

Minutes of the Board of Directors' Meeting  
American Chestnut Land Trust  
May 17, 2025

Items mailed to Board Members in advance of the meeting:

Board Packet (May 12) and  
PP Slides (May 14)

Call to Order

Dave Farr called to meeting to order shortly after 9 am on May 17, 2025

Board Members Present: Dave Farr, President; Dawn Balinski, Vice President; Cheryl Place, Treasurer; Bob Field, Darlene Harrod, Jan Degeneffe, John Yoe, Nate Novotny, Penny Moran, Peter Daly, Randi Vogt, Richard Aldrich, Ron Klauda, Shirley Knight

Board Members Absent: Adam Sampson, BL Johnston, Fred Tutman, Melissa McCormick

ACLT Staff Present: Miriam Gholi, Community Relations Coordinator; Autumn Phillips-Lewis, Land Manager; Mary Hoover, Regional Conservation Partnership Coordinator

Approval of Minutes: (Dave Farr, pps. 3-6)

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the March 15 Board meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

Request from Nathan & Emily Bowen Re: Naming something after Greg:

Robyn shared a request from the Bowen family to review the donation guidelines for naming a place after Greg and Tamea. They want it to be some kind of space where they could take the Bowen grandchildren to remember and celebrate Greg and Tamea. Robyn noted that the Bowen children do not have sufficient funds to meet our official naming guidelines, but she suggested that including the funds in the Greg Bowen Memorial Fund would get us there. The outreach committee, which met the week of the Board Meeting, posited the idea of creating a token space to represent the "cathedral of nature," such as a fire circle with stumps or a mini amphitheater. Robyn was unable to share slides during the meeting, but she promised to send them for distribution afterwards. Robyn proposed that the Board ask Autumn to develop a plan and a budget for a couple of options, ranging from low-high cost. Robyn doesn't want the space to be necessarily contingent on what the Bowens donate, but instead, it could be correlated to the Memorial Fund.

Dave Farr recommended that some kind of committee devise a plan for naming something after Greg. **Bob Field made a motion that the Land Management Committee and the**

**Outreach and Membership Committee work together, from the direction of the Board, and come back with several plans. Dave Farr noted that the Board will implement this project with whatever funds necessary, regardless of what the Bowen children donate. The motion passed unanimously.**

Treasurer's Report (Cheryl Place - pps. 7-14)

Cheryl reported that during the first four months of 2025 ACLT had operating receipts of \$54,443 and operating expenses of \$175,676 for a deficit of \$121,233. Cheryl noted that receipts are very weak, mostly as a result of donations going to the memorial fund. There is now \$41,000 in the fund. Cheryl pointed out that, while it is important to grow the memorial fund, we must be mindful that ACLT has to raise at least \$100,000 in contributions in order to receive the final iteration of the capacity grant. The memorial fund, being a restricted fund, does not count toward the \$100,000 match. Cheryl also noted that currently, only 26% of the \$54,000 in income is from contributions, which is slightly concerning. Expenses are currently 25% of the budget, which is fine.

Cheryl then reported on the invested accounts, noting most of them have partially recovered from earlier volatility. The Forever Fund received a \$1,000 donation, and the land acquisition fund received a \$250 donation in Greg Bowen's name. ACLT also received the fourth installment of the capacity grant during this period.

Regarding the Greg Bowen Memorial Fund, Cheryl suggested putting the money in a short-term CD to let it earn at least a little bit of interest. The Board agreed.

Finally, Cheryl discussed the end of year calculation of operating funds. Cheryl recommended adding \$12,000 to the repair and replacement fund, with no objections from the Board. The Board then discussed the "troubled" financial situation re: contributions. Cheryl said contributions should be prioritized over the Memorial Fund at this point, as the Memorial Fund is a long-term investment, while there is an immediate need to raise \$100,000 before the end of the year. Mark Smith recommended looking into private foundations to fund the two staff positions beyond the capacity grant, and Autumn agreed that this is a possible avenue; however, grant funding for salaries is difficult to come by.

Executive Director Search Committee:

Dave Farr reported that 18 applications have been received for the Executive Director position, and five interviews are scheduled for Friday, May 23, 2025. Three of the five are local, one is from Montana, and one is from Wisconsin. All five interviewees are familiar with the area. Dave noted that the search will continue until the committee is confident about a candidate.

Outreach and Membership Committee (Miriam Gholl- pps. 15-23)

Penny reported that the trail counts continue in the five-six thousand range per month, with hopes that the numbers go up for May and June. Penny then discussed specific events that had happened since the last Board meeting. The Leprechaun Hunt was a success, with pre-registration bringing in \$180, walk-ins/raffle bringing in \$339, and face painting bringing in \$85 in tips. Penny also noted that guided hikes have continued to be popular at ACLT. The guided hikes that happened this period were the MLB Opening Day hike on March 22, the Spring Ephemerals hike on April 13, and the Night Hike on May 10. The Osprey Festival took place on April 5, 2025, and was another big success. The annual meeting on May 3rd went smoothly at the new Truth Bible Church venue. 167+ people (not including walk-ins) attended the meeting, and 110 people attended the luncheon. There were 52 no-shows. Luncheon and merchandise sales amounted to about \$2,400. The catering was about \$3,400, so money was pulled from the budget to cover the difference.

Penny then discussed the upcoming events and guided hikes, stating that the next event is the Southern Maryland Heritage Festival at Sotterly on May 18, 2025. The guided canoe trips will be starting soon, and guided hikes will continue throughout the early summer. ACLT will also be attending the College of Southern Maryland Nature Fest (LaPlata Campus) for the first time on May 31, 2025. Children's Day on the farm is June 1, the Wade In and the Scavenger Hunt/Hike are on June 8th, and NAACP Juneteeth Celebration at JPPM is June 14th.

Finally, there was a request from the Community Heritage Subcommittee to be elevated to committee status. There was an official motion and proposed charter on page 17 of the Board Packet. A discussion ensued re: the motion. The Board discussed the current political climate as the motive for the name change, with some members concerned about acquiescing to these pressures. However, the discussion made it clear that the work of the former DEI subcommittee will not be changed, and elevating it to a committee will only fortify the work being done as part of ACLT's core operations. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Land Management Committee (Autumn Phillips-Lewis pps. 24-26, 29-37)

Bob Field began the report of updates from the Land Management Committee meeting on April 29, 2025, stating there were no discussion and action items from that meeting. Autumn reported that since the board packet was sent out, the first 30 trees were planted on Goldstein. Autumn then showed some pictures of Double Oak Farm, the Water Quality Blitz, and macroinvertebrate sampling. She also reported on the controlled meadow burns at Yoe and Gravatt West, which were partially funded by state cost-sharing programs. She then shared pictures of sign installation from the Parkers Creek Heritage Trail. Autumn reported updates on

the Spring Invasives Survey, which covered 750 acres. Two spring ephemerals were the target of the survey, and none were found, except lesser celandine, which was planted in the rain garden out by the barn. Trail maintenance projects including clearing several large fallen trees and adding rolled shingles to a slippery boardwalk. ACLT also received the “Cooperator of the Year Award” from the Soil Conservation Service. The Master Naturalist class is currently underway, and both CCCC interns taught a class. Finally, several grants have been submitted over the last couple of weeks to fund both materials and staff time for various land management projects.

#### Land Acquisition and Preservation Committee (Dave Farr, p. 24)

Dave updated the Board on the status of the Jewell Glass property, which Scientists Cliffs (SCA) had been trying to donate to ACLT. However, our current understanding of the situation is that Scientists Cliffs never actually owned the property. In order to rectify this, SCA is trying to find out how much it would cost to own it.

Dave then briefed the Board on the Helfrich property, noting that Greg’s intended strategy with the property was to set aside a lot to sell to a conservation buyer and to pay for the cost of purchasing the property. In order to set aside a lot, a perc test must be completed, which was not done for the property this year. Since October is the closing date for Helfrich, we no longer have time to create a lot. In order to continue with the contract, we will have to pay for the remaining cost of ~\$150,000. A motion was made for the Board to approve the use of land acquisition funds for this purchase. **The motion passed unanimously.** Autumn then added that ACLT will be applying for a France Merrick grant to help fund this purchase.

#### Executive Director’s Report (Autumn Phillips-Lewis, pps 27-28, Miriam Gholl p. 28, Mary Hoover p. 28)

Autumn reported that she has taken over two large grants that Greg was working on. The first is the Maryland Heritage Authority (MHA) grant for the Parkers Creek Heritage Trail. ACLT turned in a final report for the MHA grant a couple of weeks ago. The second grant is through the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT). After consulting with the descendants of the Lemuel Wallace Family, a conditions assessment was completed, and a report was passed along to the Facilities Committee. Now the report is under review by MHT.

Autumn reported that the Facilities Committee met on April 22, 2025 to discuss the Wallace house roof replacement and repairs to the Holly Hill house. John reported that Clara is putting together a list of all ACLT facilities to begin a baseline assessment of the health of our infrastructure. This will help us anticipate what upgrades will be needed and when.

Autumn acknowledged that ACLT once again received accreditation from the Land Trust Alliance. It took a lot of people doing a lot of work—most of all Greg— and is good for the next five years.

Miriam reported on the Estate of Dorothy Jane Klemmer, saying that Dorothy Jane intended to give ACLT \$10,000 through a personal representative. The Estate of Dorothy is currently being disputed. ACLT's attorney seems to think we can sit back and wait for a check.

Miriam noted that the Patuxent River Summit was cancelled, but she doesn't know whether this event will be rescheduled.

Mary gave the Board an update on the 2025 legislative session, noting that some funding was allocated to land preservation programs, despite the DLS' recommendation to cut 100% of land preservation funding for the next several years. This is a very small win for land preservation, and this is largely thanks to the land conservation community speaking out against the DLS recommendation.

Mary also reported that the Southern Maryland Woodlands National Wildlife Refuge is still moving forward. There has been a small group of SMCA partners meeting to discuss strategies and properties to pursue, and several leads are currently being pursued. It is imperative to continue to build the refuge to make it less of an easy target to the current administration. The Chesapeake Conservancy has set up a revolving loan fund to buy and hold properties for the Service.

Lastly, Mary updated the Board on the status of the CBT grant with Green Fin Studio, noting that the marketing campaign strategy (phase 2) is underway.

#### Adjournment

There being no other questions or comments, a motion to adjourn the meeting was unanimously approved at 11:01 am.

Prepared by Mary Hoover

Approved by BL Johnston