



Western Reserve Land Conservancy
OUR LAND. OUR LEGACY.

Spring 2009

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Landline

A Western Reserve Land Conservancy newsletter celebrating land conservation in Ashtabula, Mahoning and Trumbull counties

Western Reserve Land Conservancy

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When we are asked why it is so important to preserve land, one reason makes its way into every conversation: It improves the quality of life in our region.



Scott Hill
Field Director

Two projects we are working on now show how our land-preservation mission touches different groups – and for different reasons.

In the Mahoning Valley, we are helping protect the Meander Creek watershed by preserving land around Meander Creek Reservoir, the drinking water source for about 250,000 people, including the city of

See HILL page 3

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

Nice catch

Land Conservancy purchase would add fishing access along Conneaut Creek

Conneaut Creek is one of Ashtabula County's jewels.

The stream, which has been designated a State Wild and Scenic River, is one of the finest steelhead trout fisheries in Northeast Ohio and is one of its most picturesque waterways.

Along its banks are mature maple, oak, cherry and hickory trees, as well as flora and fauna unique to cool-water riparian corridors. This habitat also supports whitetail deer, wild turkey, various waterfowl, great blue heron, bald eagles and more than six dozen species of fish.

The Land Conservancy, work-



ing in conjunction with Ashtabula County MetroParks, has developed a project that will increase public access to this beautiful river.

The Land Conservancy has struck an agreement to purchase the 35-acre Woodring property in Conneaut and combine it with an adjacent 79-acre site already owned by the county. The result would be a 114-acre county park, one that would provide parking and access for steelhead fishing, protect a sensitive riparian corridor and give the park system an educational site for

See CREEK 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

- **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 kbihler@wrlc.cc.
- **June 18** — Save the date for a celebration of conservation by the Land Conservancy and Mill Creek MetroParks at Fellows Riverside Gardens, 123 McKinley Ave., Youngstown.

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.



Project to protect Mahoning Valley water

The Land Conservancy and its conservation partners in the Mahoning Valley are working to protect the Meander Creek Watershed, the drinking water source for about 250,000 people in the Youngstown area.



ervoir and treated by the Mahoning Valley Sanitation District is the sole source of water for the Youngstown, Niles and McDonald community water systems, which serve Youngstown, Niles, Canfield and 10 townships.

The project received a big boost when the Youngstown Foundation awarded the Land Conservancy a \$25,000 grant to acquire conservation easements in the watershed.

Conservation easements obtained by the Land Conservancy would offset the increasing negative impacts to the watershed, including new housing and commercial development, failing home and commercial septic systems, agricultural runoff, oil and gas wells and road/rail stream crossings.

Surface water taken from Meander Creek Res-

Conservation easement is Ashtabula County first

Dick and Rhonda Thompson's move to protect 286 acres with a conservation easement made history — it was the Land Conservancy's first project in Ashtabula County.

The land, which straddles the Ashtabula-Trumbull County border, is now used primarily for commercial grain farming. It produces corn, soy beans, wheat and oats.

Dick Thompson, a former



A stretch of Pymatuning Creek runs through the property.

Champion resident who began purchasing the property in 1985, is a conservationist who wants to see this land perma-

nently protected.

The Land Conservancy successfully sought funding on behalf of the landowners through the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Easement Purchase Program, according to Eastern Field Director Scott Hill.

"We're grateful that the Thompsons took this important step to permanently protect their beautiful property," Hill said.

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) 773-5582.

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.

A Grand get-together

River will be site of our April 18 steelhead fishing event

The Land Conservancy is hosting a fishing outing on the Grand River, and you're invited.

Novice and veteran steelheaders alike are welcome to join us April 18 at the Harpersfield Covered Bridge Metropark just south of Geneva in Ashtabula County. Cost is \$20 per person and includes fishing guides, 50/50 raffle prizes for the longest fish, most fish and other categories, as well as a 3 p.m. fish fry at the Ellsworth Pavilion. Registration will be from 8-9 a.m., and then anglers



The area below the dam is a popular spot.

will head to local fishing spots with their guides.

Equipment will be available for those who want to try fly fishing.

To register for the event, call Kim Bihler at (440) 729-9621, Ext. 112 or send e-mail to kbihler@wrlc.cc.

"People travel from out West to fish for steelhead in Ohio. It's a premier steelhead fishery, one of the best in the country," said Scott Hill, director of the Land Conservancy's Eastern Field Office.



Above, a fly fisherman tries his luck in the Grand River. The Harpersfield Covered Bridge, left, is perhaps the most recognizable enclosed span in Ashtabula County.



Project would create park on Conneaut Creek

From page 1

promoting locally grown food.

The Land Conservancy is now seeking funding to complete the purchase and combine it with the land owned by Ashtabula County MetroParks on the south side of South Ridge Road. The current landowner, who, with his father, has owned a tire business in



In 2005, Conneaut Creek was designated a State Wild and Scenic River.

Conneaut for more than a decade, is relocating. Both the

Ohio Division of Wildlife and the Central Basin Steelheaders are supporting the Land Conservancy's purchase.

"This is a golden opportunity to protect one of Ohio's great sportfishing streams," says Scott Hill, director of the Land Conservancy's Eastern Field Office.

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.

Hill

From page 1

Youngstown. A clean, reliable water source is vital to the valley's future. To the north,

we're working with the Ashtabula County MetroParks to enhance a regional treasure – our world-class steelhead fishing. We are helping create a 114-acre public park with fishing access to Conneaut Creek

as well as other amenities.

The most livable communities in the United States have active, vibrant land trusts. Here at the Land Conservancy, that is on our minds every day.

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 properties 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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We thank you for supporting our mission.

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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
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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.