

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

James/Mathews Farm



James/Mathews Properties: A Model for Partnering

By Candi Moore, *Board Chair*

Partnering and collaborating with other conservation organizations is essential to the Licking Land Trust's success, and no property demonstrates this better than the 115 acres in Union Township conserved by Dr. Patricia James and Jay Matthews.

When Pat was exploring the idea of agricultural and/or conservation easements on her rural property near Hebron, she approached Steve Goodwin of the Appalachia Ohio Alliance ("AOA"), a non-profit dedicated to the stewardship of Appalachia Ohio and the cultural heritage of its people. Steve spent some time with Pat discussing the conservation easement process and providing sample easements and information about charitable contributions and appraisals. Although the property fell within the AOA's operating area, its board and Steve reached out to the Licking Land Trust to consider accepting easements on this property because the Licking Land Trust would be able to provide a local presence on an ongoing basis. This approach would facilitate working with the owners and easement monitoring.

The Licking Land Trust agreed and, with assistance from Steve Goodwin, began working with Pat and Jay to tailor an agricultural easement and a conservation easement for their two scenic parcels. The 60-acre James and Matthews Farm borders Canyon Road and features pastures, woods and ponds.

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Columbus and Gund Foundation Grants Enable Trust's Assessment

By Mike Mickelson, *Trustee*

With funding provided in part by grants from the Columbus Foundation and the Gund Foundation, the Trust will undergo a Guided Organizational Assessment (GOA) on November 11, 2011. The Land Trust Alliance (LTA) developed the GOA in response to land trusts' identified need for assistance in fully implementing Land Trust Standards and Practices. These documents are the working policies by which all members of the LTA guide their operations. The GOA involves intensive on-site assessment and planning to address the specific needs of each land trust. It is designed to help land trusts make major changes or improvements in their organizational structure and in their capacity to fully realize their mission.

Through a board retreat, the Assessment Facilitators will walk our board through all 12 *Land Trust Standards and Practices*, comprising 80 separate practices. Because the Trust has identified accreditation as

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Pickerel-weed is a native plant
identified by the ONPC

Ohio Native Plant Collaborative

By Lori Totman, *Conservation Director, The Dawes Arboretum*

On November 18, 2010, The Dawes Arboretum called together major stakeholders, including state and federal agencies, private and public organizations and respected field professionals, concerned with Ohio native plant conservation. Collectively they formed the Ohio Native Plant Collaborative (ONPC).

An Ohio native plant is simply a plant that was part of the Ohio landscape pre-European settlement. Pre-European settlement in the late 1700s was a time when nearly 95 percent of Ohio was forested, with

some open prairies, bogs and marshes. The rich woodlands with towering trees (some of these majestic giants stood 100-150 feet tall with the first branches located 50 feet off the ground) were most certainly impressive. Few temperate zone hardwood forests rival Ohio's original, primeval forests in varieties and sizes of trees.

The rapid European settlement of Ohio resulted in a steady decline of forest cover and wetlands, as they were cleared and drained to make way for agriculture. The native plant species that the Ohio Native

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James/Matthews Properties *continued from p. 1*

The 55-acre James Farm parcel borders Seminary Road and is planted with various hardwoods and pines. Both are now protected in perpetuity.

But there was more partnering to come. Kurt Waterstradt and Kristin Westad of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approached the Licking Land Trust about protected lands that might be candidates for wetland construction. The Licking Land Trust suggested the James/Matthews Farms and arranged for the introduction. Pat and Jay signed onto the "Partners for Fish & Wildlife" program and now have an established wetland on a corner of their property built by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. This wetland, along with a dozen more built or enhanced in Licking County by the program, has helped improve the area's wildlife habitat. The James Matthews wetland has attracted singing spring peepers, wood ducks and snipe.

What a great partnership developed: property owners Patricia James and Jay Mathews, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, Appalachia Ohio Alliance, the Licking Land Trust, and spring peepers, ducks and snipe, all working together. This is surely a model for future conservation successes.



James/Matthews Farm

River Roundup Revival

By Lyn Boone, *Trustee*

The Licking Land Trust sponsored an information table at the September 10 revival of the Licking River Roundup, an environmental clean-up event co-sponsored by Licking County's Soil and Water Conservation District. Originally initiated more than twenty years ago, the River Roundup is a community volunteer effort to pick up debris and trash along portions of the Licking River. The event was held for fifteen years before being suspended for several years. The Soil and Water Conservation District partnered with the City of Newark, Licking County Recycling Litter Prevention, and the Licking County Health Department to bring the program back.

During the morning's work, twenty cubic yards of debris and 350 old tires were collected and removed from thirteen miles of the river banks. Afterward, about 200 volunteers convened at Everett Park in Newark to clean up, enjoy lunch, and visit at information tables staffed by environmental groups. Licking Land Trust Board members Larry Bicking and Lyn Boone talked with participants and family members about the mission and activities of the Trust, and Trust staff member Wendy Bittel offered a kid's demonstration on how soil and sediment naturally filter and clean water.



350 old tires & 20 cubic yards of debris were removed from 13 miles of the Licking River



Trustee Larry Bicking assisting a child with the Trust's water filtration experiment at River Roundup

Grants *continued from p. 1*

a goal, there is a particular focus on a subset of 37 indicator practices, all of which the Trust has developed and completed. The GOA retreat will also identify our organizational strengths and weaknesses, and the Facilitators will provide guidance for determining next steps toward a stronger organization and national accreditation.

The Trust must contribute \$500 toward the total cost of \$4500 for delivery of the Guided Organization Assessment. Because grant support to LTA Midwest was provided by the Columbus Foundation and the Gund Foundation, the LTA Midwest Program is able to cover the balance of the cost (\$4,000). The Trust appreciates the enthusiastic support of LTA Midwest, and the enabling grants to it from these two foundations.

After completing the GOA and follow-up work, the Trust ideally will become one of the next 100 land trusts to achieve accreditation within the next three years. There's a lot of work ahead of us as an all-volunteer organization, but we recognize the importance of accreditation in assuring our constituents that the Trust will continue into the future to safeguard our easements in perpetuity.

One of the critical requirements for accreditation is to build funds for legal defense and stewardship of these easements and fee (owned) properties. We are currently working to raise these funds; as you think about supporting the Licking Land Trust, keep these special funds in mind.

Save the Date!

**Annual Meeting
and Potluck Dinner**

**Bryn Du Mansion
Tuesday, October 25
6:30 PM**

Plant Collaborative will focus on are those that survived the vast changes to the ecosystems during times of settlement.

In the November 2010 meeting, The Arboretum's Executive Director, Luke Messinger, stated that The Dawes Arboretum is "proposing the creation of a collaboration comprised of resource professionals who will help establish guidelines for the collection, propagation and distribution of trees, shrubs and herbaceous perennials of wild known origin." The overall goal of this initial meeting was to exchange experiences and to create a vision for this collaboration to enhance native plant biodiversity, conserve local genotypes and restore native plant communities in Ohio.

To enhance native plant biodiversity, the partnership will need to address some of the present and most serious threats, such as habitat loss and degradation due to competition from non-native, invasive plant species. One also must not overlook the imminent threat of climate change on present Ohio native plant species. According to recent scientific predictions, if Ohio becomes warmer and wetter during climate change, there will be an appreciable decline in American beech trees, and sugar maples may totally disappear from Ohio. As these species decline and disappear, species more tolerant of a warmer, wetter climate, such as those that are now found in the southeastern parts of the United States, will move north. If this happens, many Ohio native plant species that coexisted and co-evolved with these ecosystems may also disappear.

It is not difficult to find seemingly native plant materials sold in local garden centers and nurseries, but consider first where this "native" plant material originated. If buying locally, it is better to purchase plant material where the origin (provenance) is known to be both from Ohio and the local eco-region. Distinctive plants, wildlife and natural communities are grouped into eco-regions based on climate patterns, landforms, elevation, soils and hydrology.

Why work to conserve local genotypes? It is a documented fact that the more closely the environmental conditions of the plant material source (seeds) are matched to that of the planting site, the better it will grow. This is because species have become genetically adapted to the local conditions. To attain the goal of conserving local genotypes, the ONPC will preserve not only the diversity of Ohio native plant species but also genetic diversity within each species. One way to accomplish this is to collect seeds of wild known origin within an eco-region.

Another goal of the ONPC is to restore native plant communities in Ohio. It will require the work of ONPC members working collaboratively with Ohio nursery and



landscape industries to ensure the availability and use of common Ohio native plants of local known genotypes. Just imagine the impact if new developments could utilize Ohio native trees, shrubs, vines and herbaceous plants around newly constructed homes and businesses.

After collecting seeds from common (not rare, threatened or endangered) Ohio native plants of wild known origins and propagating these seeds, the goal then will be to get these plant materials into the nursery and landscape industries for their use and eventual distribution to anyone responsible for creating backyard landscapes as well as restoring natural ecosystems.

Collecting and propagating seeds of Ohio native plants of wild known origin will eliminate the horticultural selected types, known as cultivars, that are now common in nurseries and garden centers. Cultivars rarely have the genetic variation of their wild relatives, may be overly aggressive to the point of being considered invasive, and deprive native bees, butterflies, etc. (pollinators) of their traditional food sources.

In addition to common native plant species, the ONPC may also be instrumental in saving Ohio native rare, threatened or endangered plant species through seed collecting efforts and through their role as a seed repository or seed banking system. Saving the gene pool of these plant species is critical.

The ONPC meeting attendees agreed education will be a key component to the success of the project as it moves forward. Education will come in the form of promoting public awareness with regard to Ohio native plant conservation and the value in choosing Ohio native plants of local genotypes for home landscapes.

"The native plant species that the Ohio Native Plant Collaborative will focus on are those that survived the vast changes to the ecosystems during times of settlement."

Selecting Properties - Carefully

By Linda Habig, *Trustee*



Farris – Mockingbird Hill property (photo, Skip Shepherd).

As a member, you may wonder how the Trust decides what properties it should conserve in perpetuity. Pertinent questions you might ask could include: Does the Trust accept every property offered? Does it matter where the property is? Are there specific criteria for selection? Is there a maximum or minimum acreage size? Are some land characteristics more desirable than others? Would the Trust rather have an easement, or actually own the property? Who makes the final decision?

In 2006 the board began development of standards and practices to answer these questions, and to bring consistency, clarity, and discipline to all of its operations. One of the first practices researched was “Project Selection Criteria”, designed to address how the Trust would evaluate and select easements and properties offered to it. The board took a look at its original and evolving mission, the Land Trust Alliance’s national guidelines, and legal and tax implications.

In 1989, the Granville Land Conservancy, the Trust’s predecessor, established the preservation of the Raccoon Creek Greenway as its central goal. The goal was both environmental (protecting the floodplain ecosystem) and aesthetic (preserving scenic open space in the Raccoon Creek valley). As the Conservancy evolved into the Trust, goals expanded to include preservation of valuable open space throughout Licking County, and in some cases, beyond. These original goals formed the basis of the “Project Selection” procedure, i.e. the preservation and permanent protection of riparian corridors, wetlands, woods, farmland and scenic vistas within the County and its adjacent lands for the public benefit.

Criteria for evaluating properties evolved in the procedure to these, in order of importance.

- Conserving riparian corridors in the Licking River watershed with special emphasis on Raccoon Creek and its tributaries.
- Preserving green space in Licking County which protects wildlife habitat, scenic views, historic and rural character.
- Protecting agricultural land to support economic viability of farms, and promoting interest in farmland preservation among neighboring farms.
- Conserving individual properties across the County, provided the property has particular ecologic or scenic value, and may encourage others to preserve land.

When a landowner approaches the Trust to discuss an easement on their property, or giving the land outright to the Trust, at least three board members visit the property with the landowner, and perform extensive field work. This includes evaluating the property against detailed criteria developed from the four major categories above, studying various types of maps of the property and the general area, taking photographs, interviewing landowners, walking the property, and completing a detailed site inspection report. The board also considers “public benefit” questions, such as: who will benefit from the protection of the property and how; does protection support local or regional conservation plans; will protection comply with state and local laws and comprehensive plans.

Although the Trust prefers to accept easements while the landowner continues to own the property, it will in certain situations accept gifts of land, if the land meets its selection criteria. There is no maximum size, and the more green space meeting the Trust’s criteria that is conserved, the better! Given substantial transaction expenses and work for both the landowner and the Trust, parcels under ten acres generally are not viable conservation candidates, but there are always exceptions.

After a property is evaluated and all field work documented, the board reviews all site selection documentation, and discusses whether it meets Trust criteria. Finally, a resolution is proposed and a board vote is taken; if the decision is to proceed, the landowners are notified, so that they can begin work with attorneys, appraisers, other professionals, and the Trust to move the transaction forward. This starts the process of preserving one more glorious chunk of open green space, forever!



Members: Enjoy the Land and Help the Trust

The Trust welcomes all member volunteers to assist with the annual inspections of conserved Trust properties. Come along with a Trustee to hike, view, enjoy and inspect one or more of our properties this fall. We’d love to have you, and you’d be making a significant contribution to the work of the Trust. To volunteer, or for more information, contact Trustee Craig McDonald: craig@alwaysforwardcrossfit.com



Soil & Water Goes to the Ballot

By Pat Deering, *Trustee*

Clean water, healthy environment and abundant food are the long-term benefits of soil and water conservation. For the past 67 years, Licking County Soil & Water Conservation District (LCSWCD) has worked with home and land owners, businesses, local governments, farmers, and developers to protect and improve local soil and water resources.

Conservation districts are locally organized, self-governing bodies chartered by the State. Through voluntary action and cooperation of landowners, the District works to conserve land, water, forest, wildlife and other related resources for the benefit of all.

In 1944, Licking County land owners petitioned the state of Ohio to create LCSWCD. Local districts were formed to partner with state and federal agencies in order to assist land owners in conserving natural resources. In the early years, programs focused on helping farmers reduce excessive soil erosion. As the county's land uses changed, additional programs focused on protecting all natural resources.

LCSWCD and its five-member board of supervisors provide leadership through strategic planning, partnerships and conservation programs. Partners include the federal USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and local governments. The District provides technical assistance to landowners and farmers, reviews construction plans for urban development, and oversees the county drainage maintenance program.

LCSWCD Mission:

To promote conservation of natural resources through local leadership, education and technical assistance.

Since 2009, the District has taken a leadership role in preserving Licking County farmland. As a Local Sponsor, the District works with the Ohio Department of Agriculture to accept donated farmland easements and to purchase farmland easements. To date, the District has facilitated eight easement purchases totaling 1,466 acres which when conveyed, will bring \$1.5 million to the Licking County economy.

The District also provides extensive K-12 education programs to schools and summer camps. It hosts field days, FFA soil judging and Envirothon competitions, and provides educational programs for the Natural Resources Area at the Hartford Fair. The District provides information to hundreds of individuals requesting assistance each year.

In July, at the request of the District Board, the Licking County Commissioners passed a resolution that will place a 1/10th mill operating levy on the November 8, 2011 ballot. The 1/10th mill operating levy would generate approximately \$370,000 per year. This amount is less than the \$445,000 received from the county and state in 2009. A homeowner with a \$100,000 property value assessment will be asked to invest less than a penny per day, or \$3.06 per year, to support conservation programs and services.

Questions or comments regarding LCSWCD programs and services should be directed to District Administrator, Jim Kiracofe, 740-670-5332, or jimkiracofe@lickingswcd.com. You can also learn more through the website, www.swcdfriends.org.

Please remember to vote on November 8th.

Your Land Trust at Work: 2011 Projects of the Licking Land Trust

Anyone who would like to help with any of these projects should contact the person indicated. The Trust welcomes all volunteers!

Project	Board Contact
Participate in and provide educational youth activities for Dawes Arboretum Arbor Day Festival in April.....	Wendy Bittel
Educate and inform the public about the Trust through staffing an information booth at the Hartford Fair in August.....	Larry Bicking
Increase awareness of the Trust and contribute to ecological community projects through participation in River Roundup in September	Lyn Boone & Larry Bicking
Apply for national accreditation: finalize standardization of procedures, & complete organizational assessment in November	Mike Mickelson
Develop a capital campaign to raise funds for stewardship and defense reserve requirements for national accreditation.....	Lyn Boone and Greg Sharkey
Improve Spring Valley surface water: with Granville Township, restore Salt Run waterway to more natural state (Spring Valley Nature Preserve), using Ohio EPA grant funds obtained June 2010	Doug Spieles
Mark all Trust-conserved properties through use of GPS coordinates, and install conservation plaques with property owners' permission	Mike Mickelson & Craig McDonald
Inspect all Trust easements and properties, annually: 1100 acres/26 properties	Craig McDonald
Increase membership: approach Licking County businesses, and targeted affinity groups of individuals	Linda Habig
Increase conserved acreage: communicate with interested landowners (currently 20 prospects).....	Candi Moore/Greg Sharkey/Don Wiper



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Newsletter

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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.

Renew or Join the Licking Land Trust! OR Make an Additional Contribution!

☐ **Yes**, I'd like to help the Trust with its conservation activities by renewing or joining the Trust, or making an additional contribution.

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Membership Levels

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student: \$10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Business or Organization: \$150 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual: \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservator: \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family: \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Steward: \$500 |

☐ Additional contribution amount: \$ _____

Please detach and mail this completed form to
The Licking Land Trust • P.O. Box 196 • Granville, Oh 43023,
along with your membership dues or contribution.

Please make checks payable to **“Licking Land Trust”**.

or, access the Trust's website to renew or join online.

www.lickinglandtrust.org