

What We Can Do Is Powerful

Brent Bailey, Ph.D. Executive Director

Your commitment to conserving land has shown its worth in spades this year. Thanks to you, the West Virginia Land Trust has protected more properties in 2020 than ever before, outdoor places that have become refuges and safety nets. You'll read in these pages about their increasing public benefits as our portfolio of permanently protected lands grows across the state.

"Tell me what you ache for," sings Kathy Mattea on her album "Pretty Bird", continuing with "What I really want to know is what makes you come alive." We're all rolling with the punches, writing chapters in our lives about crises and ripple effects, and how we adapted, as individuals, families, organizations, communities, and society. The uncertainty is unsettling, the discord dispiriting, the isolation incapacitating. There's a gnawing unease that what seems abnormal may be the new normal. What we ache for may be something out of our control, or unpredictable.

But what we ache for, and what makes us come alive, include things that are predictable, and some that we can control.

Like the predictable "old normal" of time spent outdoors. Mars shining for months in the night sky. The river of birds flowing north in spring, a torrent of orioles and grosbeaks, followed by summer's baby birds, then fall migrants arriving to stay through the winter. Epic tomatoes and peppers, kale and beans. Rivers gushing, fierce winds howling, first frosts. Nighttime walks with dogs. Hiking on trails. Rustling leaves. And I don't want to rake leaves anymore this year: all part of the predictable, comforting, ache-worthy "old normal" that hasn't gone away.

"New normals" are part of our history. Generations before us made it through the flu pandemic of 1918, the Great Depression, two World Wars, the Cold War, and social turbulence of the Civil Rights movement combined with the Vietnam War. We can likewise respond with intentional actions. More time at home means we can read more, drive less, finish projects, reduce the noise that clutters our lives, and choose well.

We can choose to respond as we are able, as volunteers or donors: to non-profit organizations and houses of worship that have provided lifelines and now need the same, to the heightened needs of food banks and medical clinics, to family members and friends who are out of work, or who have suffered losses. We can show compassion and form a safety net for others.

WVLT's plan is to continue to conserve more lands that offer opportunities to be safe, calmed, and inspired in the outdoors. These beautiful special places make us come alive. Protecting more of them is something you can do with us. That's powerful.

Thanks for your support. Go outside!



SNAP SHOTS
NEWSLETTER



Check out WVLT interviews
with conservation heroes at
www.wvlandtrust.org/videos

- **Kathy Mattea**
Country Music Star
- **Chelsea Ruby**
WV Tourism Commissioner
- **Danny Twilley**
WVU Office of Outdoor
Economic Development
- **Dylan Jones**
Editor/Publisher of Highland
Outdoors Magazine
- **Christiaan Abildso**
WVU School of Public Health
- **Evan Hansen**
Downstream Strategies
- **Charlie Walbridge**
Friends of the Cheat

Mammoth Dreams Start Here!

Big dreams in a big place: The West Virginia Land Trust's new Mammoth Preserve, named for both the nearby town and for its large size, creates a lot of opportunity.



Located in eastern Kanawha County, the 5,000-acre former surface mine site will host a cutting-edge forest and stream restoration project. It will also offer recreational opportunities for residents of a region undergoing an economic transition, where leaders are eager to expand amenities for community residents and visitors alike.

For comparison, 5,000 acres is more than twice the size of Blackwater Falls State Park, and 250% the size of WVU's Morgantown campus. An area of that size covers almost 8 square miles, which – if the boundaries formed a rectangle – would be two miles wide and 4 miles long.

Appalachian Headwaters, a non-profit organization that grew out of Appalachian Mountain Advocates, negotiated for this land as part of a legal settlement, then gifted the property to the Land Trust for long-term ownership and management.

In the short term, Appalachian Headwaters will conduct restoration on approximately 2,500 acres of mined land by ripping compacted soils open to loosen, so seedling trees of native hardwood forests can take root, returning these disturbed sites to deciduous forest more closely resembling the natural forest that once thrived here. At the same time, stream channels affected by past mine activity will be restored as well. The Mammoth tract will be a demonstration of new technology, and mammoth dreams.



The remaining 2,500 acres on the tract is still nicely forested. WVLT is evaluating the recreational potential of this site for hikers, mountain bikers, and other trail users. Working with the Upper Kanawha Valley Tourism Project, and specifically the towns of Smithers and Montgomery, the Land Trust's Mammoth site will offer a destination that complements the riverside redevelopment of these small towns, aiming to reinvigorate the local economy with tourism visitation and to expand area residents' opportunities for recreation.

“ We're grateful that our litigation has led to such positive efforts to restore lands previously damaged by coal mining and mountaintop removal. Restoring natural resources and creating additional recreational opportunities in Kanawha County near Smithers and in Piney Creek Gorge near Beckley will benefit state residents and visitors alike for years to come.

Cindy Rank, WV Highlands Conservancy

Learn more at www.wvlandtrust.org/mammoth.



DID YOU KNOW

COFFEE IS 99% WATER

WVLT is excited to be partnering with Stone Tower Joe on a coffee collaboration to raise awareness for the important role clean water plays in brewing delicious coffee! Conserving land that borders rivers and streams helps keep West Virginia's drinking water clean.

Our coffee collaboration is called "Just Add Water!" While this is NOT instant coffee, your cup of joe is actually 99% water. The coffee is a crowd pleaser with mild notes of marshmallow, sweet potato, and cantaloupe. A portion of the proceeds will benefit WVLT and our work to conserve land bordering rivers and streams.

Pick up a bag at one of the following locations:

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Stone Tower Brews
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Davis

The Crossing
Elkins

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Opportunities Abound in Monongalia County

When Alma Shultz's estate approached WVLT about carrying out obligations in her will to manage her properties as nature preserves, the Land Trust quickly recognized an opportunity to conserve greenspace in one of the fastest growing areas of the state.

"We were immediately excited about the chance to create two more public preserves in Monongalia County that offer nature-based recreation for residents and visitors to north-central West Virginia," said Brent Bailey, WVLT Executive Director.

But the properties' locations in the Toms Run and Whiteday Creek watersheds brought forth even more context for conserving them.

"When we started looking at the water features on the Toms Run parcel and how the landscape was situated in relation to WVLT's 320-acre Toms Run Preserve, located just a few miles down the road, it came into focus that accepting this donation could protect nearly 20 percent of the Toms Run watershed," said Adam Webster, Conservation and Communications Coordinator.

"The entire Toms Run watershed is located within a drinking water protection area for Morgantown," he continued, "so that brings considerable benefits from an ecosystem services perspective."

"Conserving land within these protection areas helps safeguard drinking water quality by keeping forests intact and allowing nature to remain as a filter for pollutants rather than being a source for contamination, such as erosion and stormwater runoff that is more often associated with developed landscapes," he said.



The Whiteday Creek property includes springs, seeps, and a headwater tributary of Whiteday Creek, which is known as a high-quality trout stream. The Whiteday Creek section of the Alma Shultz Preserve sits at the edge of Morgantown's drinking water protection area.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency suggests that for every 10 percent increase in forest cover in a drinking water protection area, chemical and treatment costs for a drinking water utility can decrease by 20 percent. Numerous drinking water utilities throughout the nation, including Morgantown Utility Board, recognize land conservation as an important component of protecting drinking water quality.

"WVLT looks for opportunities to protect land for the public good, including for recreation and drinking water protection. In this case, the opportunity was unexpected but certainly worth pursuing," Bailey said. "Now that we own the properties, we'll begin fundraising to develop their non-motorized recreation potential."

The Alma Shultz Preserves include 50 acres along Toms Run and 70 acres in the Whiteday Creek watershed.

DID YOU KNOW

FOR EVERY **10%**

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SMALL PARCEL BIG IMPACT

on the Elk River

“Bigger is better” is often true for conservation properties, but “location, location, location” reminds us that small parcels can be significant, too.

“Quaker Landing” is a 37-acre forest along the Elk River downstream of the town of Clay, near Prociuous. Located about five miles upstream of the King Shoals public small boat launch – an Elk River access site maintained by the WV Division of Natural Resources – Quaker Landing offers an opportunity for development of new river access well-positioned to give paddlers and anglers who “put in” near Clay an alternate take-out.

Exhibiting its spirit of community and stewardship, the Charleston Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, a congregation of Quakers, donated the Clay

County tract to the West Virginia Land Trust with the request that it serve the public. In addition to future boater access, picnicking, fishing, and walking in the woods will also be available.

Beautiful mature sycamore, yellow-poplar, and American beech trees shade the natural area, and sweetgum, pawpaw, and river birch provide river travelers a screen from the county road, fostering the wild experience one can get on the river. From river’s edge the tract extends to the top of the mountain and includes rock outcrops and extremely steep slopes sheltered by mature oak, hickory, and maple trees.

New organizational partners experienced in river access site development and working in Clay County will be tapped to join the WVLT in promoting and expanding the property’s uses.

Steve and Susan Wellons of Charleston, members of the Meeting, shared their appreciation of the knowledge that the land they helped secure for its river access and trees will remain protected and be made available for public use: “We would like to think we are making West Virginia a better place, and supporting creation of an area for the public to access this river and enjoy a forest makes this donation a goal-fulfilling accomplishment!”



755 ACRES

Cliff Canyon

One of the most rugged places in West Virginia is now protected forever by a conservation easement with the West Virginia Land Trust.

Steve Callen, owner of Cliff Canyon near Moorefield, had a desire to keep his 755-acre property wild, undeveloped, and protected forever. So he convened three of West Virginia's conservation organizations and asked for help and advice in achieving his goal. The West Virginia Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, and the Potomac Conservancy joined forces to bring this vision to completion.

Conservation easements are deeds tailored to a site's unique conservation values, which reflect a private landowner's desires to restrict future uses. An easement deed carries with conserved property forever, even if private ownership of the property changes. In the case of Cliff Canyon, the easement guarantees that the site will never be subdivided, developed with housing, covered with roads, or commercially timbered.

The tract lines more than three miles of river habitat along the South Fork (of South Branch of the Potomac River) in Pendleton County, protecting water quality, aquatic species, and riparian zones. Biologists were eager to see the canyon protected because of its globally rare Yellow Oak and White Cedar forests (less than five known occurrences worldwide), and habitat to many other rare species associated with this dry forest community. The federally endangered Virginia big-eared bat is also known from this remote place, adding to the critical need to keep it protected.

The driving force behind the abundance of rare species and the globally rare forest types at this site is its limestone geology. Its rich and porous soils, combined

with very steep slopes and location in the “rain shadow” of the Appalachian Plateau, creates a very dry and harsh environment where only specific plants and animals are adapted to survive.

River enthusiasts and kayakers may know this site by its other name, Moorefield Canyon, recognized for its challenging Class 4 whitewater in the spring of the year.

“The Nature Conservancy, West Virginia Land Trust and Potomac Conservancy share a vision of protecting West Virginia’s important and special places. Together, we are working to provide a backdrop that makes people want to live, recreate and enjoy the natural wonders of our great state,” said Mike Powell, TNC Director of Lands. He went on to say, “TNC is happy to work on another project with the WVLT where both conservation and West Virginia win by protecting habitats of rare and unique species in an important landscape for nature-based recreation and tourism.”

“Cliff Canyon is one of the most exciting places I’ve seen in the Appalachian region, and to find it nestled just out of sight on a common country road is remarkable. I’m thrilled to see this team come together to permanently protect such an extraordinary property,” said Emily Warner, Senior Director of Land Conservation at Potomac Conservancy.

The Nature Conservancy, West Virginia Land Trust and Potomac Conservancy each played a key role in securing the financial resources and stewarding the project to completion. The three organizations jointly applied to the West Virginia Outdoor Heritage Conservation Fund (OHCF) for financial assistance to protect the Cliff Canyon site.

The West Virginia Legislature created the Outdoor Heritage Conservation Fund to invest in the conservation of unique and important wildlife habitats, natural areas, forest lands, farmlands, and lands for hunting, fishing and recreation. Each year OHCF provides essential financial support to organizations for conservation projects like Cliff Canyon.

“This project encompasses so many good qualities, but what stands out to me is the ruggedness of the land and the solitude one feels in this canyon. It is nice to know it will always stay and feel this way,” says Ashton Berdine, Lands Program Manager for WVLT.



I personally believe that the most obvious expression of the Creator is creation itself. As far as we know, the only life in the universe is here. Accordingly, I believe that we are all called upon to be good stewards of all life. While there are many environmental threats, it seems clear that the single greatest threat to nearly all life except man is the lack of suitable habitat.

With this in mind, I consider it a great privilege to be able to participate, together with the Trumbo Family, in the permanent protection of a unique and relatively undisturbed habitat that supports a large suite of terrestrial and riparian species. The legal protections provided by the easement combined with the onsite physical barriers give me confidence that, at least in this unique canyon, life as intended can continue toward perpetuity.”

Steve Callen, Cliff Canyon Property Owner

VIRTUAL
Special Places
CELEBRATION



EVENT RECAP

WVLT's annual Special Places Celebration went virtual in September, with daily features for a week that featured conservation successes of the past year, messages from WVLT staff and Board, sponsor testimonials, and interviews with conservation heroes (including country music star Kathy Mattea!). You can still access our YouTube playlist and watch all the videos at www.WVSpecialPlaces.org.



In lieu of the normal fancy sit-down dinner, WVLT donated our typical catering bill to the Mountaineer Food Bank to help feed West Virginia's hungry.

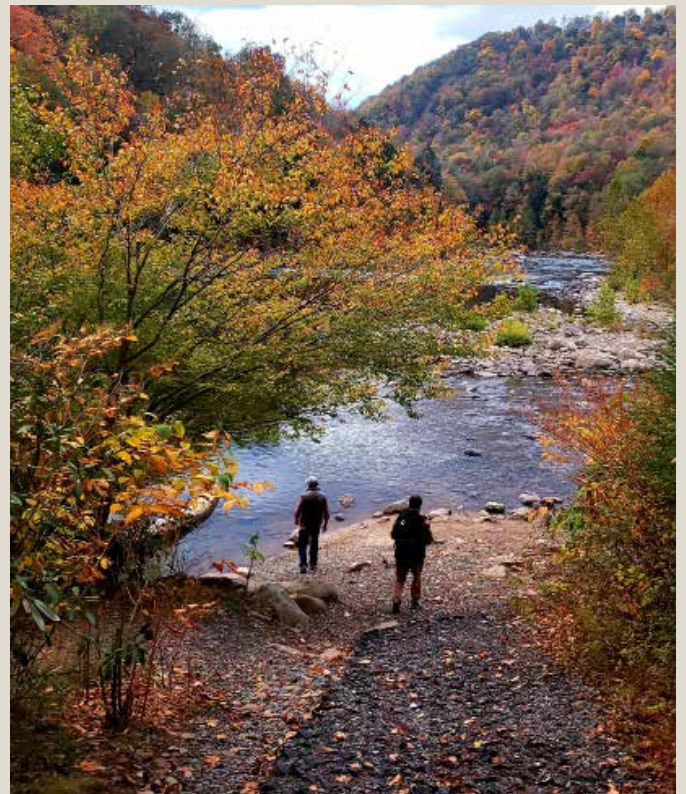
While we missed the personal connection, going virtual gave WVLT a platform to reach far more people than typically attend our in-person event in Charleston. Folks bought tickets and were able to participate from all over the country, raising more than \$60,000 for the work of the Land Trust!

We are grateful for your support and hope to see you in person next year!

Public Recreation Access Made Permanent in the Cheat Canyon

Charlie Walbridge ran the whitewater of the Cheat River for the first time almost 50 years ago. "It was a pretty wild place," he says. After its heyday of rafting companies sending almost 40,000 people per year down the Preston County rapids, the industry slowly declined, though the commercial traffic has been somewhat offset by the increase in private individual kayakers who continue to use the river.

Through the years, the whitewater community – both commercial and private – has made use of a small parcel at Jenkinsburg as a takeout after a 9.5-mile run through the Class III-IV rapids of the Cheat Canyon, or a 5.8-mile stretch of Class IV-V whitewater on Big Sandy Creek. The parcel is also a put-in for a 10-mile Class I-III whitewater section that passes through Snake Hill Wildlife Management Area (less than a mile downstream), and Coopers Rock State Forest, ending at Cheat Lake.



In September, it was purchased for permanent public access by the West Virginia Land Trust from its long-time private owners, Dave and Cynthia Hough.

That 13.5-acre property – tiny in relation to the extensive wild lands now protected in the area – is “a keystone piece of property, a linchpin,” according to Walbridge, for river and trail recreation that is rapidly growing in north-central West Virginia.

Situated at the confluence of Big Sandy Creek and the Cheat River, the property is also an access point to the Allegheny Trail, West Virginia’s longest hiking trail, a 330-mile north-south path with the northern terminus at the Mason-Dixon line at the Pennsylvania-West Virginia border near Bruceton Mills. To the south and east are public lands of the Cheat Canyon Wildlife Management Area, managed by the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, with trails under development by Friends of the Cheat (FOC), a local watershed association.

The Jenkinsburg tract is well-known for its “high bridge”, and swimming areas along the Cheat River and Big Sandy

Creek, including “Blue Hole”. WVU students, locals, whitewater enthusiasts, hunters and hikers frequent the area.

Walbridge, who has served on the board of directors of FOC, describes the Cheat River as “West Virginia’s best-kept whitewater secret.” FOC and WVLT will partner to manage the newly-protected Jenkinsburg site, with a goal of creating a family-friendly recreation destination for future generations to enjoy.

For campaign information and to watch WVLT’s interview with Charlie Walbridge during our virtual week-long Special Places Celebration, you can catch it here at www.wvlandtrust.org/jenkinsburg. To support the management and development of the Jenkinsburg site, visit WVLT’s website at wvlandtrust.org/donate.

WVLT is grateful for financial support for the Jenkinsburg project from the Dunn Family Foundation, the Oakland Foundation, the WV Outdoor Heritage Conservation Fund, and many individuals who have already participated in our campaign.

Historically, Jenkinsburg was a small logging town. The Jenkinsburg Bridge was built in 1912 by the Canton Bridge Company, and is an example of a rare design, known as a pin-connected Pennsylvania through-truss bridge. Canton Bridge Company became American Bridge Company, one of the nation’s biggest bridge-builders during the early 20th century and has numerous structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A corner of the property abuts the bridge.



Hold the Fort!

Arbuckle's Fort Archaeological Site

An unobtrusive and unprotected site in Greenbrier County marks an historical point on a timeline that embodies our region's complex story about Native Americans, mid-18th century settlement, wars and politics, and the founding of a nation.

The Archaeological Conservancy and West Virginia Land Trust have partnered to purchase and preserve Arbuckle's Fort. A campaign is underway with a fundraising goal of \$125,000. (See www.holdthefort.org to support the campaign. Deadline to give: November 30, 2020.) Once the site is secured, the Greenbrier Historical Society will assist with site interpretation. We are grateful for stewardship support from the WV Outdoor Heritage Conservation Fund.

Cultural conservation via protection of significant historical lands has lagged in West Virginia, due to a lack of organizations and funding to support the acquisition and interpretation of lands. WVLT's first foray into cultural conservation was the acquisition of the Camp Bartow Civil War site in Pocahontas County.

Arbuckle's Fort was established in 1774 as a Revolutionary War structure to protect early Euro-American settlers from raids by Native Americans. Alternatively, the Fort could be seen by the seasonal Native American residents – Shawnees, Delawares, Mingos – as an invasion of their hunting lands by immigrants. The presence of those groups is also tied to conflicts with Cherokees and Iroquois.

Consistent with WVLT's focus on water protection, the site offers potential for water protection due to its location at the confluence of Mill Creek and Muddy Creek, a priority area for drinking water protection. Furthermore, the landscape offers great potential for restoration of native forest species to buffer and clean the streams, as well as establishment of native pollinator gardens, and other plantings that demonstrate historical relevance.

Drs. Kim and Steven McBride of Greenbrier County bring authoritative archeological experience to the project and will guide much of the interpretation of the physical site, which ultimately will include signage, an

interpretive trail, and educational outreach. Doug Wood, who presents a Native American living history persona, offers indigenous perspectives to interpretation. The Greenbrier Historical Society promotes the area's historic resources for local residents' appreciation, as well as for tourism. The involvement of The Archeological Conservancy provides technical support and a national scope that establishes context for historical site protection.

“ Having a partnership with national, state, and local organizations creates an opportunity for both depth and breadth in the conservation and interpretation of this property”.

Ashton Berdine, Lands Program Manager for WVLT





IRA Distributions

Are you considering your year-end taxes? Some of our supporters must take Required Minimum Distributions (RMD) from their Individual Retirement Accounts... and find that they don't need the income. Tax benefits may be available to you, if you donate some of your RMD to the West Virginia Land Trust as a charitable contribution! RMDs must go directly from the IRA to the recipient organization, and not pass through the donor's hands. You can direct some or all of your RMD to protect more conservation lands to the West Virginia Land Trust, Inc., at PO Box 11823, Charleston, WV 25339. Please consult a tax or estate advisor to maximize your benefits.

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favorite nonprofit. Be sure to check our social
media pages on November 27 for our Black
Friday – Cyber Monday swag sale!



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