



Western Reserve Land Conservancy
OUR LAND. OUR LEGACY.

Spring 2009

Volume 2, Issue 1



Landline

A Western Reserve Land Conservancy newsletter celebrating land conservation in Cuyahoga, Geauga and Lake counties

Western Reserve Land Conservancy

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The Land Conservancy is excited to be part of a unique funding program that connects land and people through water quality protection.



Chris Szell

Regional Land Protection Associate

The program is complex and the names of those involved would constitute a hearty alphabet soup: sponsor NEORSD (Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District), administrator Ohio EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and the program itself, WRRSP (Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program). OEPA simply takes a portion of the interest it earns on loans

See **SZELL** page 3

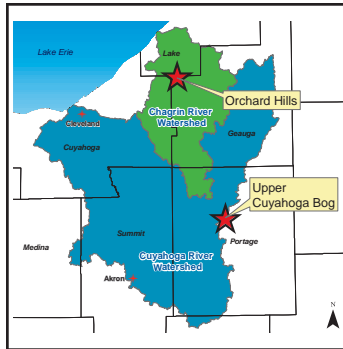
Become a member of Western Reserve Land Conservancy!
See back page for details.

Collaboration

NEORSD helps protect key watersheds by working with Land Conservancy, others

The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District is helping the Land Conservancy and other groups keep the region's watersheds clean.

NEORSD has agreed to participate in the state-initiated Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program and to sponsor seven projects in 2009, including two properties the Land Conservancy has worked to preserve, Orchard Hills in Geauga and Lake counties and Upper Cuyahoga Bog in Portage County. Both tracts are to be managed by the park systems in



their respective counties.

Sponsorship does not require the sewer district to spend any of its own money but does provide state funding for land-

protection efforts.

'The district's focus has always been protecting the environment,' says Julius Ciaccia, NEORSD's executive director.

Land Conservancy officials applauded the district for acknowledging that projects

See **NEORSD** page 3

Hard-working conservationist is one rare individual

Seven years ago, Dr. James Bissell started identifying rare plants and animals on properties the Land Conservancy hoped to protect. Today, it is hard to imagine a time when Bissell, the director of conservation for the Cleveland Museum of Natural History's Center for Conservation & Biodiversity, wasn't searching for tamarack bogs and spotted turtles at the Land Conservancy's request.

SPOTLIGHT



James Bissell

"I view Western Reserve Land Conservancy as one of our most important partners," Bissell says. "I think it is a great outfit — passionate people, great expertise and a staff

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **March 14** — Triple Tap, the Land Conservancy's annual festival at Patterson's Fruit Farm, 8765 Mulberry Road, Chesterland. Check www.wrlc.cc for more details.
- **April 18, 8 a.m.** — Land Conservancy steelhead fishing event on Grand River at Harpersfield Dam near Geneva. \$20 fee includes guide, prizes, afternoon fish fry. To register, call (440) 729-9621, Ext. 112 or send e-mail to kbiehler@wrlc.cc.

Create your own economic stimulus package.

Act now before tax incentives expire! See page 2.

willing to help us out at a moment's notice."

He adds, "It's a great partnership."

Bissell, 61, who grew up on a farm in Austinburg Township and still lives in Ashtabula County, has been with the museum for 37 years and has been the curator of botany

See **BISSELL** page 3

Have you remembered the Land Conservancy in your will?

Few contributions will have a more lasting impact than those that forever preserve our beautiful natural areas. Please consider a testamentary gift to Western Reserve Land Conservancy. For more information, contact Jean Gokorsch at (440) 729-9621 or jgokorsch@wrlc.cc.



Geauga project protects LaDue Reservoir

A Geauga County property owner has granted the Land Conservancy a 21-acre conservation easement that will help protect LaDue Reservoir, which supplies drinking water to the city of Akron and is considered an important wildlife area.

The land is west of state Route 44, south of the 1,500-acre reservoir in Auburn Township and adjacent to a 9,000-acre area managed by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources for fishing, hunting and other recreational uses.

Under terms of the easement, LaCountria Ltd., the property owner, will use 16 acres for agri-



cultural purposes. The remaining five acres will be a wildlife buffer area between the farmland and LaDue. LaCountria will be allowed to build one agriculture-related building on the site as well as trails.

The federally- and state-threatened bald eagle, which is known to nest at LaDue, is one of the endangered species living in the region.

Auburn Township has zoned the property for passive open space use, which is meant to protect natural areas. Township trustees recently passed a resolution supporting the conservation easement.

Vineyard, natural areas part of couple's plans

Jay and Beth Schabel of Geauga County have donated a 64-acre conservation easement to the Land Conservancy. The property is located at the end of a cul-de-sac on Shadow Wood Circle off Lucky Bell Lane, south of Bell Street in Auburn Township.

The Schabels purchased the property in 2004 and wanted to see the rural character of the land preserved. They have planted a vineyard at the site with plans to produce ice wine.



Jay and Beth Schabel

Mark Skowronski, director of land protection for the Land Conservancy, said mixed-use conservation easements with zones for agriculture and natural areas are not uncommon.

Chris Szell, regional land protection associate for the Land Conservancy, praised the couple's actions. "Jay and Beth should be commended for the commitment they made to their land and their community," he said. "They are wonderful people to work with, and as co-founders of Auburn Twin Oak Charities — a local nonprofit that works with new local charities to help make them successful — they clearly understand the importance of giving back."

Tax incentives expire after 2009

The generous tax-incentive program for farmers and others who voluntarily conserve their land is set to expire on Dec. 31 unless Congress renews it. Grantors of conservation easements may take a charitable deduction of up to 50 percent of their adjusted gross income in the year of the gift. Conservation easements donated in 2009 are eligible. For more details, call us at (440) 729-9621.

Land Conservancy a semi-finalist for national award

The Land Conservancy was one of 30 semi-finalists for The Collaboration Prize, a national award for which more than 644 organizations were nominated. The \$250,000 prize was created by the Phoenix-based Lodestar Foundation to recognize non-profit efficiency.

The winner will be named in March.

Group works to bring back native Ohio brook trout

The Land Conservancy is part of a group that is helping reintroduce the colorful and threatened native Ohio brook trout into streams here.

Once found only in tiny Spring Brook in Geauga County, the trout — which need cold, clean water to survive — now live in 10 streams in Northeast Ohio, thanks to the efforts of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the Brook Trout Advisory Committee.



**"They're the most beautiful fish ever."
— Anne Murphy**



"This has been a very successful program," said Anne Murphy, the Land Conservancy's director of stewardship and conservation resources and

the committee's chair. Member groups range from local park systems to Trout Unlimited.

Murphy said the group is now developing a Habitat Sustainability Index in the hope of finding even more streams where brook trout can live.

"Ohio brook trout seem to be a little more tolerant of stream conditions," she said.

The group also hopes to establish a local trout hatchery and build a new exhibit at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo.

Fall festival is outdoor celebration

The Land Conservancy encourages people of all ages to get out and enjoy our beautiful Western Reserve.

Dozens of friends and supporters did just that on Oct. 18 at the Land Conservancy's annual fall festival at Plzak property Chagrin Falls.

The family event included a scavenger hunt, music, crafts for children, s'mores and tree-planting at nearby Muggleton Farm.



Clockwise from bottom left, the Land Conservancy's Pete McDonald leads a crew of tree-planters at Muggleton Farm; a mature tree is the perfect play spot for a few festival-goers; and playing with pumpkins never goes out of style.



HONORING OUR STEWARDS

November 19, 2008, Chagrin Valley Hunt Club



Top, Dick Brubaker, Marilyn Hyde, Karen Brubaker and Rick Hyde. At middle right are Loyal Wilson, Julie Bolton and Margaret Wilson. At right are Dr. Shattuck Hartwell and Mary Jane Hartwell.



NEORSD's move helps keep watersheds clean

From page 1

outside the NEORSD service area could have a huge impact on the stormwater runoff experienced by its customers. Both the 558-acre Upper Cuyahoga Bog in Shalersville and Orchard Hills, a 246-acre former golf course, are outside the NEORSD service area.

"As we all know, stormwater runoff ignores community



The Upper Cuyahoga Bog is an ecological gem.

boundaries," says Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells, NEORSD's manager of environmental pro-

grams. "The more we can do to support the preservation and enhancement of natural stormwater sinks - open spaces, wetlands, and floodplains - the fewer stormwater problems our customers will have." The Land Conservancy projects will protect nearly 800 acres — including some of the highest-quality wetlands — and 18,000 linear feet of stream habitat.

Bissell

From page 1

since 1972. Bissell and other staff members do extensive fieldwork, identify and protect

rare natural communities in northern Ohio. The center regularly does field surveys for the Land Conservancy.

Bissell won the 2004 Natural Areas Association George B. Fell Award, which honors a

person who exemplifies lifelong dedication to the preservation and stewardship of natural areas. He also received the Lifetime Achievement Award from EcoCity Cleveland.

Szell

From page 1

it makes through the state Water Pollution Control Loan

Fund to further advance water protection across Ohio.

Bottom line: A group of forward-thinking public servants are working together and going beyond traditional jurisdic-

ditional boundaries for the benefit of the entire region.

This program is an important source of funding for our land protection and restoration efforts.

Land Conservancy's preserved acreage tops 14,000 mark

In December, the Land Conservancy reached a milestone in its work to protect the area's natural resources.

The Land Conservancy topped the 14,000-acre mark in total protected property when it secured conservation easements in Huron and Erie counties, according to Director of Land Protection Mark Skowronski.

The eight land trusts that merged to form the Land Conservancy together protected about 8,000 acres over a 20-year period. In the three years since the merger, we have preserved more than 6,000 acres – a 75-percent increase over a 20-year total. To date, we have preserved more than 230 properties.



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Our members make our land protection efforts possible.
We thank you for supporting our mission.

Are you LinkedIn? Join the Western Reserve Land Conservancy group at www.linkedin.com

If you would rather get Landline online, e-mail us at gpausch@wrlc.cc.

Yes, I want to join the Land Conservancy.

Please check your membership level:

- \$15 Student
- \$25 Introductory
- \$50 Supporting
- \$100 Donor
- \$250 Contributing
- \$500 Sustainer

Member benefits: Car decal, event notices, regional newsletter, satisfaction of supporting our work plus additional benefits for those contributing \$50 or more.



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The Land Conservancy is a tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation.



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Our mission, our vision

Western Reserve Land Conservancy seeks to preserve the scenic beauty, rural character and natural resources of northern Ohio. We want to help create a network of interconnected natural areas, working land and green space throughout the region. We envision northern Ohio as a stunningly beautiful and healthy place to live, work and play.