

Linn Log

newsletter of the Merrill W. Linn

Land & Waterways Conservancy

winter 2016



MERRILL W. LINN
CONSERVANCY
LINKING LANDSCAPES

Mission of the Linn Conservancy

To preserve and protect significant ecological sites in Union, upper Northumberland and contiguous counties and to educate the public on conservation issues critical to the health of our environment.

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for your calendar

the short list of public events; details for many listed inside

January 24: Cross country ski/snowshoe event at Dale/Engle/Walker property; 1 pm-3 pm. Register by January 20.

January 31: Union County Ag Preservation Application deadline

February 4: BCWA Board meeting; 7-9 pm, Union County Government Building. (Meets first Thursday of every month.)

February 14: Snowfest, R.B. Winter State Park; noon - 4 pm

February 20-21: Cabin Fever, Mifflinburg Intermediate School

Early March: Country Farm & Home spring open house, Rte. 45, east of Mifflinburg

March 31-May 4: Caring for Communities events;

details in Spring Linn Log

April 7: 4th Annual Sustainability Forum, Bucknell University; this year's theme is "Global Sustainabilities."

May 4: Linn Conservancy annual banquet. Save the date; details and reservation form in Spring Linn Log.

Seven Mountain Audubon Winter Programs

The Seven Mountains Audubon Society will hold monthly outings on the first Saturday of each month and monthly speaker meetings on the third Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. Visit <http://www.sevenmountainsaudubon.org> for complete information.

More news on page 2.

"We cannot move without vibrating the waters sending into the world the consequences of our desires."

From *The Forest Unseen* by David Haskell

Snowshoe And Cross-Country Ski At D/E/W — January 24

The Linn Conservancy is offering a winter afternoon of snowshoeing and cross-country skiing at the Dale/Engle/Walker property (Dale's Ridge Trail) on Sunday, Jan. 24, beginning at 1 p.m. Snowshoes will be provided courtesy of R.B. Winter State Park's Environmental Education Center. Skiers must bring their own equipment. We will have a fire, hot chocolate and possibly cookies to wrap up the afternoon, giving folks an opportunity to socialize with Linn Conservancy and Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance (BCWA) board members.

Meet in the parking lot adjacent to the Dale/Engle/Walker house for the approximately two-hour outing. The event is suitable for beginners and a brief lesson will be offered for those interested. The ski/snowshoe afternoon is free, but we do ask that participants **register by Wednesday, January 20** by calling 570-524-8666 or emailing linn@ptd.net with "snowshoe/ski" in the subject line. Please indicate if you will need snowshoes. If there is a lack of snow, a guided hike will be offered.

Snowfest at R.B. Winter State Park

Get out and enjoy a season which too many dread, on Sunday, February 14 from noon to 4 pm. The annual SNOWFEST at R.B. Winter State Park (18 miles west of Lewisburg on Rte 192) provides an opportunity for all to break out of the winter doldrums and experience some adventures and activities unique to the season.

Try out one of more of the following: a hike on snow shoes, cross country skiing (equipment rental fee), ice skating (fee for rentals), horse drawn wagon rides (fee for ride), snow volleyball, broomball. **Come to see** ice rescue demonstrations, ice fishing skill demos, snow mobile safety and rides for kids, winter camping equipment. and techniques, an ice sculpture demonstration, winter search and rescue using dogs.

Enjoy a food concession and participate in a silent auction to benefit future Snowfests and other park events. Special activities for children including winter story time, nature activities and crafts will also be provided. And if all of this is not enough (or too much), just come out to enjoy the beauty of Penns woods under a blanket of snow -- we hope.

For more information about Snowfest and other park activities throughout the winter, go to rbwintersp@state.pa.us

Ag-Land Preservation Program Open

Applications for the 2016 Union County Ag-Land Preservation Program are being accepted until Jan 31. This is a state and county-run program that purchases development rights from landowners in order to protect farmland for future food production and open space preservation. A locally appointed board of directors guides the program and establishes the method for prioritizing farms and the purchase price

of the development rights. Among other criteria, farms must be at least 50 acres unless they adjoin other approved preserved land and be signed up in an Agricultural Security Area.. Those who own farmland but do not necessarily meet all criteria may forgo the compensation for development rights and still enroll their property in the program.

For more details Contact Cindy Kahley, Union County Conservation District, 155 N 15th St, Lewisburg 17837 or call 570-524-3860 for information and/or an application.

We Thank Our Work-Study Students



Bucknell work-study students for 2015-16: Sandy Logan, Alexa Gorski, Keerthana Krishnarajah



Alexa/Keerthana promoting gardening with native plants at Shaffer Nursery open house.



Alexa working with children at the Conservancy's Woolly Worm display.

president's message

connecting partners/linking landscapes

As you learned in your membership renewal letter, the Conservancy successfully completed its acquisition of 36 acres at the Shikellamy Bluffs in southern Union County. It was two years ago that the Linking Landscapes Initiative -- our vision for preserving/establishing connectivity of natural spaces throughout the area -- was adopted by the board. But the concept was meant to go beyond the environmental connections. It meant, as well, to connect with other organizations and individuals of like mind to achieve conservation goals. Making those links/connections were essential to allowing us to realize success in this project that took nearly two years to bring to closure.



The confluence of the North and West Branches of the Susquehanna River from Shikellamy Bluffs

While several partners were mentioned in our letter, we want to acknowledge a few specific groups and individuals who contributed in special ways to our success. It was Trish Carothers, Susquehanna Greenways Project coordinator and Union County planner Shawn McLaughlin who initially prompted the Conservancy to acquire the land. Shawn then took the lead in preparing applications for state grants. His knowledge of the process and experience in addressing all elements of the applications were invaluable to us. John and Nancy Showers opened their home to provide a brunch at which Conservancy representatives were invited to present project goals with the hope of generating interest among attendees in contributing to the project through the Conservancy's land acquisition fund.

We received important letters of support from Representative Fred Keller, Senator Gene Yaw, Union County Commissioners, Union Township Supervisors, Bob Garrett of the Greater Susquehanna Chamber of Commerce, the Rivertown Coalition, Susquehanna Greenways Partnership, and business owners, Betsy and Allen Quant of Canoe Susquehanna. Substantial financial and/or in-kind donations came to us from the Degenstein Foundation, Union County Commissioners, Martha Barrick of Coldwell Banker, Lewisburg, and many individuals. And we could not have done any of this without the support of our members.

We are striving to build upon this success. The recent organization of the Conservation Union by Conservancy board member Ryan Sabo will help to bring still more players together to collaboratively achieve common conservation goals throughout the region. With final repayment of our loan, the 36 acre property will be handed to the state park system. Its adjacency to existing parkland links mature forest habitat, protects unique microhabitats of the cliff face and preserves magnificent scenic views of the Susquehanna River watershed for all to enjoy now and for generations to come. The Conservancy will work toward building its land acquisition fund so that we are in better position to react proactively as other parcels such as this, key to our Linking Landscapes model, become available. For this acquisition to come to fruition the cooperative efforts among partners was essential. It will remain essential for future projects as well. Thanks to all for your continuing concern for our environment and support of our efforts.



Shikellamy Bluffs from Northumberland

Susan Warner-Mills, President

Shikellamy Bluffs Acquisition

The following letter is from Bob Linn, son of our namesake Merrill Linn. It was written in response to our 2016 membership renewal letter which was mailed in early November. It is reprinted here with Bob's permission.

November 2015

Dear Susan Warner-Mills and your entire membership and staff,

Thank you so much for sending me your report "Ecological Significance of Shikellamy Bluffs". Shikellamy himself was the real stuff of the bedtime stories that Dad would tell to put me to sleep at night. The tales would go on night after night with new episode after episode--about the French and Indian Wars and the American Revolution and the Iroquois when the violence unfolded along the banks of the Susquehanna.

I vividly recall Conrad Weiser, Madame Montour and her son Andrew, a sister named Queen Esther (I think), Ludwig Derr, Widow Smith at White Deer who made guns, and Robert Covenhoven, my favorite frontier hero who alerted the settlers up near Pine Creek that the Iroquois and British had begun an attack. Thus, because of him, most settlers could grab their rafts or canoes or dugouts and perhaps an animal or two, and begin the Great Runaway down the middle of the Susquehanna to safety at Fort Augusta across from Shikellamy Bluffs. And the whole flotilla passed Derrstown. Now that was a great time to live!

Covenhoven was just as interesting as James Fenimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo-Deerslayer-Leatherstocking-Pathfinder—even if he didn't have as many names. Robert, that is. All this was much more eventful and inspiring than when I grew up. When the French and Indians came down (during the previous war), Dad said that they had brought a small cannon with them that they dragged up to the top of the bluff. When they shot some balls out of it, they fell somewhat short of the middle of the river, so they all turned around and went up-river back home.

Now those last two sentences I just wrote may have been one of Dad's embellishments of history--a tall tale as it were. He liked to dress tales up. I noticed that when he told tales; they generally never came out the same in the end in terms of general detail. If you know any local colonial scholars in town that know the French cannon part of these events, let me know. I've

never been able to find it in the historical chronicles I've read.

In any case, what I started to say was that I really appreciated your letter. (Like Dad, I can wander off the topic real quick.) The Conservancy has been doing a remarkable job over the years. I've passed on so many of your conservancy newsletters to my very close friend Ron Walker who has told me about his correspondence with you and Geoff. He was amazed that so much could be accomplished with community enthusiasts and volunteers in conservation. He comes from the mountains of West Virginia and understands the woods and fields and wildlife and tall tales.

Bob Linn

Editor's Note: The Conservancy has indeed been in touch with Bob Linn's friend Ron Walker. In fact, Ron is on the board of the Marta Heflin Foundation and helped arrange for the Conservancy to apply for and receive a \$10,000 grant from the Heflin Foundation for projects in education and the arts in support of environmental conservation.

Bob VanHorn Joins Board

Bob VanHorn has accepted a seat on the Conservancy board. He will assume the role of treasurer with the departure from our board of Deb Brubaker who served in that capacity since 2012. We are most grateful to Deb for her service and for her assistance with the transition of this duty to Bob.

Bob moved to the Lewisburg area in 1976 after his marriage to his wife, Deborah. It is here that they raised our two daughters, Meghan and Samantha. Deborah spent her professional career working as an elementary school teacher for the Lewisburg Area School District. Bob's career involved working at multiple manufacturing facilities in various levels of management, most notably at Ott Packagings Inc. where he spent 20 years.

Asked to share why he felt compelled to join the board Bob said "as an avid outdoorsman, I believe loss of habitat is the biggest threat to wildlife. I was drawn to the Linn Conservancy due to the work they do to put easements into place to insure that critical habitat will be preserved." We look forward to having Bob on the board.

news from the Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance of the Merrill Linn Conservancy

Mike Wilson, Brad Catherman

Join BCWA Board

Mike Wilson, retired CSIU program manager for adult education, and Brad Catherman, 7th grade science teacher at Donald H. Eichhorn Middle School, have joined the BCWA board of directors, according to BCWA chair Ben Hoskins.

Ongoing Tragedy: Eels and Mussels In our Rivers and Creeks

Mussels are by far the best agents to filter out sediment and nutrients in our rivers and streams. William Lellis, of the US Geological Survey, calculated that the Delaware River had about 2 million mussels per mile and each mussel could filter up to 1 gallon of water per hour, or between 2 and 4 billion gallons of water per day, six times the average summer flow. Freshwater mussels are one of the most endangered species in the U.S. primarily due to the damming of water bodies, yet old timers say they were abundant throughout the East before river damming.

Mussels need a host to transmit their young larvae to other areas of the river or creek where the larvae can develop as young mussels. The host for the Elliptio mussel species is the eel, as it captures larvae in its gills and carries them away to other sites where they can grow. Since eels must migrate to the ocean to mate every decade, dams are the hazard. Since there are no dams on the Delaware River until Easton, PA, eels are in abundance and continue acting as the host to mussels there. Evidence is that the average age of mussels is about 15 years.

Unfortunately, the Susquehanna River ocean fish and eel migration is blocked by five dams. The largest, the Conowingo Dam in Maryland, blocked all passage from 1928 until the 60s. Consequently, the average age of mussels in the Susquehanna River, and Buffalo Creek, is seventy years. This is a crisis as they are dying out without the assistance of eels, and the water quality is worsening.

The US Geological Survey and US Fish and Wildlife, with help from volunteers such as the Linn Conservancy and Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance, are freeing young eels in Pine Creek and Buffalo Creek in hopes that mussel larvae will be relocated by the eels. The five year program has stocked 120,000 eels in both creeks that were gathered below the Conowingo Dam. Studies have shown a

significant increase in young mussels in Pine Creek, but **not** in Buffalo Creek. The major restraints to the growth of young mussels in Buffalo Creek are thought to be farm pollution and other contaminants within Union County. BCWA works with farmers within the watershed to help reduce such impairment to the creek.

More BCWA news on page 6.

BCWA Watershed Tour

BCWA board members conducted a familiarization tour of the watershed in November. Shanon Stamm, Union County watershed specialist, (below) outlined the tour.



The two photos below, taken from the same spot along an unnamed tributary west of Mifflinburg, contrast overused pasture to the west with restored streamside looking eastward.



BCWA and Conservancy Reps Discuss School Construction

The new Lewisburg high school is being constructed proximate to Buffalo Creek. As a consequence, several of the BCWA board members met with school superintendent Mark DiRocco and staff in mid-October to explore the environmental safeguards being implemented in its building and sports fields. During the very cordial discussion, Board members were quite impressed that the building was certified LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for being environmentally friendly with solar panels, high levels of insulation, and passive solar design.

Other environmental issues discussed included the following: Board members were assured that the building, parking lots, gardens and sports grounds would be banked to prevent rainfall run-off from the property; requests were accepted to use native species and grasses in much of the property not in active use or immediately adjacent to the building; Board members asked if a community committee could be formed to give advice of plantings and maintenance issues; the use of school gardens, native un-mowed grasses and bird boxes were explored; Mark even considered that one of the flat

roofs might be "greened" with sod to improve insulation and reduce run-off.

A final issue concerned some rainfall runoff from the elementary school property, and Mark stated that the BCWA concerns would be investigated. Overall, the attendees were pleased with the discussion and resolution of the parties.

Conley Run Farmers Visited

This past month, a new relationship was developed between several of the Plain Sect farmers on Conley Run (parallels Conley Road outside of Mifflinburg) and 30 Bucknell civil engineering students and their professor Dr. Richard Crago. The engineering class had been working on a new technology for satellite mapping that can show depth within inches. In order to ground truth that technology, Dr. Crago asked the BCWA if the students could engage with the Alliance's stream bank fencing project, and a meeting was made. Once the maps were shared with the farmers, student questions zoned in on critical farming issues stimulating the farmers to explain the utility of the maps and the techniques they were using to reduce erosion on their farms and with their animals. Both parties agreed that the visits were useful and informative and should be continued.

Conservation Union Holds First Meeting

by Ryan Sabo



Ryan Sabo (second from left) led the founding meeting of the Conservation Union.

On November 20, seventeen individuals representing over a dozen groups gathered in Lewisburg for the founding meeting of the Conservation Union. Organizations at the local, county, state and national levels met to set the foundation for the Merrill W. Linn Conservancy's new initiative to encourage greater cooperation in executing conservation goals in our region. A strong framework was established and it is expected that the Union will contribute to stronger

partnerships between the area's organizations and lead the way in concerted conservation efforts. The group's next meeting will take place in January.

Lower Penns Creek Watershed Association Invites Participation



The Lower Penns Creek Watershed Association (LPCWA) focuses on issues related to Penns Creek from Weikert to the Susquehanna River. Speakers at monthly meetings provide information on fishing and boating concerns, environmental issues and projects to benefit the watershed. Activities include roadside cleanups, maintaining rain gardens, rain barrel workshops and developing a water trail. Meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month at 7 pm at the Penns Creek Adult Resource Center, Penns Creek PA. All are invited to attend meetings or participate in projects. Information on current activities is available on the Lower Penns Creek Watershed Association Facebook page.

PERSPECTIVE OF A LINN EASEMENT HOLDER

by Donna R. Constant, Landowner, Linn Conservancy Board Member

In 1995 when Dick and I were looking for a get-away-place from urban life, suitable for eventual retirement, we made an appointment to view an old (1800s) house and barn on 39 acres of wooded ridge in rural Snyder County. The scenic beauty caused “love at first sight.” We liked the property so much that within a few minutes we stopped looking at each other, trying to hide our excitement! What we liked about the place was the rural location, a long, deep hollow topped by ridges, with trees, birds, wildflowers, a fantastic view of Shade Mountain and privacy, all located



A view toward Hermit Hollow Lane.

not far from two universities and shopping. The old farm house needed a lot of work, but that was a magnet for Dick’s do-it-yourself interests.

Living in Germantown (Philly) at the time, in a noisy, highly populated area, the sense of peace and privacy of the hollow beckoned us to write up the offer to purchase two days after first seeing it. The seller told us later that he knew we would be back to buy it! Three years later our daughter, son-in-law and first grandson came to live in the old farmhouse while we moved into a new house built higher up the ridge, away from road noise. The old farm became Hermit Hill on Hermit Hollow Lane. (A hermit really lived in the old house years ago.)

Hiking an old logging road that winds up the ridge behind the new house, we discovered Pink Lady’s Slipper Orchids growing under the old pine trees near the top of the ridge. The orchids have “travelled” downhill since that time, seeking the nutrients they require. Someday they will be gone – when the old pines finally give way to the rapidly growing deciduous trees. We

wholeheartedly wanted to prevent future development and to preserve the natural environment of wild creatures, including deer, birds and the occasional black bear found here in Central Pennsylvania.

In the year 2000 we again became horse owners and bought a mare who gave us two beautiful foals. Dick built a barn near the “new” house and then a riding arena. He had already created several trails in the woods along the ridge. Two pastures completed the picture. I enjoyed trail riding with another horse owning friend who introduced me to still another horse owner. She lived on a very large property just a few miles away. As we rode her trails, Debi Myers Smith of Bower’s Woodspring Farm, told us about having a conservation easement with the Merrill Linn Land & Waterways Conservancy. That sounded so good to us that we began having discussions with Wayne McDiffett, Linn Conservancy president at that time. As Wayne and several others explained the process of becoming an easement donor, we hoped we would have an ecologically significant enough site for preserving the natural beauty and diversity that we found on our land. We were visited and revisited by members of the Site Selection/Stewardship Committee to discern whether our property matched the goals and mission of the Conservancy. Since we cared enough about this marvelous acreage to make precautions to conserve it for future generations, we had our property assessed and resurveyed.



The Constants receive visitors at dusk.

To our great delight, our property was described as “39.73 acres; diverse woodland with excellent bird and mammal habitat; 2 dozen tree species including Mountain and Virginia pines; pink lady’s slipper orchids; pond and small wetland

Continued on page 8.

Continued from page 7.

area.” In consultation with conservancy representatives, we chose from many options in designating “minimum protection” and “maximum protection” areas.

Finally, on February 21, 2010, we signed our Land Conservation Agreement, and then re-recorded the deed in our county courthouse so that the easement donation is in perpetuity. No subsequent owner of the property can remove it from the conservation easement, but they may choose different options for protection. For instance, we do not allow hunting but that could be changed. We don't harvest trees, but that could be changed.



The view at sunset from the Constant home.

We have learned that habitat patches require connections to similar habitats. Developing and maintaining landscape connections is central to conservation efforts. Because linking adjoining properties connects similar habitats, we hope our conserved property can be linked to a nearby property/landscape to increase both the size and the environmental effect of both properties.

Each year a few members of the Site Selection/ Stewardship Committee hike our trails and authenticate that our property is being cared for consistent with our easement agreement. Since Dick loves to drive his tractor, mowing the trails is no problem. For several years we offered a hike in our woods in May as the Pink Lady Slippers bloomed. Every year we are delighted

to experience the annual spring banquet, visiting with other members and donors. We are thankful to participate in the Linn Conservancy Board.



Pink Lady Slipper in early spring.

In closing, we offer you an experience from early October before the leaves dropped. Looking out a window to a small clearing on the ridge where Dick keeps a salt lick for deer, we were enjoying the triplet fawns with their doe at the salt lick. One fawn, followed by its mother, walked out of our sight into the trees near the pasture where our three horses were grazing at the opposite end. Suddenly our thirteen year old Paint gelding, Nosey, (nicknamed so because he is), stalked threateningly toward the end of the pasture where the fawn was hidden from our sight. Our miniature pony marched right behind Nosey with an attitude of “Yeah, this is our place. Find your own.” Suddenly the hidden fawn and Mama Doe bolted out from the trees, racing past the salt lick, where the two remaining fawns caught up in their flight, kicking their heels. As all disappeared into the woods on the other side of the salt lick we could just hear our horses saying, “So there! That'll teach ya.”

Twenty years after buying the property, we still are in awe of its beauty. I adore living here!



All native species are welcome on the Constant property.

“If you ignore beauty, you will soon find yourself without it...But if you invest in beauty, it will remain with you all the days of your life.”

Frank Lloyd Wright

thank you!

Welcome new members:

From Winfield: Bob Van Horn
From Lewisburg: Barbara B. Baker
From Mt. Pleasant Mills: Dolly Meiser

In Montandon: **Bertoni's Pizza**, just east of the railroad crossing; **Ard's Farm Market**, Rte 45 west of Lewisburg; in Lewisburg: **Cherry Alley Café, Lewisburg Studio**,

Thank yous:

Duane Griffin, Alexa Gorski, Geoff Goodenow, Diane and Jim Lenge – highway cleanup; Shaffer Nursery plant starter kits; Brian Auman, presentation about native plant gardens.

We Thank Our 2016 Business Partners

We thank these local businesses that joined us in supporting our *Business Partner* card which was enclosed with your membership materials sent to you in November. Each offers a specific discount to Conservancy members on particular items. Please patronize these businesses and thank them for their support of the Conservancy's mission.



BU professor Duane Griffin discusses natural history with his students during a field trip at Dale's Ridge. Trail.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

(Detach and mail to Linn Conservancy, PO Box 501, Lewisburg, PA 17837)

YES! I / we want to support the Linn Conservancy this year as a:

Sponsor \$500 _____ Supporter \$250 _____ Friend \$100 _____ Contributor \$50 _____

Other _____

This is a contribution from _____ Individual _____ Family _____ Business _____

New membership _____ Renewal _____

I am also adding \$ _____ to support the Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance (BCWA)

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home phone _____ Business phone _____

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