



Candi Moore & Don Wiper of the Licking Land Trust, Jay Matthews, Pat James, Matthew Johnson-Qualls, Alex Johnson and U.S. Fish & Wildlife biologist Kurt Waterstradt in front of the James/Matthews' new wetland.

### Out and About around Licking County

Trust members and friends hike, bike, and explore the diversity of nature



Licking Land Trust members enjoying the Trust's hike at Raccoon Creek in March, 2009.



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*The mission of the Licking Land Trust is the preservation and permanent conservation protection of our central Ohio green spaces—wetlands, woodlands, farmlands, riparian corridors, and scenic vistas, and education about the importance of green spaces and their conservation, all for the public benefit.*

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# NEWSLETTER

A Publication for Members and Friends

Summer 2009

Seeking to preserve, protect and enhance land in perpetuity for the public benefit

## Responsible stewardship involves annual inspection of Trust properties

The Trust's acquisition of conservation easements and land is just the first step in preserving regional green space in perpetuity. To make sure the land continues to be conserved, the Trust inspects every property annually. With 26 properties covering almost 1,100 acres, inspection is a major activity of the Trust board and members who volunteer to assist. The annual frequency is recommended as a key policy for land trusts by the Land Trust Alliance, the national organization of land trusts.

The starting point for every annual inspection is a review of "Baseline Documentation" which was created at the time of the easement or property acquisition. The Baseline includes a thorough inventory of the terrain, soil, water, vegetation and cultural attributes of the property, and a summary of what will and won't be permitted on the property in future years. It serves as the reference document for monitoring future changes to the property and conducting annual inspections.

There are important differences between properties for which the Trust holds conservation easements and properties owned by the Trust. For easements, the Trust's role is generally



Early spring growth in a maturing woodland on the Farris – Mockingbird Hill property (April 2009 photo, Skip Shepherd).

limited to keeping a watchful eye on the property to insure that its use is consistent with the stipulated conservation terms and principles. For owned properties, in addition to monitoring the ecological status of the property, the Trust must

**"When possible, the Trust takes a 'hands-off' approach, letting nature take its course."**

establish the appropriate types and levels of public use including access points and trail development, and address issues such as potential encroachment by adjoining

property owners. When possible, the Trust takes a "hands-off" approach, letting nature take its course. In some cases, however, very real issues such as the harvesting of downed trees and the control of invasive species must be addressed.

For each inspection, the property owner is contacted prior to the visit. Then at least two Trust members, aided by appropriate plat maps, topographic maps, and air photos, participate in the monitoring of each property. One inspector needs to have conducted a previous site examination and be familiar

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with specific issues of the property. Monitoring generally involves examining the perimeter of the property to ascertain boundary conditions and crossing the property to visit areas of particular environmental interest or sensitivity. Photos are taken to document general property conditions and particular elements of interest. Over time the Trust thus develops valuable records of floristic change. Ideally properties will be examined during different seasons over the years to get a better sense of the property’s status through the seasons.

The 2009 property-monitoring season is underway. All that participate in this important part of the Trust’s mission truly enjoy the quiet chance to walk some fields and woodlots and to witness the seasons unfold over land that will be preserved forever. Trust members are strongly encouraged to volunteer to participate in these property inspections. If you like to walk and want to help, contact Tod Frolking at [frolking@denison.edu](mailto:frolking@denison.edu).

*—Tod Frolking, Board*



*Property encroachment and long term health of forest stands are ongoing issues where yards and woodlots meet such as at the Park Trails property (March 2009 photo).*



*Partners for Fish & Wildlife changes the terrain*

Wildlife flourishes in new wetlands

“Partners for Fish & Wildlife,” a program sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has changed the sounds heard on Pat James’ and Jay Matthews’ property, which is conserved under easement granted to the Licking Land Trust. “We can hear the spring peepers singing at night now. We’ve never heard them in our pond.” Pat and Jay have had a pond for years, but they just got a wetland. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Kurt Waterstradt gave them technical and financial help to establish the wetland on a corner of the property. The bulldozer came last May to build a low berm. This spring, the peepers are singing.

One of the big differences between most wetlands and most ponds is fish. Wetlands are usually too shallow for fish. The fish that live in ponds eat the larvae of frogs and salamanders. That’s why frogs and salamanders need fish-free water for growing up. A huge variety of species are attracted to wetlands. During a visit this April, Kurt showed Pat’s and Jay’s family three wood ducks and five snipe using the new wetland.

“Partners for Fish & Wildlife” exists to help landowners improve wildlife habitat. U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologists look for landowners who are motivated to take good care of their land, and to protect some space for wildlife. This program has helped many Licking County landowners improve wildlife habitat. It has established or enhanced a dozen wetlands in

Licking County and more than 300 across Ohio -- all on a voluntary basis. In addition to wetland projects, “Partners for Fish & Wildlife” helped Dawes Arboretum plant native grass and flowers, helped the Licking Park District plant native hardwood trees along Lobdell Creek, and completed habitat projects with 14 private families in Licking County.

Recently, the Partners program received a grant with the specific goal of establishing wetlands in Licking, Knox and Morrow counties. These wetlands will provide nesting habitat for mallards and wood ducks in the summer. During migration, they support ring-necked ducks, pintails, hooded mergansers, teal and many other species. It’s called the Black Duck area because biologists have noticed these increasingly rare ducks using local wetlands during the winter months.

If you’d like to hear more frogs or see more birds on your property, contact biologist Kristin Westad at 740/258-7686 or [kristin\\_westad@fws.gov](mailto:kristin_westad@fws.gov).

*—Kristin Westad, Biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

Tax incentives help increase pace of land conservation

In 2006 the US Congress approved a tremendous expansion of the federal tax incentive for landowners who donate conservation easements on their property. These powerful incentives, **still in effect through the end of 2009**, have helped America’s land trusts increase the pace of conservation by about a million acres a year – an area the size of Rhode Island.

The law:

- Raises the maximum income tax deduction a donor can take for donating a conservation easement from **30%** of their adjusted gross income (AGI) in any year to **50%**;
- Allows qualified farmers and ranchers to deduct up to **100%** of their AGI; and
- Increases the number of years over which a donor can take deductions from 6 to **16 years**.

These changes enable family farmers, ranchers and other moderate-income landowners to get a more significant tax benefit for donating a conservation easement on their land. **Under law prior to 2006**, an agricultural landowner earning \$50,000 a year who donated a conservation easement worth \$1 million could take a total of no more than \$90,000 in tax deductions! Under the newer law still in effect, that same landowner is able to take as much as \$800,000 in tax deductions – still less than the full value of the donation, but a significant increase.

This legislation has created a true win-win situation – thousands of acres of beautiful lands preserved for the

enjoyment of future generations and a much better tax deal for the generous donors of these lands. While the primary motivation for most landowners continues to be protecting their land forever, the increased tax incentive makes these wonderful gifts even more attractive for most donors.

While these important tax incentives are currently set to expire at the end of 2009, there is promising activity in both houses of Congress to make this easement-enhanced tax incentive permanent. In the House, Representatives Mike Thompson (D-CA) and Dave Camp (R-MI) have introduced legislation (H.R. 1576) to make the enhanced tax incentive permanent, and the bill now has a bipartisan list of 174 cosponsors from all over the country, including Rep. Zack Space (D-OH/18<sup>th</sup>).

Senators Max Baucus (D-MT) and Charles Grassley (R-IA) have introduced similar legislation in the Senate (S. 469), with 27 cosponsors. The President’s fiscal year 2009 budget also endorses an identical provision.

The Licking Land Trust is a key player in the national land trust community as a member of the Land Trust Alliance, an organization that includes over 1,600 land trusts across the country. For more information on the provisions of the law, please contact the Licking Land Trust at [lickinglandtrust@windstream.net](mailto:lickinglandtrust@windstream.net) or call Greg Sharkey at (614) 787-4739. We welcome the opportunity to help you explore the possibility of granting a conservation easement for the permanent protection of your land.

*—Greg Sharkey, Board*

THE LEGACY CLUB: A NEW INITIATIVE OF THE TRUST

The Board of Trustees of the Licking Land Trust is pleased to announce the creation of **The Legacy Club**. This special group of supporters has made a lasting commitment to land conservation by naming the Licking Land Trust as a beneficiary in their estate plans – by will, trust, retirement plan, or life insurance policy.

If you have already made provisions for the Trust in your estate plans, we thank you and encourage you to contact us to share any specific preferences on how you would like your gift to be used. Even if your gift is unrestricted, please contact us so that we can recognize you as a member of The Legacy Club and ensure that you have correctly designated the Trust in your plans.

If you would like to explore the possibility of naming the Licking Land Trust as a beneficiary in your estate plan, we welcome your phone call or email inquiry, with no obligation on your part.

Licking Land Trust Board member Greg Sharkey is happy to help in answering your questions related to estate gifts and The Legacy Club. Greg may be reached at [gsharkey@tnc.org](mailto:gsharkey@tnc.org) or (614) 787-4739. Additional information on The Legacy Club is available on-line at [www.lickinglandtrust.org](http://www.lickinglandtrust.org).





**Save the Date**  
**June 13      Nature Hike at the Fryman Reserve, 10am**  
**August 9-15   Hartford Fair, Trust Information Booth**  
**October 27    The Trust's 20th Anniversary Annual Banquet**

**Help the Trust**  
**Nominate a member, friend or yourself to join the Board of Trustees. More information available at [www.lickinglandtrust.org](http://www.lickinglandtrust.org)**

**Volunteer for a shift at the Trust's booth at the Hartford Fair. Contact Mary Fitch at [mfitch3@columbusrr.com](mailto:mfitch3@columbusrr.com)**

**Join the inspection team to walk the Trust properties. Contact Tod Frolking at [frolking@denison.edu](mailto:frolking@denison.edu)**

**Invite a friend to join the Licking Land Trust**

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**Oops! We apologize!**  
The Trust owes a huge apology to John and Joan Cox of Pataskala. In our 2008 Annual Report, we mistakenly listed them as “Members (\$1 - \$249)”. For 2008, they were actually “Stewards” and we should have listed them under “Stewards (\$500 +)”. John and Joan Cox have been members for several years and the Trust very much appreciates their loyalty and significant financial contribution to land conservation. We apologize to them for our error and thank them again for their 2008 membership in the “Steward” category.

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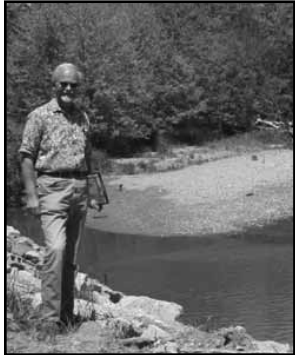
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Member Jurgen Pape stands on the bank of Racoon Creek after recent restablization. Pape was part of a recent inspection team to survey the area.

In their own words...



**Larry Bicking**  
Board of Trustees

“My wife, Liz, and I have lived in Granville Township, on the lee side of Flower Pot Hill, for the past 15 years. Our son and his family (two grandchildren) are Hudson Valley, NY folks. I am a member of Bryn Du Governance Commission, and volunteer there, sit on the Ohio National Road Association board and volunteer at the Licking County Genealogy Society Library. I retired from a career in public administration including parks and recreation, public properties and aid (grants) to local communities for infrastructure and open space. I hope my experiences will help the LLT further its mission. LLT accomplishments during the next few years? Complete the accreditation process. Improve community awareness of LLT goals and objectives and activities. Increase youth interest, involvement and “buy in” in land conservation activities and their importance locally and globally.”



**Wendy Bittel**  
Administrative Assistant

“My family and I moved to Granville about seven years ago. I met my husband at Miami University where I graduated from the Western Program of Interdisciplinary Studies. We have three children, two dogs and a variety of other critters. I spend most of my time in the summer planning where I’m going to plant the next tree in our yard. The position at Licking Land Trust offered a unique opportunity to be involved with an organization that was doing something I felt was important while balancing being a mom of three great kids. I hope to contribute to the goals of Licking Land trust by helping to manage the day to day details that contribute to the larger accomplishments.”