

SUMMER 2015



WEST VIRGINIA

LAND TRUST

Bringing Conservation Home

"If we don't protect West Virginia's special places, who will?" asked Rodney Bartgis, our 2015 Guardian of the Year honoree, at the Special Places Celebration in Charleston. In remarks that touched on the importance of having access to natural places during childhood, West Virginia's amazing mountains and streams, our obligations to protect the state's gems while we can, and our need for a Teddy Roosevelt-type conservation champion among our elected officials, Rodney inspired us all.

At the West Virginia Land Trust, we're working on a range of projects that we hope will inspire you, too. In these pages you'll see references to our work to protect the Gauley Canyon; to develop a donated farm in Hardy County for community benefits; to improve access and interpretation at public preserves in Charleston and Morgantown; and to encourage people to join an EPIC adventure to get outside and explore great places in West Virginia.

Our conservation work protects family farms and forests, preserving our rural heritage. But it serves many other purposes too. We can protect land to provide public access for boating, fishing, hunting, hiking, or cycling, on water trails and along rail trails. We have projects underway to protect parcels that lie upstream of drinking water intakes. See our website (wvlandtrust.org) for our latest video "What is a Special Place?" – protecting our Home.

I hope you'll enjoy this update on what's happening with the WV Land Trust. And I hope that you'll join us in bringing conservation to many more places and communities in the Mountain State.



Warm regards,

Brent Bailey Ph.D.

WV Land Trust Executive Director

Snap Shots



Land Trust Receives Settlement Funds

Three civil legal cases regarding violations of the federal Clean Water Act have settled, resulting in almost \$800,000 in settlement funds being directed toward watershed conservation work of the West Virginia Land Trust. "Land conservation and water quality protection go hand in hand," said Brent Bailey, WVLT Executive Director. "We will use these funds to develop conservation projects that prevent runoff and pollutants from damaging the rivers and streams of the Kanawha and Tug Fork River watersheds."

The cases were brought by Appalachian Mountain Advocates, a non-profit environmental law firm, on behalf of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, Highlands Conservancy, Sierra Club, and Coal River Mountain Watch. "We are so pleased that one outcome of these legal actions will be on-the-ground protection of West Virginia's land and water resources," commented Janet Keating, Executive Director of Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, a plaintiff in all three cases. "Clean water is vital for the well-being of our communities and economies, and the WV Land Trust's work will provide permanent protection for important lands that buffer our rivers and streams."

Conservation Incentives Under Consideration by WV Legislature

A “study resolution” passed by the WV legislature in March will permit consideration of the impacts of tax credits for donations of lands for conservation, or of conservation easements.

Currently before the Joint Committee on Finance, the study was promoted by conservation groups including WVLT, The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, the New River Conservancy, the WV Agricultural Land Protection Authority, the WV Association of Farmland Protection Boards, and local land trusts.

“Conservation incentive programs in other states have rapidly accelerated the amount of acreage under protection,” pointed out Nikki Barone, WVLT’s policy consultant.

“A state tax credit for conservation adds to a landowner’s financial and land use choices, and may make it financially possible for a landowner to conserve her land,” according to Beth Wheatley of The Nature Conservancy. “A tax credit can offset the landowner’s tax liability on a dollar-for-dollar basis and may be structured to enable landowners who are land rich and cash poor to take full advantage,” Wheatley commented. “By giving landowners this choice, other states with such programs have demonstrated that they are an effective tool to protect lands important to our economy and quality of life, such as farmland, critical wildlife habitat, forests important for drinking water, and areas for hunting, hiking, and fishing.”

The study will be completed and reviewed during interim legislative sessions, and could lead to the introduction of a bill for consideration by the full legislature in early 2016.



Join us for an Epic Adventure!

EPIC Engaging People In Conservation
A West Virginia Land Trust Program

EPIC (Engaging People In Conservation) is a great opportunity to get involved with the WV Land Trust, venture outdoors, make new friends, and learn how YOU can help keep West Virginia wild and wonderful! In addition to learning more about land conservation, our leaders will provide guidance and basic instruction so that you can engage in similar outings on your own or with friends. Please check our website for more details and updates!

Upcoming EPIC Adventures:

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|---------------------|---|
| July 24 - 25 | Coal River Float – Kevin’s Lazy River Adventure
<i>(camp Friday night and float Saturday with 300 others)</i>
Boone County, WV (\$60 per person / \$25 if you bring your own kayak) |
| August 22 | Historical Tour of the Battle of Bartow & Upper Pocahontas Civil War Camps
Bartow, WV (\$10 per person) |
| September 19 | Bike the Greenbrier River Trail
Anthony, WV to Caldwell, WV (\$35 per person / free if you bring your own bike) |
| October 17 | Flashlight Hike to the Cemetery Located in the Wallace Hartman Nature Preserve
Charleston, WV (FREE activity) |

To join the EPIC Adventure fun visit www.wvlandtrust.org and click on the EPIC logo. Each outing has a link for registration.

Or Contact: Jessica Spatafore, Director of Development & Communications | Phone: (304) 413-0945 Email: jessica@wvlandtrust.org

Management plans are underway for our recently acquired Poppy Bean Preserve!

Photos courtesy of Adam Webster

Wedged between two major tributaries of the Potomac River near Moorefield, a 62-acre floodplain farm is the latest protected property of the West Virginia Land Trust. The “Poppy Bean Preserve,” named in honor of the anonymous donor’s grandfather, will be conserved by WVLT as a community resource. “I’d love for it to be a nature preserve; and I’d love for it to help the community,” said the donor, who no longer lives in the area.

With one of the few known barn owl nesting sites in West Virginia, as well as lowland fields, stream frontage, and wetland habitats, the Hardy County property easily lends itself to nature watching. “The ‘sloughs’ (pronounced “sloos”) are an especially interesting feature of the Poppy Bean Preserve,” said Ashton Berdine, WVLT’s Lands Program Manager. “As ‘off-channel habitat,’ these slow-moving backwaters provide an environment for fish and other aquatic species that is out of the main river, and gives protection during spawning and early life stages, when young can avoid predation.”



Floodplain forest species, including sycamores and cottonwoods, exist in narrow swaths along the Preserve’s stream banks. Restoring and expanding them will contribute to improved water quality in the South Fork and the South Branch of the Potomac, which flank the property, as they flow to the Chesapeake Bay. As a recreational resource, the Preserve has potential not only for the immediate community, but also for short-stop visitors who now easily access the vicinity from the Washington, DC metropolitan area via Corridor H.

Presently leased for cattle grazing, the Preserve will develop in response to community interest and grant opportunities. “There’s so much we can do to design low-impact recreation opportunities, educational projects relating to early settlement history, and environmental improvement efforts,” commented Adam Webster, Conservation Coordinator for WVLT. “Stay tuned!”



Eagle Scout Project Complete!

With help from his friends in Scout Troop 31 in Charleston, Colton Lohmeyer has completed an interpretive history trail project in the Wallace Hartman Nature Preserve in fulfillment of his Eagle Scout requirements. After stumbling upon the old Ferrell family cemetery, Colton did his research to identify the graves, and benefited from input by descendants of the Ferrell family, now living out of state. Many of the headstones are simply large rocks with letters engraved, dating late 1800s and early 1900s; many of the letters have worn away over the years.

Improved trail access and interpretive signage are now in place for visitors.

“Boy Scouts have been a great resource for improvements in the Wallace Hartman Nature Preserve,” commented Terrell Ellis, WVLT Senior Program Manager. “Colton’s project uncovered – quite literally – one of the preserve’s important historical resources.”

Photos courtesy of Skip Lohmeyer

Into the Woods: Summer Interns in Wild Places

What better way to get to know West Virginia than to spend 8 weeks in its rich forests, scrambling across steep slopes, and documenting its abundant natural resources?

Two graduate students with fresh Masters degrees in hand have joined WVLT as seasonal interns, and their first exposure to The Mountain State will take them to some of our most rugged and beautiful parts.

Hale Morell graduated in May from the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University, with a Masters in Forest Science. Originally from New Hampshire, she studied the effects of timber management on bird diversity and abundance. Franklin Jacoby recently completed his Masters degree in Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, where he focused on the history and philosophy of science. "Home" for Franklin is a family blueberry farm in Maine. Both have worked for the National Park Service at Acadia National Park, and for the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, a statewide land trust.

Two large conservation projects requiring "baseline documentation" posed a logistical challenge to WVLT, given the size of the properties, their remote locations, and their wild (and wonderful) characteristics. One project (still pending) is a 1600 acre easement in Fayette County; another is the Gauley tract owned by WVLT, consisting of 665 acres of deep and steep forest along six miles of Gauley river frontage.

"Baseline documentation" is land trust jargon for a detailed report on the conservation condition of properties protected by the West Virginia Land Trust. The baseline is established early in a land trust's acquisition of a conservation property, and is the reference against which future monitoring is gauged, as well as any necessary legal action to protect the properties.

With existing staff resources stretched to their maximum capacity, WVLT was able to recruit Hale and Franklin for seasonal work, tapping into an Intern Fund at Yale. Friends of WVLT living in Raleigh County opened their homes to the interns for summer lodging.



"We're going to have great results from these two young professionals," said Dr. Rick Landenberger, WVLT's Science and Management Specialist. "And they are going to be amazed at the wildness of West Virginia."

From left to right : WVLT staff member Rick Landenberger, interns Franklin Jacoby and Hale Morrell, and WVLT Board member Dave Clark on a weekend hike in the Otter Creek Wilderness, Monongahela National Forest.



Fund The Mission



The West Virginia Land Trust:

Protects special places, such as scenic landscapes, forests, and farms;

Safeguards water quality in our state's rivers and streams; and

Secures recreational opportunities for public benefit.

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All three of these of these important goals are realized at four public nature preserves protected by WVLT - Wallace Hartman Nature Preserve in Charleston, Elizabeth's Woods in Morgantown, the Gauley Canyon property in Fayette and Nicholas Counties, and the recently acquired Poppy Bean Preserve in Hardy county.

Your support will help us improve access, develop trails networks, restore habitat, and offer new interpretive materials in 2015.

Ways you can help:

- ▶ \$5,000 will support a seasonal employee to manage a preserve
- ▶ \$1,000 will provide materials to build 1 mile of new trail
- ▶ \$500 will provide summer volunteer crews with meals while building trails
- ▶ \$250 will fund supplies and maintenance for trailhead signing
- ▶ \$100 will enable planting American Chestnut Trees

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Please help us build and improve the nature preserves in our communities through your generous donations. With your continued support, so much more can be accomplished!



Special Places

CELEBRATION

Celebrate the land we love and honor those who protect it.

Many thanks to everyone who helped make our 10th Annual Special Places Celebration an incredible success: sponsors, silent auction donors, attendees, WWLT Board of Directors, Special Places Planning Committee, and staff!

We cannot function without your support, and for that we are grateful. West Virginia is blessed with abundantly beautiful landscapes. Your generosity will help ensure that they will forever remain as a special place for generations to come.

Together, we raised nearly \$60,000 that will be used to fund trail construction, outdoor education, and the protection of land currently under consideration.

We hope you will join us next year for more fun and a great evening of celebrating the land we love and honoring those who protect it!

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