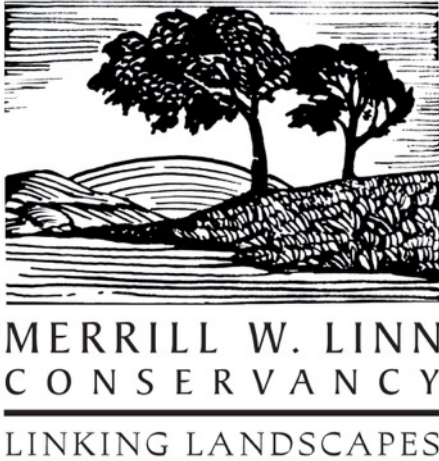


# Linn Log

newsletter of the Merrill W. Linn Land & Waterways Conservancy



## 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.

## winter 2017

### Board of Directors

Susan Warner-Mills, President  
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Allen Schweinsberg, Site/Stewardship Chair  
Geoff Goodenow, Coordinator  
Diane Donato, Editor  
Patricia Arduini, Facebook and Webmaster  
Ann Gelnett, Historian

## for your calendar

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

**January 1-31:** Application period for Union Co. Ag Land Preservation

**Friday, January 27:** Conservation Union, 7:30 am Union Co. Gov. Center, 155 N. 15th St., Lewisburg

**Thursday, February 2:** BCWA board meets, 7 pm, Union Co. Gov Center, Lewisburg

**Saturday, February 4:** XC Ski/Snowshoe

**Sunday, February 12:** Snowfest R.B. Winter State Park; noon – 4 pm

**Thursday, March 30 and Friday, March 31:** 5th annual Bucknell Sustainability Symposium

**Saturday, April 1:** Caring for Communities events begin

**Wednesday, May 3, 2017:** Conservancy's annual banquet

**Seven Mountains Audubon** third Wednesday monthly, 7:30 pm. Seven Mountains Audubon hikes, first Saturday of the month. Visit [www.sevenmountainsaudubon.org](http://www.sevenmountainsaudubon.org) for details.

**Sierra Club** meets second Wednesday, 7 pm, every other month starting January at Union Co. Gov. Center, Lewisburg.

**Thanks to all who have already renewed support for 2017.** If you have not yet done so, we have included a membership form on page 11, or use Paypal on our website. Click **Support Us** then the **Donate link** to join/renew.

*“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”*

Aldo Leopold, Sand County

## CONSERVANCY ANNUAL BANQUET SET FOR MAY 3

Please plan to join us for our annual banquet at beautiful Shade Mountain Vineyard and Winery on Wednesday, May 3. We are excited to have the **Kitchen Witch** as our caterer this year.

**Carol Parenzan**, Middle Susquehanna Riverkeeper, will join us as our guest speaker for the evening. More details and reservation forms will come in the spring edition of the *Linn Log*. Hope to see you there.

## Snowshoe and Cross-Country Ski Event at D-E-W

The Linn Conservancy is offering a winter afternoon of snowshoeing and cross-country skiing at the Dale-Engle-Walker (D-E-W) property (Dale's Ridge Trail) on Saturday, February 4, beginning at 1 pm. 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, snacks, and marshmallows to roast 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 Tuesday, January 31, by calling 524-8666 or emailing [Linn@ptd.net](mailto:Linn@ptd.net) with "snowshoe/ski" in the subject line. Please indicate the number in your party and if you will need snowshoes. If there is a lack of snow, a guided hike will be offered.

## Koons Trail Update

The Koons Trail in Mifflinburg has been closed since early fall due to the death of ash trees and the potential for falling branches to injure users of the trail. As of last October, the Conservancy and current property owners, Ryan and Samantha Sabo, arranged to have trees that threaten the trail removed. That work was to be completed by the end of 2016. Significant damage will very likely result from this effort and it could take some time for us to restore the trail to its former beauty, but we hope to reopen it soon. In the meantime, a portion of the property along North 4<sup>th</sup> Street north of the

covered bridge was converted last spring to wetland habitat which you are welcome to enjoy.

## Snowfest at RB Winter State Park February 12, 2017, Noon to 4 pm

Get out and enjoy a season which too many dread. 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 or more of the following: a hike on snowshoes, 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, and 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](mailto:rbwintersp@state.pa.us)

## Riverkeeper Announces "Venture Crew" Program

Carol Parenzan, Middle Susquehanna Riverkeeper, along with Boy Scouts of America/Williamsport will be launching a new Venture Crew for young adults, ages 14-20, coed, based out of Lewisburg with a focus on aquatic activities and environmental science. A planning meeting for adults will occur in January, followed by the organizational launch shortly thereafter. If you would like to be an adult volunteer, or if you know of a young person who may be interested, please contact Carol at [midsusriver@gmail.com](mailto:midsusriver@gmail.com) or (570) 768-6300.

## Did you know?

A Massachusetts land trust created the country's first conservation easement in Boston in 1891.

## president's message

### connecting partners/linking landscapes

#### **PRESERVING OUR PAST AND FUTURE: The Challenge of Sustainability for the Linn Conservancy**

By Susan Warner-Mills, President

Dear Linn Conservancy Members and Friends,

Elsewhere in this issue of *Linn Log* (on page 9) you will see an article by Allen Schweinsberg, the Conservancy's Site/Stewardship Chair, explaining the need for increasing the resources available to our organization in order to fulfill our land-protection responsibilities to our easement donors over the long-term.

As Allen explains, every year we acquire new easements, for which we are responsible in perpetuity. Yet we currently have one part-time coordinator and a very part-time secretary. We now also need to plan for the possibility that the political climate in our country and our region in the coming years may be less supportive of allocating resources to conservation than has been the case in years past.

Therefore, now that the Shikellamy Bluffs work has come to a successful conclusion, I feel a sense of responsibility as president to start the process of moving the Conservancy toward sustainability. My goal is to work with Coordinator Geoff Goodenow, Membership-Development Chair Marilyn Brill, and other friends of the Conservancy to establish an endowment fund and to raise money for that fund to the point where its earnings would be sufficient to fund a site stewardship staff position.

We are extremely proud to inform you that after extreme due diligence by the Conservancy's ad hoc Investment Strategy Committee, the board has decided to invest \$70,000 of its financial resources in a permanent endowment fund held by the very highly-reputed First Community Foundation Partnership (FCFP) of Pennsylvania, based in Williamsport, PA.

FCFP holds numerous endowment and other funds on behalf of non-profit organizations across the region and state. Creating this endowment fund with FCFP is an incredibly significant first step in the Conservancy's pursuit of sustainability. We estimate that accumulating approximately \$500,000 in our endowment fund would allow us to pay a part-time site stewardship staff person. Over time, with luck and hard work, we could hopefully expand the fund to pay for one or more full-time staff positions.

Over the coming months, our team will be reaching out to foundations, government entities, businesses, and others to initiate the fundraising process with the goal of reaching the \$500,000 mark. This is an immense challenge to undertake, and so we will also rely on you, our members, to support us in several critical ways:

#### **Building our Endowment**

Those of us who will be working on this project are not professional fundraisers, but rather passionate conservationists who recognize our Conservancy's need to start raising large sums of money in order to fulfill over the long-term our mission of land protection and community education. Consequently, we will need even more support and cooperation from our members and friends to do so. In addition to renewing your membership each year, here are some other means to consider:

1. Contribute a significant one-time contribution to the Conservancy's Endowment Fund.
2. Pledge an annual contribution, which we may then count on each year to expand the Fund.
3. Make a bequest as part of your estate planning. (See following page.)
4. Spread the word. (See following page.)

*Continued on page 4*

## Estate Planning

We believe that there may be a number of Conservancy members and friends who have generously included the Conservancy as a beneficiary in their wills.

- If you are one of these, it would help our planning efforts immensely if you could contact us to let us know of your bequest and to share as many other details about it as you feel comfortable providing.
- If you have not already included the Conservancy as a beneficiary in your will, we ask that you give serious consideration to doing so.

The endowment we have created is permanent and it is safe. You may have confidence that a bequest to the Merrill Linn Conservancy Endowment Fund will be used to its full potential and will be directly responsible for helping secure the Conservancy's long-term sustainability.

## Spread the Word

We know that nothing works like networking. Please also consider:

- Telling your friends and colleagues about the critical work of the Conservancy and encouraging them to support us by becoming members and by making a contribution to the Endowment Fund.
- Providing us with the names of friends and colleagues who have expressed interest to you in joining and/or contributing so that we may follow up with them accordingly.

Conservation is not a spectator sport. It is participatory. And it is a team sport. Our Linn Conservancy team is taking on this challenge. But we need every one of you to join us—to participate. It is this simple: the Merrill Linn Conservancy—this organization we have created and nurtured together to be the champion of protecting the natural beauty of this region we call home—needs all of us. It cannot survive and be sustained without all of us. Please join us. Please help in whatever way you can.

*Susan Warner-Mills, President*

PS If you would like to help in any way, please contact me at [swm@dejazzd.com](mailto:swm@dejazzd.com) or 570-716-0870.

### Cub Scouts Plant Trees, Cleanup DRT

*by Steve Schmit, scout leader*

In early November, the Tiger Scout den of Cub Scout Pack 3622 in Turbotville went to work along the Dale's Ridge Trail. Tiger cubs are boys who are in first grade. They went on this nature hike and planted trees as part of achieving their Cubs in the Wild Award. This is one of the many awards that is required to actually earn their Tiger Scout badge by the end of the year. In addition to planting pine tree saplings they learned about Nature's Code (a Cub Scout thing)



*Cub Scout Pack 3622 exploring Dale's Ridge Trail.*

which states to leave no trace behind and practice helping nature. They picked up litter (although there wasn't much since the trail is so well maintained and cared for), moved a few branches from the trail, and then looked for wildlife. They saw squirrels, some mallards in the creek on the lower trail, and a few deer tails as they ran away from our excited, yet noisy kids!

I appreciate the opportunity to take the kids on the trail and will look forward to some more trips in the future.

## Shikellamy Bluffs: Million Years Of Geologic Change, Part I

By Jeff Trop, Bucknell University Professor of Geology, Linn Conservancy board member

*This is Part 1 of 2 articles about the geologic history of the site. The second will appear in the spring edition of the Linn Log in conjunction with the upcoming celebration (date TBD) of the Conservancy's acquisition and transfer of 36 acres along the bluffs and the cliff face to the state park system.*

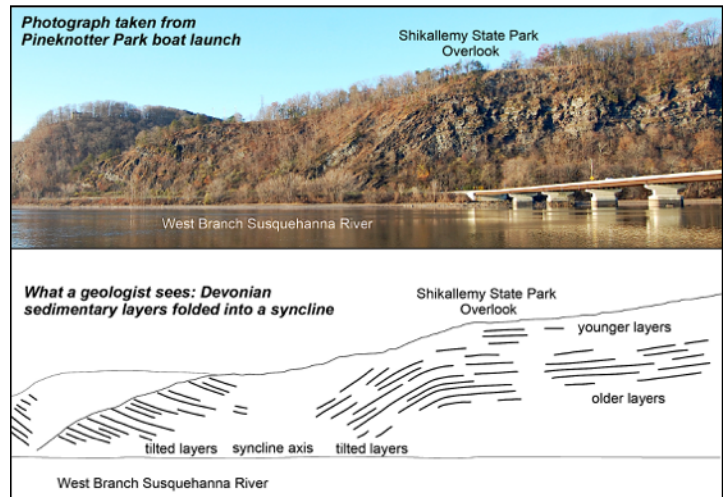
Merrill Linn Conservancy, together with several government agencies, recently helped expand the footprint of Shikellamy State Park, a unique site for ecologic, educational, scenic, and scientific purposes. The overlook section of Shikellamy State Park provides spectacular views of the confluence of the north and west branches of the Susquehanna River, the largest river in the eastern United States. Ecologically important, the bluffs are home to several threatened or endangered species of plants and have a history of hosting nesting Peregrine falcons. These modern flora and fauna take advantage of soil and topography resulting from diverse geologic features exposed in the Park.

The Park and surrounding Susquehanna River Valley lie in what is known geologically as the Valley and Ridge Physiographic Province. If you were flying over central Pennsylvania you would see parallel, linear ridges and between them fertile valleys with many farms. Examining the bedrock underlying this landscape reveals a stack of sedimentary layers deformed so that the layers are no longer horizontal but are warped and folded. Most ridges, like the one at Shikellamy, contain hard, difficult-to-erode sandstone bedrock, whereas easier-to-erode shales and limestones make up adjacent valleys.

Creation of this "valley and ridge" topography began more than 450 million years ago when sediments started accumulating in a low-lying basin west of the incipient Appalachian Mountains. At that time, convergence of tectonic plates along the eastern margin of North America started creating rugged topography that eventually was comparable to the modern Himalaya Mountains. The ancient mountains were weathered and eroded, producing enormous quantities of sediment that were transported westward toward the interior of North America. Collectively, the sedimentary layers exposed in the Park are part of the Sherman Creek Member of the Catskill Formation, which extends from the Catskill

Mountains in New York to southwestern Pennsylvania.

The sediments preserved at Shikellamy State Park formed from these processes and provide a glimpse of life and environments in central Pennsylvania some 360 million years ago during the Late Devonian period. Features preserved in the strata indicate that sand and mud accumulated in shallow streams and floodplains before being gradually compacted and cemented into sandstone and shale. Along County Line Road between the park entrance and Route 11, lenses of greenish-gray sandstone record ancient stream channels and bars, whereas surrounding reddish-grey siltstone and shale



reflect muddy floodplains that flanked the channels. Cross-stratification in the sandstone layers record northwestward shifting sand dunes along ancient streambeds. Fossilized plant roots, caliche nodules, and desiccation cracks in the shales preserve episodic flooding and soil development on the ancient floodplains. Common in some layers are fossil leaves and branches of *Archaeopteris*, an early tree that was the foundation of Earth's first true forests but mysteriously went extinct at the end of the Devonian (note: rocks and fossils may not be disturbed or collected without permission from Park personnel). Fossilized scales and bones of now-extinct lobe-finned fish such as *Bothriolepis* crop out in the Park strata. This is not surprising given that the Late Devonian period, often called "The Age of Fish", is renowned for abundant, diverse fish. Over several million years, one lineage of lobe-finned fish evolved limbs from fins, leading to the earliest amphibians ("tetrapods"), fossils of which are preserved near Williamsport.

*This is the end of Part 1. Be sure to look for Part 2 in the spring edition of the Linn Log for the conclusion of this "cliff hanger."*



## Successful D-E-W, DRT Fall Cleanup

*Contributed by Jeannette Lasansky*

On a gorgeous November 12<sup>th</sup> morning, a fall work effort at the Dale-Engle-Walker property involved nearly 30 Bucknell students and staff, coordinated by assistant property manager Eric Imgrund, Union County Historical Society board member Doug Hovey, and property manager, Jeannette Lasansky. Extensive raking and removal of invasive plants and fallen branches were among the top priorities and were completed.

Bucknell Professor of Geology Jeff Trop, along with Nicola Certo and nine other Bucknell Environmental Club members, worked with Dale's Ridge Chief Trail Steward retired professor, Tom Travis. Linda and David Elton, Diane Lingle, and eight members of BU's Kappa Sigma-Alpha Phi also assisted. Other Bucknell students—Jake Malavsky, Owen Parent, and Joe Elvin—assisted in moving heavy items in the Dale House to the wagon shed before joining the others in raking and cutting operations. William Lasansky and Fred Swanger, an assistant property manager, provided logistical support including food and beverage for the participants.

Earlier in the week New Enterprise Stone, located in Winfield and along Rte 192, provided time and materials in the restoration of the parking area for the Dale's Ridge Trail (DRT) and sections of the farm lane as arranged by Mike Erdley of New Enterprise. New Enterprise,



*Bucknell Environmental Club members joined the fall cleanup in November.*

formerly known as Eastern Industries, has helped maintain the parking, trail entrance, and farm lane since 2001 while Dave Gutelius Excavating in Mifflinburg, has maintained the property's south lane that is used in special events. Geoff Goodenow, Linn Conservancy Coordinator, has been instrumental on other aspects of the DRT parking area restoration since the new Strawbridge Road bridge was completed a year ago.

The next work effort at the 1793 farm property will be either the morning of Saturday March 25 or April 1, 2017. To express interest in helping on such efforts contact one of the volunteer property managers or Union County Historical Society at [unioncountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://unioncountyhistoricalsociety.org)

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## Protected Areas Proliferate

*by Kelsey Nowakowski*

*Adapted from National Geographic, Sept. 2016*

Nearly 13 million square miles of Earth's land and water, an area larger than Africa, has been set aside worldwide for conservation. Since 1990 the number of marine reserves, national parks, and wilderness areas has risen from fewer than 50,000 to more than 229,000. But there is much more to do. Though about 15% of Earth's land has protected-area status, half of the sites are small and isolated, pointing to a need for biological corridors to link these landscapes.

### Linking Landscapes in Your Backyard

A very good article, "A Call for Backyard Biodiversity," about why we should stop having huge yards and applying lawn fertilizers, while incorporating native species in our landscaping can be accessed at the site noted below. It is in keeping with the Conservancy's Linking

Landscapes Initiative in promoting creation of wildlife habitat and corridors within and throughout our neighborhoods. <http://www.americanforests.org/.../art.../backyard-biodiversity/>



*Tali MacArthur, Mary Hague, and Doug Orbaker represented the Conservation Union at the Susquehanna River Symposium held at Bucknell in November.*

# News from the Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance Of the Merrill Linn Conservancy

## Trout in the Classroom

Brad Catherman, Donald Eichhorn (Lewisburg) Middle School science teacher and BCWA board member, introduced the Trout in the Classroom program to his classes this fall. In mid-November, Mr. Catherman's 7th grade students visited three stream locations in the area. They studied sites along Little Buffalo Creek, Limestone Run, and Rapid Run to determine the ideal location to release brook trout fingerlings in the spring. Students studied physical, chemical, and biological features of the streams and used their knowledge of brook trout habitat to identify the most suitable area for eventual release of the fish.

Mr. Catherman's students are currently raising young brook trout in their classroom as part of their Trout in the Classroom experience. Their participation in the Trout in the Classroom program was made possible through a unique partnership between PA Fish and Boat Commission and PA Council of Trout Unlimited. This partnership, coupled with assistance from local conservation organizations, was created to introduce Pennsylvania students to coldwater resources and their importance to all communities. The partnership also provides brook trout eggs, trout food, technical assistance, curriculum connections and teacher workshops each year. Mr. Catherman and his students were



*Mr. Catherman assists with kick netting to collect stream macroinvertebrates.*

assisted in the field by Geoff Goodenow, BCWA board members Ben Hoskins and Allan Grundstrom, Bucknell Professor of Biology Matt McTammany, Union County Conservation District's Greg Bonsall, and R. B. Winter State Park environmental education specialist MaryAnn Haladay-Bierly.



*Mr. Catherman's students will release the trout they are raising in the spring.*

## State's 2016-2017 Budget Does Not Favor Environment

*Adapted from an article by Andy Loza,  
PA Land Trust Association (PALTA)*

For a second year, Growing Greener lost \$15M due to Growing Greener's dependence on natural gas impact fees, which have dropped dramatically with reduced drilling activities. Growing Greener was competing for these funds with the state's General Fund, which (absent new revenues) needed the money to keep state government (e.g., DCNR) running. The Hazardous Sites Cleanup Fund, High Performance Green Buildings Program, and Recycling Fund also took hits. DCNR and DEP, having experienced many years of cuts, were both in need of substantial increases to address water protection and other needs. This did not happen. However, there were some bright spots for conservation:

### 24% Increase for Farmland Preservation

With the increase in cigarette taxes, the state Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program gets a boost of \$5M annually. It moves from \$20.485M to \$25.485M annually.

**More Conservation-Related Real Estate Transactions Excluded from Realty Transfer Tax**  
PALTA had worked to expand the types of conservation real estate transactions excluded from paying realty transfer taxes. Although many land trust real estate transactions were already excluded, local government transactions involving easements were not.



## Conservancy Supports Student In Wildlife Leadership Academy

*As we have done for several years, the Conservancy supported a student from our service area in the 2016 Wildlife Leadership Academy. Those funds come from our Jeff Bowers/John Clark Education Fund dedicated to promoting educational programs for area youth. Lance Smith, a 17-year-old student at Midd-West High School in Middleburg,*



*Lance Smith at Ursids field school*

*participated in the week-long Pennsylvania Ursids field school, one of five similar programs offered in 2016. Below is Lance's description of his experience and its impressions upon him.*

"This past summer, I was honored to be selected to attend the Wildlife Leadership Academy under the Ursids program. What interested me the most about applying for this program, was that it would be a camp of everything I love

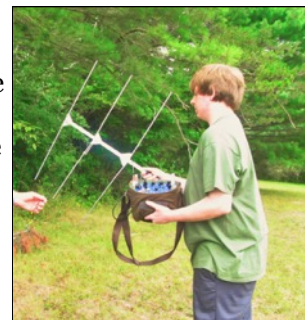
and people I could relate with. My desire for my future career is to enter into the field of forestry and conservation. I have been focusing my studies on earning scholarships with the hope of attending college upon graduation.

"This was a unique opportunity for me that I am glad that I took part in. This program allowed for me to explore my career choices for a field of science that is vast and enjoyable. My trip began with a drive to the Stone Valley Recreational Area, and meeting my mentors who were specialists in various conservation fields. I bunked in a small cabin with a team of my fellow Ursids members. If you come to this camp and think you won't have fun, you are beyond wrong. This camp is one of those memories you can never forget, because it was so great and fun.

"The first day of camp we went over the week's agenda. We met some of our instructors and future friends. The second day, we learned the anatomy of the black bears. They showed us the black bear's respiratory, reproductive, and cardiovascular systems. The best part was it was hands on. The experts dissected the bears and showed us the organs to let us gain a better understanding of the black bear's anatomy. Then we did team building activities and learned about plants and how they affected the bear's habitat. We learned how they caught the bears and how educating the public about bears can increase cultural carrying capacity. A coexistence with black bears is possible if we are educated and well informed about them.

"I highly suggest this camp for any soul who is interested in conservation and wildlife. This is

more than just a camp. It is a grand experience, something nobody can take from you. This camp is full of knowledge and expertise in the conservation science fields. I truly loved this camp and would go back any year. I'm so grateful to my sponsor, the Merrill Linn Conservancy. This is something I will never forget. I will always look back, and say that's when my passion really clicked, the week I went to the Ursids camp."



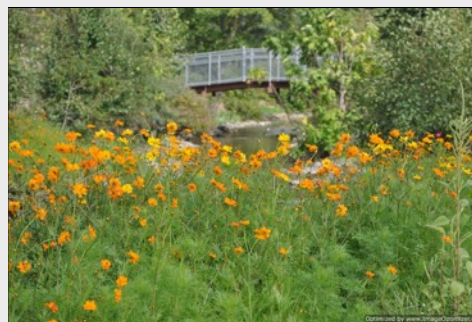
*Lance learned to collect and transmit data using telemetric equipment.*

The Wildlife Leadership Academy has opened its exclusive Youth Conservation Ambassador nomination process to the public for the 2017 program, and is currently seeking referrals of motivated students, ages 14-17, to become Certified Conservation Ambassadors. Nominations will be accepted online at [www.piceweb.org/nominate](http://www.piceweb.org/nominate). Applicants may be nominated by a teacher, school counselor, Envirothon advisor, youth group leader, or other adult who knows them well but is not a relative. For more information, contact Wildlife Leadership Academy Program and Outreach Coordinator, Katie Cassidy, at [kcassidy@piceweb.org](mailto:kcassidy@piceweb.org) or (570) 939-5109.



### East Buffalo Township Stream Restoration

*The project along Limestone Run north of the EBT municipal building included wildflower seeding. By late summer the area, shown above and below, was in full bloom.*





## WHAT DOES A CONSERVATION EASEMENT COST?

by Allen Schweinsberg, Site/Stewardship Committee Chair

The Linn Conservancy currently holds sixteen conservation easements, each of which was negotiated with a property owner. Each obligates us to conduct a single annual inspection, which is done by volunteers. That seems simple enough, and costs to the Conservancy might appear to be minimal.

Not so fast. Let's dig a little deeper.

There are some upfront expenses. While our easements are adapted from a carefully crafted model provided by the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association (PALTA), each easement requires modifications of the model to accommodate the specific conditions of each property and its owner's desires for it. Negotiating those terms and preparation of a baseline report of the property's conditions consume considerable time and energy that has always been donated by Conservancy volunteers. Once documents are ready, we always submit them for attorney review. Additionally, courthouses charge a recording fee. Taken together, these latter two items may cost in the neighborhood of \$300 or more, a sum that the Conservancy has been in the habit of covering.

The founders of the Linn Conservancy recognized that each easement carries a legal liability, and we have always expected property owners to contribute to our legal defense fund. The experience of many land trusts over many years has shown that a few conflicts and violations are almost inevitable over time, especially when the conserved land passes to owners who have less regard for the property and did not participate in the creation of the conservation agreement.

Our legal defense fund falls short of the current recommendation of the national Land Trust Alliance. Fortunately, we should not fall further behind due to recent action of the board. Note that, at present, each new easement increases the recommended amount in the legal defense fund by approximately \$1600. In qualified or certain circumstances, funds may be available to reduce landowner expenses.

Additionally, insurance is now available to land trusts to offset the costs of legal action to defend conservation easements. This insurance carries

an annual cost of \$60 for each easement owner. We expect that amount to rise.

Let's return to those annual inspections and the wonderful volunteers who conduct them. We are indebted to the individuals who contribute hours and gasoline and paperwork to fulfill our obligation to visit each property annually. But PALTA tells us to be cautious. It warns, "Although a holder may, at the time a conservation easement is acquired, be using volunteers to conduct some or all of its stewardship, for planning purposes, holders should estimate stewardship costs based on the use of paid staff, not volunteers. Conservation easements must be stewarded in perpetuity, and as the number of easements held by a holder increases, easement stewardship can become too much for volunteers to handle (or to handle without substantial staff support)." Annual inspections of our 16 properties currently cost the Linn Conservancy little, but what will happen

when the number of our easements double and triple? We must take PALTA's caution seriously.

Furthermore, stewardship consists of more than inspections. Recently three Linn Conservancy volunteers met with a landowner and his forester. We sat around a table to exchange ideas and walked the land (in the rain!). It was an enjoyable and educational experience, but it still represented quite a few hours, and miles, of volunteer time. The conservation agreement required our involvement in the process.

The PALTA model conservation agreement uses the words "subject to review" approximately 20 times. These represent activities that we must approve. Each such request has to be addressed by appropriate folks in the Conservancy, whether by our paid coordinator or knowledgeable volunteers. The hours accumulate. Oh, how much time has been spent on ash tree issues in the past year or so! One volunteer alone logged approximately 30 hours, and many others contributed considerable additional time.

While we neglected to address stewardship costs in the past, we have begun to require annual contributions from landowners for this purpose. PALTA provides a model stewardship funding

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*"Conservation easements must be stewarded in perpetuity ..."*

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*Continued on page 10*

Continued from page 9

covenant. The size of annual contribution sufficient to cover costs might vary with particulars of individual properties, but two to three hundred dollars is not unreasonable. That amount, adjusted for inflation, should be contributed by all present and future owners. If one wanted to endow stewardship costs with a single initial payment, \$5000 - \$7500, invested at 4%, would suffice.

These amounts are estimates, and most represent costs that we do not yet incur. Nevertheless, responsible management of the Conservancy requires that we prepare for a time when our operation will require paid staff to cover an increasing workload.

Now we return to the question posed at the outset. What does a conservation easement cost? Without significant volunteer effort, perhaps

\$7000 to \$10,000 is a reasonable estimate. Most of this represents a single contribution that would endow stewardship costs, whereas property owners usually can be expected to opt for small annual amounts instead. While these figures may initially discourage a potential donor, one should remember that IRS rules allow for significant tax breaks on qualified properties that often help to offset these costs and might in fact exceed these costs.

Whatever the actual present or future costs, the Linn Conservancy is responsible for insuring that our conservation agreements, agreements that extend in perpetuity, are financially sound. At present, landowners have to bear the greater burden. As the Linn Conservancy continues to mature, we can hope that bequests and other contributions will contribute more to easement funding.

## Exploring the outdoors in the West End and at Dale's Ridge Trail



*Top left and clockwise: BU Professor of Geology Craig Kochel explains formation of "rock fields" along the former railroad west of Weikert; BU Professor of Geology Jeff Trop interprets rock structures at tunnel entrance. At Dale's Ridge Trail (DRT) BU Professor of Biology Mark Spiro describes plant life along the trail. Jeff Trop points out fossils on DRT switchbacks. BU Professor of Biology Chris Martine shows a variety of leaf arrangements in plants along DRT. Jeff Trop discusses valley and ridge topography in Union County.*



# thank you!

## Welcome new members:

**Lewisburg:** Marion Brown; Michael and Amy Toole; Wayne and Dolly Farmer

**Milton:** Benjamin Brillat and Dr. Leocadia Pilaus

## Thank yous:

Unrestricted donation from the Marta Heflin Foundation for \$2,500

Mike Erdley of New Enterprise Stone and Lime: donation of time and materials to resurface D-E-W driveway and DRT parking area

Benjamin Brillat and Dr. Leocadia Paliulis of Milton for donation toward Dale's Ridge Trail maintenance

**Highway cleanup:** Duane Griffin, Geoff Goodenow

**Easement subcommittee participation:** Sue Travis, Allen Schweinsberg, Tali McArthur, Matt Roberts

## In Memory:

Cynthia Kessler for her donation in memory of her nephew, Jeff Bowers

Nancy Macky for her donation in memory of her husband, Pete Macky. Additional donations in memory of Pete from his sister Patricia Fisher; his cousin Janette Wentz; Bob and Patti Schmieder; Judy McNinch; Glenn and Gail Sandmeyer; David and Susan Gocland; Stacy Lenarcic; anonymous

## To leaders/interpreters of our Dale's Ridge

**Trail hike:** Jeff Trop, Chris Martine, and Mark Spiro and to the leaders/interpreters of the "tunnel" hike west of Weikert: Jeff Trop, Craig Kochel

**Woolly Worm festival staffers:** Amanda Kline, Marilyn Murphy, Susan Warner-Mills, Tom Gibson, John Tonzetich, Marilyn Brill, Tali MacArthur, Diane Donato, Geoff Goodenow

## Our Business Partners for 2017

We thank these local businesses that continue supporting our Business Partner card which was enclosed with your membership materials sent 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.

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**, **Vargo Outdoors**, **Canoe Susquehanna**; in Middleburg: **Shaffer Landscapes, Inc.**

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Business phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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winter 2017

## In this issue:

- Merrill Linn Conservancy Endowment Established
- 'What Does a Conservation Easement Cost?' by Allen Schweinsberg
- 'Shikellamy Bluffs: Million Years of Geologic Change' by Jeff Trop

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