johnson's Island in Ottawa County to Vermilion River headwater properties in Ashland County to rich floodplain forests along the Huron River near Milan in Erie County, the interest in preserving our rich natural resources is growing.

The level of farmland preservation was outstanding. Huron County

See ANDY page 2

Contact Western Reserve Land Conservancy

Central Office:
(440) 729-9621or info@wrlc.cc
Firelands Field Office:
Andy McDowell, Firelands Field Director
(440) 774-4226 or amcdowell@wrlc.cc

Protecting land, preserving history

Lorain County property owners save 384 acres

A fifth-generation farm family and the great great granddaughter of the fifer portrayed in Archibald Willard's famous "Spirit of '76" painting have helped the Land Conservancy permanently protect about 384 acres in southern Lorain County.



The Cowie family protected 208 acres of farmland.

The Cowie and Browand families have recorded conservation easements protecting property in Rochester and Brighton Township, according to Andy McDowell, director of the Land Conservancy's Firelands Field Office. A conservation easement permanently protects the natural, agricultural and scenic resources of the land while allowing the property to remain in private ownership.

The Cowie farm has been in the family for four generations. The current owner, Rhea Cowie, 91, and her family permanently preserved 208 acres of the 220-acre farm. Her son, Gerald Cowie, is a Rochester

See PRESERVING page 2

Upcoming Events

- **March 27, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. —** Friends of Vermilion River Open House, Vermilion on the Lake Historic Community Center.
- **April 17, 1-4 p.m. —** Garlic Mustard Pull and Hike at Wendtwood, 18163 East River Road, Columbia Township.
- **April 24, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. —** North Ridgeville Green Fest, South Central Park, 7565 Avon Belden Road, North Ridgeville.
- **May 8, 10 a.m. —** Wildflower walk at Bridal Veil Preserve, Dan Styer's new private nature preserve at 9716 Dean Road in Huron County.

His farmland protection work inspires others



SPOTLIGHT
Brian Smith

Farmland preservation has always been of the utmost importance to Brian Smith, who sells crop insurance in Ohio and Michigan. "Keeping the farm in the family" is equally important to Brian. Brian jumped at every opportunity to buy back the historic Smith family farms.

The Smith family has been farming in Huron County ever since Brian's great grandfather bought their first farm during the 1860s.

The farm included an orchard and a saw mill, which was torn down in the 1970s. Brian bought this farm at an auction in April of 2009. This 137-acre farm just outside of Willard was preserved through the 2009 Agricultural Easement Purchase Program by means of the Land Conservancy and the Ohio Department of Agriculture. This was the first successful AEPP application in Huron County.

Brian purchased another 86

See SMITH page 2

Land Conservancy loses a great friend



The Land Conservancy lost one of its biggest supporters with the January passing of Rose Scheeff of North Olmsted. It was Rose's generous contribution that helped the Land Conservancy acquire a 9-acre parcel on South Bass Island and turn it over to the Put-in-Bay Township Park District. She helped create Scheeff East Point Nature Preserve in memory of her husband, Bill, and the nearly 50 summers they spent on the island. We will miss you, Rose.

Smith

From page 1

acres from his uncle in 2003 to "keep the farm in the family." Brian and his two brothers inherited the remaining acreage in 2007 and preserved an additional 220 acres of the uncle's farm with an agricultural easement

Brian has put conservation easements on the majority of his other property. This has resulted in Brian and Denise Smith preserving 389 acres of farmland. In total, five Smith farms totaling 532 acres were preserved by the Smith family in 2009.

Brian says, "I think most farmers are highly conservation minded. You have to be to have a good profit margin. The philosophy is leave the land in better condition that what you found it"

Brian's parents quit farming in 1984. The threat of losing the opportunity to farm the family lands was always a concern of his. Brian knew that he wanted to keep the farm in the Smith family.

"No matter what happens the farm will remain in the family – this is foremost in our minds," he says. "If my son (Daniel, 15) wants to continue to farm I feel at ease knowing that I have done everything I could do for that to happen." Brian is taking his son out to the fields and getting him acquainted with the machinery and the land. "You don't know what is involved in farming and running a business until you actually do it," he says.

Preserving

From page 1

Township trustee and has served for over 20 years with former trustee Jarvis Babcock, whose family permanently preserved more than 1,000 acres in 2007.

The Cowie farm has transitioned over the years from dairy to beef to hogs and currently to grain. The farm also contains three tributaries to the West Branch of the Black River. The Browand property, which is located in Brighton Township, has been in the family for five generations and is a designated a Century Farm by the Ohio Department of Agriculture. The conservation easement will preserve 176 acres of the 182-acre farm.

Current owner Joyce Browand's great great grandfather, Hugh Mosher, who served as the model for the fife player in Willard's patriotic "Spirit of '76" painting, was born and raised on the farm. Mosher served in the Civil War and was considered the finest fifer in Ohio.

"Our thanks go out to these wonderful people who are not only preserving this beautiful property for future generations but are also preserving the rich history of Lorain County. It is truly an honor to help protect these farms," McDowell said.

Two thousand nine was a good year for land preservation out of the Land Conservancy's Firelands field office.

In addition to the 384 acres in Lorain County, the Land Conservancy preserved 665 acres in Huron County, 148 acres in Ashland County, 61 acres in Erie County and 44 acres on Johnson Island in Ottawa County for a total of 1,302 acres permanently protected.

Land Conservancy backs Envirothon



The Land Conservancy is a sponsor of the District 2 Envirothon competition for high school students. This year's regional competition will be April 28 at Camp Wise in Geauga County. The top four high school teams advance to the Ohio Envirothon competition June 14-15 at Lake Erie College in Painesville.

Andy

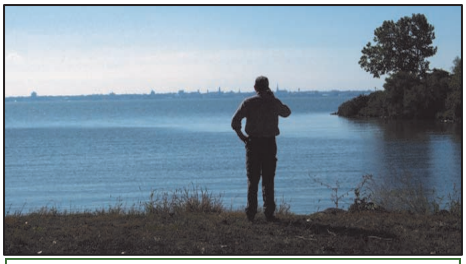
From page 1

had nearly 550 acres of farmland preserved stretching from Ridgefield Township to Greenwich Township and several points in between.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Easement Purchase Program also accepted the first farm in Huron County into the program and is in process of being finalized.

In Lorain County, two multi-generational farms were preserved totaling nearly 400 acres. In all, these landowners helped to protect an additional 1,300 acres that will either remain natural or available as farmland into the indefinite future.

The Land Conservancy thanks them for their decision to protect their land and future generations will thank them for their foresight.



The view from Johnson's Island, where the Land Conservancy helped a group of property owners permanently preserve 44 acres — about one-sixth of the island. The island was once a prisoner-of-war camp for Confederate soldiers captured by Union forces during the Civil War.

Another 630 acres protected in Huron Co.

An additional 630 acres of farmland and natural areas in Huron County have been permanently preserved by property owners working with the Land Conservancy.

Andy McDowell, director of the Land Conservancy's Firelands Field Office, said eight conservation easements have been donated by five separate property owners. The Huron County projects include:

- The 60-acre Cherry property northwest of Norwalk, near the Erie-Huron county line in Ridgefield Township. Wayne Cherry preserved property that contains both active farmland and a scenic corridor along a tributary to the Huron River. Cherry fulfilled his late brother's wish of preserving the family farm.
- The 80-acre Gerber property, also northwest of Norwalk in Ridgefield Township, is used almost exclusively for farming.
- Four easements covering about 252 acres of farmland and woodlots in Fairfield and Greenwich Townships preserved by Brian and Denise Smith, who are fifth-generation farm owners. The protected lands include nearly ½ mile along the East Branch of the Huron River and tributaries to both the East and West Branch of the River.
- A 143-acre conservation easement granted by Chris and Clark Smith, Brian Smith's brothers, in Fairfield Township. The land is used mostly for agriculture but also has a nice 50-acre woodlot. The land also protects a segment of the East Branch of the Huron River.
- The 96-acre Kinnel easement in Hartland Township. This property is a mix of farmland and natural areas and includes a scenic ¾ -mile stretch of the Vermilion River and one of its tributaries, Indian Creek.

Historic Johnson's Island property is preserved

A group of property owners and the Land Conservancy have permanently preserved about one-sixth of Johnson's Island, the site of a prisoner-of-war camp for Confederate soldiers captured by Union forces during the Civil War.

A conservation easement has been placed on about 44 acres owned by the Johnson's Island Investment Group. The group purchased the land from a developer who declared bankruptcy.

The island was the only location to have a Union prison exclusively for southern officers. The prison housed as many as 3,200 prisoners at one time, with over 15,000 having been there over the course of the war. After the war, the island contained two failed resorts and was mainly used for farming and rock quarrying.

Picciano, Mather join Land Conservancy staff

Conservation Funding Associate Jenny Picciano and GIS and Conservation Planning Manager Liz Mather are the newest members of the Land Conservancy staff.



Picciano



Mather

Picciano earned her master's degree in Urban Planning, Design and Development last May from Cleveland State University's Levin College of Urban Affairs. Jenny grew up in Orange Village and now lives in Cleveland Heights.

Mather, who holds a master's degree in geography and planning from the University of Toledo, spent the past seven years as GIS/IT Program coordinator for the Delaware Soil and Water Conservation District in central Ohio. Liz grew up in the Toledo area and now lives in Shaker Heights.

BEST OF SHOW



Diva, an 8-year-old female Chesapeake Bay Retriever, finds a novel use for a Land Conservancy whiz ring at last summer's Yoga on the Preserve in Chesterland. Diva's owner, William Fraser, says she enjoys swimming every day either at Orchard Hills Park or in the river near her home.

Western Reserve
Land Conservancy

OUR LAND. OUR LEGACY.

Western Reserve Land Conservancy
P.O. Box 314
Novelty, OH 44072

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Cleveland, OH
Permit No. 1

Printed on Recycled Paper

Our members make our land protection efforts possible.

We thank you for supporting our mission.

Become a fan of Western Reserve Land Conservancy group on Facebook!

To receive event notices or Landline online, e-mail us at gpausch@wrlc.cc.

Yes, I want to join the Land Conservancy.

Please check your membership level:

O $15 Student
O $25 Introductory
O $50 Supporting
O $100 Donor
O $250 Contributing
O $500 Sustainer



Member benefits: Car decal, event notices, regional newsletter, satisfaction of supporting our work plus additional benefits for those contributing $50 or more.

Name:_____

Address:_____

City, State, ZIP:_____

E-mail address:_____

Phone:_____

Payment Method: O Check enclosed, payable to
Western Reserve Land Conservancy
O Visa O MC O AmEx O Discover

#_____ Exp:_____

Signature_____

Please return to: Western Reserve Land Conservancy
P.O. Box 314, Novelty, Ohio 44072

The Land Conservancy is a tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation.

Western Reserve
Land Conservancy

OUR LAND. OUR LEGACY.

Central Office
P.O. Box 314
Novelty, Ohio 44072
(440) 729-9621
info@wrlc.cc

Firelands Field Office
P.O. Box 174
Oberlin, Ohio 44077
(440) 774-4226
amcdowell@wrlc.cc

www.wrlc.cc

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.