

THANK YOU

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An **Allegheny Land Trust** Publication

Winter 2018



2017 Giving

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A winding green space trail in the winter. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

Your Help Made a Difference

by Tom Dougherty | VP of Development & External Affairs

In September, we asked for your help in raising the final \$27,000 needed to permanently protect 70 acres of beautiful woodlands in the Big Sewickley Creek watershed.

In December, we asked for your help again -- this time through our Year-End Appeal to contribute to one of two efforts: the protection of those Big Sewickley Creek woodlands OR the bolstering of our general operating fund by a targeted \$46,000 so that we could fulfill our conservation mission without interruption as we moved into 2018.

We are pleased and thankful to report that dedicated supporters of ALT rose to the occasion to help us exceed both of those important goals!

Thanks to the urgent action of 184 donors, we had sufficient funding to complete the purchase and permanent protection of one of the two Big Sewickley Creek parcels in early January, and

we'll close on the purchase of the second parcel in the coming weeks. The response from these donors was directly responsible for the permanent protection of a combined 70 acres of woods in this scenic and important watershed. It is a textbook example of ALT working with the community to "help local people save local land"! Visit our website and future editions of VISTAS for more detailed information on these new conservation areas that dedicated ALT supporters helped to protect.

An additional 142 Year-End donors specifically designated their donations to bolster our general fund helping us to exceed our target by 39%. This operating support is absolutely critical to our being able to efficiently and effectively carry out our mission, and as a result we'd moved into the new year focused squarely on the conservation and education priorities that we have in front of us.

Thank you to everyone who responded to these appeals for support.

by Tom Dougherty | VP of Development & External Affairs

ALT conservation efforts got off to a quick start in 2018 with the protection of 17.5 undeveloped acres nestled between Interstate-79 and Nicholson Road in Franklin Park Borough.

Our newest conservation area, "Blackburn Woods," will forever protect the wooded viewshed along this part of the busy highway and provide a natural buffer between it and local neighborhoods. Its protection will preserve an active wildlife corridor and provide the community with a close-to-home place for quiet solitude and outdoor exploration.

The new Blackburn Woods conservation area was made possible by a generous donation from Franklin Park residents Ed and Connie Engler.

"One of the things Connie and I treasure about this area is the beautiful wooded hills and valleys all around us," said Ed. "Here in Franklin Park, and in many parts of the Pittsburgh area, people can live near or even in the city and still feel like they're close to nature. That natural landscape is part of the very unique character of this region, so we're happy to have been able to work with Allegheny Land Trust to protect this little piece of it."

ALT hopes to work with others in the community to expand this conservation area in the future.

Introducing the New Blackburn Woods



The new Blackburn Woods Conservation Area. Photo by Ed Engler.

notes

FROM THE LAND:

by Roy Kraynyk | VP of Land Protection & Capital Projects

Lining Up Projects for a Green 2018

Bright and early on January 2, Chris Beichner and I found ourselves in the standing-room-only Gold Room of the County Courthouse attending a Sheriffs Sale where a property we wanted was up for sale. The property was announced and immediately people were shouting out bids, \$10,000, \$12,000, \$15,000, \$18,000. Chris and I looked towards each other with surprise and adrenaline filled glances. This was ALT's first attempt to buy property at Sheriffs Sale auction.

We evaluated the property earlier in the year and being free of any environmental hazards we were especially excited to acquire it because it was adjacent to our Devils Hollow Conservation Area in Bell Acres, and Sewickley Heights Park. The 19 acres consists of mature woodlands, old logging trails and a rock quarry. We had the property appraised in advance of the auction which provided a maximum of \$76,000 that we would be willing to pay for it; and the Board approved that amount in September, 2017.

Chris countered at \$20,000. Then a man countered \$22,000. Chris and I nodded at each other and he countered again...\$25,000! The room fell silent. "Please step forward to make payment," ordered the clerk. Chris eagerly obliged and signed the paperwork to add this parcel to ALT's portfolio of conservation areas.

Three days later we closed on

17.5 acres in Franklin Park that was fully funded by a nearby resident. That conservation area, called Blackburn Woods, has frontage on I-79, and has potential to be expanded by two more parcels to reach Blueberry Hill Park.

This month, we are scheduled to close on 50 acres (Bell Acres) that we secured under contract in 2017 and spent much of the past year raising the \$375,000 to close. This parcel located on Hitzel Hill Road reaches from the ridgeline, down to and across Big Sewickley Creek. The parcel includes a wide floodplain enjoyed by many to access the creek to fish.

In March, the Board will be asked to approve 2 conservation easements (Thornburg Borough and Indiana Township) that total 56.35 acres. Conservation easements protect the land while the landowner maintains ownership. The easement prevents any development of the property.

At the moment, we have another 50 acres under contract for a December closing and I'm in negotiations with 5 other landowners in hopes of securing several more properties under contract before our grant application to the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in April.

Due in part to your ongoing support, ALT continues to raise the larger state grants necessary to buy the best remaining green space in our communities for all to enjoy. Thank you!

A winter view of a green space in Thornburg Borough.
Photo by Lindsay Dill.



ALLEGHENY LAND TRUST 2017 IN REVIEW

2017: A Year of Building

by Tom Dougherty | VP of Development & External Affairs

As shown in the graphic to the left, 2017 was an exciting and productive year on all fronts for ALT. Significant progress was made toward permanently protecting more green space, sustainably stewarding our current conservation areas, teaching people of all ages to care about the natural world, and rallying greater support for ALT.

A sincere and heartfelt *Thank You* to everyone who played a part in these accomplishments. We appreciate your support and look forward to working with you to accomplish the aggressive agenda for conservation that we have established for 2018. Find more information regarding 2017 on our website.

6 PROPERTIES



totaling

under contract for protection

121 ACRES



to save



67,000 Trees

to sequester



847,000 lbs
of Carbon

to absorb



176M gal.
of Rainwater

736
Volunteers



removed



7,015 lbs
of Trash

4,635
Volunteer
Hours



planted



1,000
Trees

\$106,594
In-Kind Value



improved



6 miles
of Trail

Trained



151
Educators in
Environmental
Education

Educated



8,619
Students
& 6,417
Community
Members

Ran



175
Environmental
Education
Programs



662 Members & Donors
raised
\$1.2M for ALT's work

This support gave us the roots to grow!

It's generosity like this that ensures we'll continue to protect more green space, maintain and improve our conservation areas, and provide more quality environmental education for all ages.

thank you!



Food Security Through Land Conservation



(Left) A member of a Grow Pittsburgh-supported garden tends to greens. Three Rivers Agricultural Land Initiative (TRALI) will permanently protect parcels like this to ensure long-term food security, community-building, and agricultural skills for our region. Photo courtesy of Grow Pittsburgh.

by **Chris Beichner** | President & CEO

Food and water: two of life's greatest essentials. For 25 years, we've protected critical drinking water by acquiring land connected with tranquil streams, natural waterways, and high quality watersheds. Our conservation areas can absorb one billion gallons of water every year, purifying and replenishing the area's water supply. Now, we're working to protect sources of food.

Food insecurity is a significant challenge facing families in Allegheny County. According to Just Harvest, 174,000 people in the Pittsburgh region are facing food insecurity, including 42,000 children in 2016. We believe ALT can make inroads to help address this food insecurity threat.

At the end of 2017, we partnered with Grow Pittsburgh, an East End non-profit with a regional vision for everyone to "grow and eat fresh, local and healthy food", to form the Three Rivers Agricultural Land Initiative (TRALI) to permanently protect endangered community gardens and urban farms from decimation.

There are over 80 urban gardens and farms throughout Allegheny County. Most are producing local, healthy fruits and vegetables on unprotected land. The current landowner can, at a moment's notice, decide they want to sell their land, build a building on it or simply reject volunteer's access. TRALI will protect these urban parcels to ensure they continue to produce and distribute fresh fruits and veggies to vulnerable populations.

A steering committee made up of three Grow Pittsburgh and three ALT representatives were established to oversee this new partnership. Additionally, both organizations sought three community representatives on the steering committee. Out of 25 applications, Dana Harris Yates of Homewood, Masoud Sayles of McKeesport and Gavin Deming of the North Side were chosen to sit on the steering committee.

TRALI goals for 2018 include prioritizing the most at-risk gardens and to work towards protecting at least five gardens by early 2019. We hope you'll support our organizations and stay tuned to this effort.

Pittsburgh Rises to the City Nature Challenge

by **Jessica Kester** | VP of Education

We all know that Pittsburghers love a good challenge. Mostly, in rising to the challenge on the field, a court, or ice; but what about rising to the challenge in nature?

For the first time, Pittsburgh will participate in the City Nature Challenge (CNC) as Allegheny Land Trust, The Carnegie Museum of Nature History, the Western PA Conservancy, Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, Upper St. Clair Citizens for Land Stewardship, and several other local organizations compete to document and log as much local nature as possible for the Pittsburgh region.

The CNC began as a citizen science dual between Los Angeles County and the San Francisco Bay Area in 2016 to see who “had the most nature” as documented by the iNaturalist platform. Since then the initiative’s co-founders, the citizen science teams from the California Academy of Sciences, and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County have been growing the challenge. This year’s challenge has gone global, and Pittsburgh has answered the call to find and document its natural assets.

Allegheny Land Trust will host a hike each day of the CNC this year (April 27-30) at different conservation areas and you’re invited --and you can bring a friend; no experience is necessary!

Simply download the free iNaturalist app to your mobile device (or bring a camera), join the City Nature Challenge 2018: Pittsburgh project (<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2018-pittsburgh>) and head outdoors. The great thing about iNaturalist is that you don’t need to know what you’re taking a picture of; simply take the photo (multiple angles are best) and upload it with any notes you think would help someone identify the organism (i.e. it smells like dead fish) and presto! An observation has been made.

Once entered, anyone in the world can help identify your photo and once at least three people agree on the identification, it becomes “research grade” and can be used by researchers around the world. All because you took a photo; that’s the beauty of citizen science.

So, whether yinz join us on a hike or you photograph the plants on your street while walking Fido, it all counts towards showing the world the natural beauty and diversity that we’re so lucky to have in the ‘Burgh.



Harrison Middle School Students log plant species found at Wingfield Pines in Spring 2016. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Nelson Mandela

Wingfield Pines Conservation Area Update

Wingfield Pines will be under construction in the coming year as a shift in the underground mining system in early November caused the contaminated mine water to flow directly into Chartiers Creek, bypassing the passive treatment system. ALT staff and mine engineering experts are working closely with the Department of Environmental Protection to determine the best method to fix the problem. We are working for a temporary solution by this Spring to continue to provide habitat for bird migration, habitat development, and seasonal educational programming. The permanent fix will require significant construction and should be complete by May 2019. For any questions or concerns, or how you can help, contact Emilie Rzotkiewicz at erzotkiewicz@alleghenylandtrust.org or 412-741-2750.

Helping Local People Save Local Land Now for a Quarter Century

by **Lindsay Dill** | Marketing Communications Director

In 1993, Allegheny Land Trust formed in response to an outcry for protection of community green space. Since then, our nonprofit has protected more than 2,100 acres in Allegheny and Washington Counties. Through our strategic priorities of Land Protection, Stewardship, Education, and Urban Greening, we plan to forge on creating a better quality of life for all in the Pittsburgh region.

So much greenspace is being lost to development and it is essential to protect it where possible. Thanks, ALT!

Cathy Zellers | Explorer, Birder

by **Lindsay Dill** | Marketing Communications Director

As Pittsburgh begins to gain attention as a the young, hip, trendy city, it gains more visitors looking to get a slice of the PGH action, or at least a pierogi.

While there has been a cultural shift resulting in more people moving back to the city, sprawl continues to move on relentlessly in the county overall. This sprawl has resulted in Allegheny County's loss of 10,000 acres of tree canopy just in the past five years. Meanwhile, the residents, the water quality, the air quality, and the animal habitats suffer the consequences.

This year marks ALT's 25th anniversary, and in our quarter century of existence we've fought to balance sprawl and development with permanently protected green space. Since 1993, we've protected more than 2,100 acres in Allegheny and Washington counties that protect the region's unique scenic quality, biodiversity, and water quality. As a result of ALT's work, every Allegheny County resident now lives within 12 miles of a conservation area, which provide environmental benefit and opportunities for recreation and education for all.

It was due to communities' demands for the protection of the region's resources that Allegheny Land Trust was formed in 1993, and it's due to proactive communities that we now have so much land protected in the region. Through advocacy, volunteer, and financial support, Pittsburgh's communities have helped us help local people save local land. We thank you for that.

We'll be celebrating our anniversary by featuring 25 supporters who have helped us get to where we are today, inviting supporters on members-only hikes throughout the year, providing punch cards to incentivize attendance to our environmental education programs, sharing photos and stories from our archive across social media, and by forging on in our strategic priorities to protect more land, maintain and improve our conservation areas, provide environmental education to all ages, and to engage with urban greening.

We hope you'll join us in celebrating by becoming a member, attending our environmental education programs, lending a hand at one of our open volunteer days, helping to spread the word about ALT, and by practicing conservation in your community to ensure a green present and future for generations to come.



(Top) Volunteers improve trail at Barking Slopes Conservation Area.

(Right) ALT educators participate in a bird training at Wingfield Pines Conservation Area.

Photos by Lindsay Dill



Stay Tuned to Celebrate

Helping Local People Save Local Land for 25 Years | You helped us get here, and we hope you'll follow and join in on the celebration.

We'll share supporter stories, offer opportunities to win some sweet outdoor swag, host special events, and more in celebration of our 25th Anniversary. To follow and join in on the fun, visit the 25th Anniversary page on our website where we'll centralize all of the happenings:

alleghenylantrust.org/25-years



25 Supporters for 25 Years



Volunteers, donors, and board members hike Linbrook Woodlands. Photo by Lindsay Dill.

by Lindsay Dill | Marketing Communications Director

Your support has helped us thrive.

For 25 years, ALT has helped local people save local land. It's due to thousands of supporters ranging from casual volunteers to major donors that we've been able to protect more than 2,100 acres of green space.

As part of our 25th Anniversary, detailed on the previous page, we'll be substituting our typical "Meet a Steward" column with featured supporter stories from our "25 Supporters for 25 Years" series.

Supporters come in many types: Members, Donors, Advisors, Board Members, Volunteers, Partners, and more.

Sigo Falk's story is one of 25 that we'll be sharing in 2018 as part of celebrating our 25th Anniversary: alleghenylandtrust.org/25-years

Featured Supporter:



SIGO FALK

by Lindsay Dill | Marketing Communications Director

Every day, Sigo Falk puts on his boots, walks out his front door, and hikes at least one mile along a trail network that he helped to create more than 20 years ago. That land provides a space that he sees as essential, not only to a healthy personal life, but also to a healthy community.

"When you're [outdoors], you're happy," Sigo said. "You can't just live with brick and mortar; you have to get a touch of reality."

Sigo, when hiking with families, recommends parents allow their children to walk a small loop twice: first rounding the loop while holding their parent's hand, then making a second lap alone. He says this can be a first small step in allowing the child to develop their own individuality and freedom to become who they're meant to be.

When he reflects on how he became who he is today, Sigo talks about backpacking and trekking on trails in Vermont, Nepal, India, and Tibet. His face shifts into nostalgic smiles and smirks as he reminisces on everything from the beauty of a rock face to the trials and tribulations of trip mishaps. From those trips, he's learned both to plan for the unplanned, and to foster a connected and sustainable culture in his community.

Sigo brings many of these lessons to his involvement with Allegheny Land Trust, and he is one of ALT's longest supporters. He was asked to join the board in 1996 as ALT was acquiring Dead Man's Hollow, and he became Board President by 2003 as ALT was acquiring Wingfield Pines; by the end of his tenure, the board modified the bylaws to allow those in his position to stay an extra year to ease transitions. His experience and connections coupled with his humble persona brought an entrepreneurial posture to ALT that allowed for scrappiness when and where it was needed, and authenticity and legitimacy when and where it was needed.

"When he spoke, he was very thoughtful, and people listened," VP of Land Protection & Capital Projects Roy Kraynyk recalled of board meetings with Sigo. "We'd be talking about mundane event details—like, 'have we ordered bagels yet', and he would interject with something profound and inspiring. It brought us all back to reality."

In addition to his involvement with ALT, Sigo is a long-time Chatham University Board Member and a major benefactor of its Falk School of Sustainability. He's also currently involved with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Heinz History Center, the YWCA, and Thornburg Borough.

ALT still grows thanks to Sigo's support, and his impression will last as the land he helped protect remains green forever.

"Open space is essential to a community," Sigo said. "It enhances our towns and makes them better places to live."

UPCOMING EVENTS

E Education Events

V Volunteer Events



Barking Slopes Stewardship Series

Barking Slopes

April 21 - Earth Day Special! | 9 – 12 pm
May 19 | 9 – 12 pm
June 23 | 9 – 12 pm

Celebrate Earth Day with the ALT stewardship team for the first of the 2018 Barking Slopes Clean Up series. Bring a friend and tend to this rocky, hillside green space along the Allegheny River. We'll improve the trails to clear trash, natural debris, and invasive species.

All ages | Free to attend

V



City Nature Challenge Series Various Conservation Areas

April 27-30 | Varying Times

Join as Pittsburgh competes for the first time in the National City Nature Challenge! We'll host hikes on each day at several of our conservation areas where attendees will learn how to use the iNaturalist app to photograph and identify species of flora and fauna. No experience is necessary. Find more info and time details for each day on our website.

- APR 27: Early Spring Plants @ Linbrook Woodlands
- APR 28: Tree ID @ Dead Man's Hollow
- APR 29: Wildflowers @ Barking Slopes
- APR 30: Creatures of the Hollow @ Devil's Hollow

All ages | \$5/person each hike

V **E**



City Nature Challenge Tree Planting Dead Man's Hollow

April 28 | 9 – 11 am

As part of the City Nature Challenge, our stewardship team will lead a tree planting at the historic, haunted Dead Man's Hollow! Our CNC Tree ID Hike is just after the tree planting, so give back and plant some trees before learning how to tell them apart!

All ages | Free to attend

V



Starlight Stroll

Venango Trail

April 28 | 8 – 9 pm

Stroll under the light of each month's full moon with trained education staff. Topics vary depending on the evening's expert, and can include nocturnal and crepuscular creatures, astronomy, lore, and more!

All ages | Cost: \$5

E



#TrailTuesdays

Dead Man's Hollow

April - September | 4:30 – 6:30 pm

Lace up your boots, get outside, and lend a hand in helping improve local land! Join us every third Tuesday (April-September) as we work to improve and expand the Hollow's trail system.

All ages | Free to attend

V



Wingfield Pines Conservation Area Update

Volunteers are the backbone of our stewardship work; without them, we couldn't care for our 2,100+ acres of conservation lands. Independent volunteer land stewards are our main support, but often are faced with projects that are too challenging for one person to handle on their own. This is where our volunteer groups shine. Whether it's a group of 6 or 60 dedicated hands, groups allow us to efficiently clear out a dump site, plant trees, or tackle acres of Japanese knotweed. Often these are corporate groups where a team of staff joins us outside during their work day, and many companies offer a donation matching service hours. BNY Mellon and Google are a few of our long running partnerships, and one of our newest is a group of Apple retail store employees. These all started with a single person motivated to coordinate their peers to do good. Ask your workplace if you can organize a group event to give back and do good at a conservation area.



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Fitness in the Trees (F.I.T.) Series, Basic Dead Man's Hollow

May - September, 1st & 3rd Wednesdays
1st Weds, 5 - 6 pm | 3rd Weds, 5 - 6:30 pm

Looking to spend more time in nature, get fit, and learn about your surroundings? Join our environmental Education Team to get FIT on our trails using nothing but your self and the green space! This is a bimonthly series; the first WEDS of each month is the 1-hour basic training program and the third WEDS of each month is the 1.5-hour advanced training program.
MAY 2, 16; JUN 6, 20; JUL 11; AUG 1, 15; SEPT 5, 19

All Ages | Basic Program: \$15/program or \$70/series of 5. Advanced Program: \$20/program or \$75/series of 4. Or \$140 for all 9.

E



Creek Critters

Irwin Run

May 9 | 4:30 - 6:30 pm

Formerly Macro Mayhem. Join our trained education team as we wade into Irwin Run's water in search of the macroinvertebrates that can help determine water health. This event occurs several times throughout the year.

All Ages | Cost: \$5

E



Plant Pursuit: Wildflowers

Dead Man's Hollow

May 5 | 10 am - 12 pm

Formerly Bountiful Botany. Take a walk with one of our trained education staff as we identify a portion of the botanical diversity that can be found growing at this state-designated Wild Plant Sanctuary. This event occurs several times throughout the year; today, we'll focus on wildflower identification.

All Ages | Cost: \$5

E



Photo courtesy of Flickr Creative Commons by user Kaye Heins.

Twitter in the Trees

Wingfield Pines

May 12 | 8 - 10 am, 10 am - 4 pm

Listen to the sounds of the woods, ponds, and creek as we venture into Wingfield Pines to count the wide variety of birds that call it home. Become a citizen scientist; no experience or equipment needed. Stick around from 10 am - 4 pm to help in the migratory bird count with our friends at Upper St. Clair Citizens for Land Stewardship.

E

All ages | Cost: \$5

Fungus Among Us Hike

Devil's Hollow

May 12 | 9 am - 12 pm

Gain a better understanding of mushrooms with our education team and Western PA Mushroom Club Identifiers. We'll spend the first hour learning about habitat, tree id, and basic fungi knowledge, and spend the last two hours hiking Devil's Hollow in search of mushrooms. While we'll be collecting mushrooms for educational purposes, we won't be harvesting for food.

All Ages | Cost: \$20

E



To register and find more information, visit:
alleghenylantrust.org/events



ALLEGHENY LAND TRUST

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ABOUT ALT

Allegheny Land Trust (ALT) is a nationally accredited, independent, non-profit organization that has been helping local people save local land in the Pittsburgh region for a quarter century.

Founded in 1993, ALT has protected more than 2,100 acres of green space preserving our region's unique natural beauty, providing enhanced outdoor recreational opportunities, improving water quality, fostering biodiversity, and enhancing the overall quality of life for our communities. ALT's areas of strategic priority include Land Conservation, Stewardship, Education, and Urban Greening.

ALT's mission has expanded in recent years to include innovative methods of land conservation in support of community needs for urban green space as well the addition of a professional environmental education team teaching children of all ages to understand and appreciate the natural world.

With conservation areas in 27 municipalities, there is now an ALT conservation project within 12 miles of every Allegheny County resident. The benefits of ALT's efforts can be experienced across the region from McKeesport to Franklin Park, Upper St. Clair to Blawnox, Mt. Washington to Plum, and many places in between.



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Vistas is underwritten by an anonymous donor. Thank you!

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FRONT COVER: An ALT member ice skates on the frozen ponds of Wingfield Pines Conservation Area. By Tom Dougherty.

BACK COVER: Winter grasses at Audubon Greenway Conservation Area. By Lindsay Dill.



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