

Linn Log

FALL 2022



Protecting Land in Snyder County: Act of love that lasts forever

In 1995, as Dick and Donna Constant were searching for a week-end getaway and eventual retirement home within three hours of their Germantown residence, they came across an ad for a 39-acre property located in rural Snyder County. The son of the property's previous owner met somewhat reluctantly with the Constants. He explained that he wanted to find a buyer who would love and preserve the land as his father, the previous owner, had.

Dick, then a Department of Energy attorney, and Donna, an

Episcopal priest with a parish in Germantown, visited the Hermit Hollow property and immediately fell in love. The site's long, deep hollow topped with ridges, was habitat for two dozen tree species, wildflowers, birds, and mammals. It also offered a breath-taking view of Shade Mountain, room for pasture for horses, and the privacy and quiet that couldn't be found in their Philadelphia neighborhood. Two days later the Constants made an offer.

"We wholeheartedly wanted to prevent (*continued on page 3*)

Linn Log FALL 2022

Mission of the Merrill W. Linn
Land & Waterways Conservancy

To preserve and protect significant
ecological sites in Union, upper
Northumberland, and neighboring
counties and to engage the public
with conservation issues that affect
the health of our environment.

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Operations Coordinator
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The Merrill W. Linn Land and
Waterways Conservancy was founded
in April 1988 in memory of Merrill W.
Linn, a local attorney and avid out-
doorsman who spent much of his life
exploring the woods, streams, fields,
and byways surrounding his native
Lewisburg, and sharing that experience
and knowledge with others.

Merrill Linn Conservancy
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MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

In June 2021, conservation develop-
ment consultant, David Allen, visited
Linn Conservancy Board members
and other key personnel to assess our
organization's strengths and weak-
nesses and the changes needed to
ensure sustainable growth. A month
later the Board received a Develop-
ment Audit Report that advised very
specifically what we needed to do—
grow our membership, donor base,
and profile in the communities we
serve—and how to go about it, with
the ultimate objective of ensuring the
Merrill Linn Conservancy remains
a healthy, sustainable organization
capable of protecting environmental-
ly significant sites for all time.

Some of the changes David Allen
recommended are visible to all, such
as the Linn Log's color photography
and revised format. Others, such as
acquisition of software that tracks
membership and donor data, may
only be evident in our ability to
respond quickly to membership and
donor queries.

Our Board's adoption of Google
Workspace as a secure communica-
tion and collaboration tool is an-
other change. Lance Miller, the tech
guru on the Conservancy's Board,
led us through this transition. So
now we use Google Calendar to keep
track of meetings and events and
Google Photos to store and retrieve
pictures of Conservancy-related
properties, events, people, or scenic
views. Documents that we may want
to share go on Google Docs, where
Board members can collaborate on
editing. That is enormously helpful
when writing grants and other doc-
uments that benefit from the input
of others. There is a learning curve,
but change doesn't happen without
acquiring new skills.

You may have heard the Linn
Conservancy now has an office at the
East Buffalo Twp. Municipal Bldg.
The Board had been discussing this
issue for the last year and actively
looking since February. When our
search for an Operations Coordina-
tor concluded with Chris Bergesen's
(see interview on page 3) acceptance
of the position starting June 27, we
had to move quickly.



Then we became aware of space at
EBT. It was the right size, right loca-
tion, and right price. Plus, the office
was freshly painted, utilities were
included, and we had room to store
historic files, decades of promotion-
al materials, and office equipment
accumulated at various locations.
Conservancy Board members and re-
tiring coordinator Geoff Goodenow
all pitched in to make the move.

Our new space is big enough to
accommodate Board meetings and
intimate enough for smaller commit-
tee meetings or to meet with visitors.
It also does just fine as a venue for
receptions of 30 or less. Our first
gathering was June 30 with Board
members and easement donors in
attendance to meet Chris Bergesen
and thank Geoff Goodenow for his
decades of service as coordinator, a
board member, committee chair and
other roles.

We see greatest value in the day-
to-day use of the office, which is
usually open 9 am to 5 pm. After
two months working as Operations
Coordinator, Chris will be going
out to visit the Conservancy's pro-
tected properties and meeting with
like-minded groups and individuals.
If you would like to visit, please
call ahead. Our new office phone is
570.524.2959. Contact Chris direct-
ly at admin@linnconservancy.org or
email info@linnconservancy.org. Our
mailing address continues to be P.O.
Box 501, Lewisburg, PA 17837.

Please feel free to contact us. We
would like to talk with you about
the changes we are making and
where those changes can lead.

—Diane Donato, *President*

future development and to preserve the natural environment of wild creatures, including deer, birds, and the occasional black bear,” Donna says. But it was not until years later that the Constants learned of the Merrill Linn Conservancy and how the nonprofit could make perpetual preservation of the land a reality.

A fellow horse owner invited Donna to bring her horse and ride the trails on a large property a few miles away. The owner of the property was Debi Myers Smith, who had permanently protected her 126.8-acre property—Bower’s Woodspring Farm—by entering into a conservation easement with the Conservancy in 2007. Mrs. Smith described the rigorous, but rewarding process of becoming an easement donor and put the Constants in touch with site/stewardship committee members who could help them decide if becoming an easement donor was the right move for their property.

Fortunately, the Hermit Hollow property was found to match the goals and mission of the Conservancy and was as environmentally significant as the Constants believed. After signing and filing their conservation easement, the Constants opened their property to Conservancy-sponsored hikes which frequently focused on the population of pink lady slipper orchids, which once grew abundantly here. They joined the Conservancy’s Board and shared their views of various issues from the perspective of landowners. And each year members of the Site/Stewardship committee walked

the property to assure it was being cared for consistent with the provisions of the easement agreement

“We adore living here,” Donna told the Linn Log. But the Constants have come to the hard decision that it is time to move on. They want to spend the coming years living near their son and his family. And they find, even with help, caring for the 39-acre property with its trails, pastures, barns, horses, landscaping and house is not as easy as it once was. So now the Constants are making any final repairs and refurbishing that will assure potential buyers they have found the perfect home.

Whoever buys this special site, now or in the future, is bound by law to the provisions of the conservation easement signed by the Constants and the Merrill Linn Conservancy. Every year—forever—Conservancy site monitors will visit the Hermit Hollow property to assure it is properly maintained. The Conservancy is perpetually required to legally defend in court the integrity of its preserved properties. In short, a conservation easement has teeth.

It is now, when the Constants are closer to saying goodbye to their beloved home, that the ‘forever’ provisions of a conservation easement give comfort. They will leave the beautiful property that was home for 27 years. But that property will remain just as it is, adored by a new family committed to its preservation.



Pink Lady Slippers have grown scarce with changes in the forest composition.



Nature’s Explorers Returns to Dale’s Ridge

The popular Nature’s Explorers program, which introduces children to new ways of learning and being in the natural world, is continuing this fall with sessions held at Dale’s Ridge on the second Saturday of the month.

Fall 2022 sessions include:

- Sept. 10** 2 pm-3:30 pm: Exploring Botany
- Oct. 8** 2 pm-3:30 pm: Exploring Geology
- Nov. 12** 2 pm-3:30 pm: Exploring Storytelling and Creative Writing

Nature’s Explorers sessions are recommended for children 5-10 years old and their families.

The cost is \$7 per family. Sign up at www.lewisburgchildrensmuseum.org/natures-explorers. Space is limited.

Nature’s Explorers events are made possible by collaboration between Bucknell University Humanities Center, Merrill W. Linn Land & Waterways Conservancy, the Lewisburg Children’s Museum, and the Union County Historical Society.

What if
we get it
right?

New per-
spectives
on our
climate
future



Sabrina Kirby is a writer with a special interest in the environment and climate change. She has recently retired from the Bucknell University Writing Center where she worked to help students, faculty, and staff meet writing challenges. This—an interview with Taylor Lightman of Lewisburg Neighborhoods, is the first in a series of interviews that will explore fresh perspectives on our climate future.



Taylor Lightman

Electrify everything—transportation, homes, workplaces. While we're at it, remove or work around barriers that prevent people from walking (or rolling under their own power) to grocery stores, medical appointments, schools. Connect communities via trails and public transport, much as Linn Conservancy is linking landscapes to benefit endangered animals and plants. Implement flood mitigation and climate adaptation measures. In other words, provide safe, healthy, livable habitat for people, too.

This is the future Taylor Lightman, Director/Program Manager of Lewisburg Neighborhoods, envisions. "Fifty thousand Americans die in traffic accidents every year," he notes, adding that air pollution from power plants and automobiles contributes to thousands of premature deaths annually in the U.S. "A future in which we've adapted better for a healthier climate is a future where that doesn't happen."

Convinced by his work with local, state, and national political campaigns that "the local stuff is most important and where you can have the biggest impact," the 2011 Lewisburg High School grad came home to put his organizing experience—and his master's degree in Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation from Lund University in Sweden—to work. And he feels confident Lewisburg can become a more livable, equitable, climate-adapted community.

"I took a look at the original Lewisburg Neighborhoods project plan that Kim Wheeler and Brian Auman did in 2004, the plan that created Lewisburg Neighborhoods as an organization. What they envisioned was to remediate Bull Run Creek, reviving the habitat while doing flood mitigation; to demolish two blocks of houses along South 6th street, to increase the park area; to connect western Union County with Bucknell through a rail trail; to start an organization to see all this through; and to rehab these blocks [around Bull Run Creek] to be more biking and walking friendly." Eighteen years later, "we've done all that and more. So, yes, it's going to take a while, but I think we're capable of doing it and we will do it."

What's YOUR vision for a climate-adapted future? When you look out your window or step outside your home, into your neighborhood, your fields, or into the woods, what will you see? What will you hear? In the words of Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, oceanographer and co-founder of the All We Can Save Project, "What if we get it right?" **Share your vision at skirby@dejazzd.com. It may be featured in a future Linn Log.** — Sabrina Kirby

What's your vision for a
climate-adapted future?
When you look out your win-
dow or step outside your
home, into your neighbor-
hood, your fields, or into the
woods, what will you see?
What will you hear?

Meet Chris Bergesen, Operations Coordinator

Chris Bergesen, the Merrill Linn Conservancy's first full-time employee, came on board as Operations Coordinator in late June. Her responsibilities include management of donors, volunteers, social media, marketing, and financial processes. Chris has served as a Linn Conservancy board member and is currently easement monitor for Glacier Pools Preserve in eastern Lycoming County. She shared her outlook for the Conservancy with the Linn Log.

You were a Merrill Linn Conservancy Board member from 2009 to 2013. In your view, how has the Conservancy changed since then? It is so much more organized. There is a lot of vision and there are a lot of visionaries within the organization. In terms of technology, the Board is bringing the organization into the modern world. Obviously more land has been acquired; the Linking Landscapes



Initiative has been adopted and there is much more community outreach.

How do you find working as a Conservancy employee rather than a volunteer? I am

excited, because I feel supported. There is definitely a sense that I am welcome and have people cheering me on. I feel more an integral player because I am a fulltime employee rather than someone who attended meetings and events when I could.

What are you looking forward to doing in your new position? Succeeding! I am hoping to take the Conservancy to a new level financially. I am looking forward to spreading the word about all the Conservancy has accomplished, with largely volunteers' efforts. There is something to celebrate there. I want to carry that forward and fulfill the expectations of the Board.

How did you initially become interested in conservation issues? The environment was definitely near and dear to my heart as a kid. I stood out because no one else in my family could relate to that. I kind of got away from that in my career as a marketing professional and business manager in the zoo industry. But now I feel those experiences helped me get this job. It is gratifying, especially at my age. As we get older, we do want to make some kind of lasting contribution to the world. If I have any opportunity to do that, it will be here with this organization.

What was your most interesting experience working at the Conservancy so far? Meeting the people: at site visits and at the open house we had, where I met landowners and board members. It is about the work that has come before. I am excited to work with like-minded people who are educated and passionate and have accomplished so much already.

Upon visiting the Lewisburg Farmers Market in early August, I had the pleasure of meeting Steve Kidd from Perennial Gardens Nursery in New Bloomfield. A local regular at the market, I found him to be a wealth of information. An avid gardener myself, and one who gardens for wildlife, I quickly discovered how little I knew about native host plants. He easily rattled off the names of plants that zebra and tiger swallowtails need to lay their eggs, and I found myself making a mental list of all the new plants I had to include in my home butterfly garden. There is always room for more plants, right?

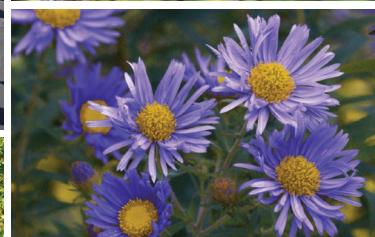
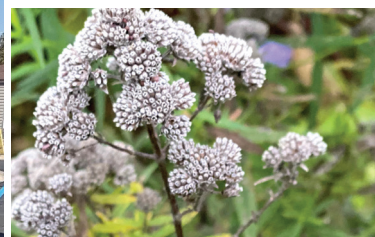
The Merrill Linn Conservancy is very fortunate to be partnering with Steve for our native plant sale **Saturday, September 17th from 9 am to noon** at the **East Buffalo Township Building on Fairground Road**. You'll need to visit Steve's beautiful and informative website at www.perennialgardens.com name to pre-order what you want. It's not just a perennial sale. You can also order trees, bushes, and edible plants.

Steve will also bring a selection of additional plants for those who did not get a chance to pre-order. This native plant sale will not only benefit local pollinators but also the Linn Conservancy. Steve is generously giving a portion of his proceeds to benefit the Conservancy's land and water conservation mission. **See you all Saturday, September 17th. — C.B.**

Fall Native Plant Sale: September 17 at EBT



"There is always room for more plants, right?"



Purple coneflowers, asters and false sunflowers bloom in the fall. But when planting in September or October gardeners are not limited to these. Most perennials planted at this time will do well. The autumn months are also ideal for planting shrubs and trees.

COMMUNITY FOSSIL DIG

DISCOVER RELICS OF DEEP TIME

The Linn Conservancy's annual Community Fossil Dig is our organization's most popular public event—by far. Each year attendance numbers in the hundreds. While most families are local, quite a few travel some distance—even from out of state—to hammer away at the ancient shale in Snyder County's Faylor Lake Quarry off Shale Pit Road

This year's Fossil Dig is scheduled Sunday, September 25 from 11 am to 3 pm. Bucknell University geology professor Jeff Trop and his students will again guide exploration and identify fossils. Examples of common fossils will be on display.

Crinoids and brachiopods are easily found in the quarry. Trilobites, gastropods, and bryozoans are present, but relative rare. All these marine fossils date back some 390 million years, which makes even the common brachiopods and crinoids outstanding souvenirs of deep time.

Dress for the occasion. Whatever you wear to a fossil dig will get dirty. Dress accordingly. Wear sturdy shoes with a good tread for safety and comfort. Bring water and snacks. There is no shade at the quarry, so bring sunscreen and sunglasses or safety glasses to provide protection. Bring a hammer and chisel or flathead screwdriver, along with a bag for the trove of fossils you collect. A limited supply of equipment is available to borrow.

For further information about this year's dig, call 570-524-2959. For directions to the site, visit www.linnconservancy.org.



The Community Fossil Dig is a multi-generational event. (above) Fossil dig displays included a poster of common fossils found in Pennsylvania. Geologist Dr. Jeff Trop points to drawings of fossils from the Devonian period. (at left)



**Sunday,
September 25
11-3 pm**



Three generations of fossil enthusiasts dig. Dogs are welcome on leash. (below)



The Bill Flack Trio (above) set the mood for the Conservancy's Spring Soiree dinner event at Shade Mountain Winery in May.

The Linn Conservancy and the Sierra Club's Otzinachson Group co-sponsored Music in the Park's Van Wagner concert in July. Wagner (near right) wears the white hat. Chris Bergesen and board member Kylie Aikey (above far right) represented the Conservancy at the concert.

And a big thank you to Wayne and Nancy Stahl (far right) who hosted a very special Butterfly Walk at their 243-acre protected property on August 28.



**U.C. Agland
Preservation
Board Preserves
over
10,000 acres
of Farmland**

Union County's Agland Preservation Board has permanently preserved more than 10,000 acres worth of family farms that will remain forever in agriculture, ensuring a local food supply generation after generation. This milestone was celebrated in late spring at Try-Oaks Farm in Gregg Township. Andrew and Janet Sellard (second and fourth from left in photo) own and operate Try-Oaks.

"We preserved this farm for my parents," said the Janet Sellard. "This was their life and we needed to preserve it." Department of Agriculture Secretary, Russell C. Redding, Union County Commissioners Preston Boop, Stacy Richards, and Jeff Reber, and Union County Conservation District representatives including Agland Administrative Assistant Cindy Kahley were on hand to mark the event.

Today, Pennsylvania leads the nation in farmland preservation, with more than 6,000 farms and over 600,000 acres preserved to date. Union County in collaboration with local organizations is strengthening the visions of local food systems and setting a precedent for land conservation and preservation.

Degenstein, Huplits Grants Support Conservancy Goals

This summer the Merrill Linn Conservancy received two grants supporting ongoing projects of the Merrill Linn Conservancy. The 1994 Charles B. Degenstein Foundation has awarded the Conservancy a grant in the amount of \$25,000 to support outdoor programming. The grant will fund the hiring of a Community Adventure Coordinator whose responsibilities will include development of programming for the Conservancy's public engagement and outreach efforts.

The Conservancy also been designated to receive a 2022 Huplits grant in the amount of \$14,386 to facilitate the acquisition and subsequent transfer of privately held land within the Bald Eagle State Forest with the objective of protecting the land from possible deforestation and septic pollution. Allegheny Group of the Sierra Club Huplits Wildlife Committee made the award.

Thank You's

Memorial gifts received:

Dennis and Gwen Elliot, in memory of their cousin, Margaret Moyer. Also in memory of Margaret Moyer: **Scot Wagner**, Mifflinburg, **Peter Stryker and Kathi Hannaford**, Francie Ketainck

From **Jeannette Lasansky**, in memory of Lettie Davis, former Linn Conservancy board member.

Endowment Fund donations: Ellen Herman, Marilyn Brill

Donations: Michael Gross, Kathy Frey, Ralph and Janet Moyer, Laura Brenner,

To volunteers at Linn Conservancy display during Music in the Park's Van Wagner Concert: **Chris Bergesen, Kylie Aikey, Chad North, Karen McGrath, Amanda Kline**

At River Road Holiday: **MacKenzie Flynn**

Caring for Native Plant Garden: **Ellen Gaultier and Steve Miller (below)**



All who helped with office move: **Beth Capaldi, Kylie Aikey, Tyler Aikey, Kathi Hannaford, Peter Stryker, Cheryl Stayton, Geoff Goodenow, Lance Miller, Diane Donato, Adrienne Gemberling, Andrew Hobbins**

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Sat., September 17 Fall Native Plant Sale from 9 am to 12 noon at East Buffalo Twp. property Linn Conservancy's Go Native demonstration garden at East Buffalo Twp. Municipal property on Fairground Road, Lewisburg.

Sun., September 25 Community Fossil Dig from 11 am to 3 pm at Faylor Lake Quarry, Shale Pit Road, outside Beaver Springs, Snyder County.

Thurs., October 6 Linn Conservancy Society dinner from 5 pm—7:30 pm at Penn's Tavern, Sunbury. *By invitation only for Linn Conservancy Society level donors.*

Fri., October 7 – Sun., October 9 UnPaved of the Susquehanna River Valley

Weekend biking events over gravel, hills, and dirt roads. For all information: <https://gropromotions.come/unpaved/>

Sat., October 8 Nature's Explorers: Exploring Geology From 2:00 pm—3:30 pm at Dale's Ridge with Bucknell's Dr. Jeff Trop. Registration required.

Sat., October 8 Lewisburg Fall Festival from 10 am—5 pm. Crafts, Food and activities for children. In Hufnagle Park and South 6th Street, Lewisburg

Fri., November 4 to Sat., November 5 17th Annual River Symposium 2022 theme: Restoration to Resilience: Creating Partnerships to Improve Watershed Health from the Headwaters to the Bay. Open to the public. <https://riversymposium.scholar.bucknell.edu/>

Sun., November 6 Conservation Club foliage walk followed by a casual outdoor meal at Warren and Chris Abrahamson protected property at 3833 Stein Lane, Lewisburg. *By invitation to Conservation Club level donors.*

Dale's Ridge Chief Trail Steward Sought

The Conservancy Site/Stewardship Committee is seeking a Chief Trail Steward for Dale's Ridge Trail. The volunteer is responsible for overseeing all aspects of trail maintenance. He or she is responsible for a 7-month schedule of responsible trail stewards for each month. The chief trail steward anticipates trail maintenance needs and then requests a budget line in October of each year. The Chief Steward reports to the Site/Stewardship Committee on DRT issues and attends and functions as an active committee member. The Chief Steward is not required to personally do maintenance, but will find or hire help needed to assure the work is done. Contact Site/Stewardship Chair Kathi Hannaford at khannaford@gmail.com to learn more.