

**Minutes of the Board of Director's Meeting
American Chestnut Land Trust
January 18, 2025**

Call to Order

Dave Farr called the meeting to Order at 9:02 on January 18, 2025.

Items mailed to Board Members in advance of the meeting:

Packet1 (January 9)

Packet2 & PP Slides (January 16).

Board Members Present: Dave Farr, President; Dawn Balinski, Vice President; Cheryl Place, Treasurer; BL Johnston, Secretary; Richard Aldrich, José Ballesteros, Jan Degeneffe, Bob Field, Darlene Harrod, Ron Klauda, Shirley Knight, Melissa McCormick, Penny Moran, Nate Novonty, Adam Sampson, Mark Smith, Randi Vogt, and John Yoe.

Board Members Absent: Peter Daly and Fred Tutman.

ACLT Staff Present: Greg Bowen, Executive Director, and Jen Ludlow, Office and Donor Relations Coordinator.

Approval of Minutes: (Dave Farr - Packet1, pps. 2-6):

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the November 16, 2024 Board Meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report (Cheryl Place Packet2 - p. 2-6):

Cheryl first called our attention to the balance sheet included in Packet2 on pps.7-8. This is a document to be shared with the Board 3 times a year. Under "Assets" she noted the Edward Jones CD for \$50,000 and explained that these funds were put aside from the 2024 surplus that we hope to be able to add to the Capacity Grant to fund Capacity Grant activities when the grant runs out in 2 years.

Penny asked what were net assets and Cheryl explained. She noted that the Financial Statements are preliminary and that any additional expenses related to 2024 will be included in the final statements presented at the Annual Meeting.

For the first 12 months of 2024, ACLT had operating income of \$660,284 and operating expenses of \$536,321 for a surplus of \$123,963. Receipts were 121% of budget, and all contribution categories were well over budget. We easily met the \$100,000 Capacity Grant match.

In December ACLT took a \$100,000 appropriation from the Land Management Endowment that was inadvertently not recorded in these financial statements. Total expenses were slightly under budget at 99%. Expenses incurred to meet the requirements of the \$18,242 in new

grants were not budgeted but were covered by the grant monies. The restricted accounts spreadsheet has a new look: Land Trust Alliance Accreditation staff require that funds be categorized as donor restricted, board designated, and unrestricted as indicated in the footnotes at the bottom of the spreadsheet. The Land Management Endowment was reduced by a \$100,000 appropriation to pay forward into the next year for operations such as repairs and replacements. The Forever Fund received a \$1,750 donation, \$35,000 was donated to the Acquisition Fund, and a grant of \$50,000 was received from the Chesapeake Bay Trust.

Community Relations Manager/Outreach and Membership Committee Report (Penny Moran - Packet1, pps. 7-20):

Penny summarized past events, including the very successful wreath-making workshop and sale where 50 wreaths were made, sold within 15 minutes, and raised \$3,700; the first unguided hike of the year; and the 12 Hikes Challenge, completed by 113 hikers, raised \$4,970 in donations, and for which 190 hikers have already registered for this year's Challenge. She distributed a calendar of events and guided hikes for this year and added one: The College of Southern Maryland has invited ACLT to participate in a Nature Fest at the LaPlata campus, an event that intersects with our goal of reaching out to the Southern Maryland community. The Annual Meeting and Luncheon will be held on March 1.

Land Management Committee Report (Bob Field- Packet1, pps. 21-37):

Bob ran through a list of topics that were discussed at the last committee meeting highlighting production, work, and repairs at the Double Oak Farm; an update of the meadows including plans to undergo prescribed burns and seedings; controlling and removing invasives on the Goldstein property; plans and cost-sharing funding for repairs to erosion on the Showalter access road; building beaver dam analogs; completed property monitoring; planning for the trail on the Yoe property; and proposed topics for CCCC members' capstone projects.

Bob asked for a motion to approve staff to work with the MD Forest Service to conduct prescribed burns on Gravatt West Meadow B and Yoe Meadows A, B, D, F, and H. The motion was made and passed unanimously.

Finally, Bob shared the exciting news that each year the Calvert Soil Conservation District selects a landowner who has gone beyond implementing conservation processes on their property as "the cooperator of the year". ACLT was selected for 2024 and will be recognized and receive the award at their annual dinner in March. Greg remarked that this is a great bonding with the farm community; this is the first non-farm organization to receive the award.

Land Acquisition & Preservation Committee Report (Dave Farr - Packet1 pps. 38-42):

Dave reported that no action has been taken re: assuming ownership of the Jewell Glass property from Scientists Cliffs. As it turns out, there is no deed; the property was left to the Nature Conservancy in Ms. Glass's will, who then turned it over to Scientists' Cliffs. Our attorney estimates that it will cost between \$10,000 and \$20,000 to settle because her will was probated in DC whereas the property is in Maryland. Randy asked whether the property was worth it to us. Greg responded that this would require some thought and that he would report back at the next meeting. Rural Legacy has agreed to work with us to purchase the Helfrich

property. A surveyor has been secured and we are working through the Easement Valuation formula. There was discussion about what would be done with the trailer on the property. There was no progress on the Bowen property: we are waiting to hear from the owners, one of whom is ill.

Dave remarked that the Committee accomplishments are impressive and thanked everyone for their efforts.

Science Committee Report (Melissa McCormick - Packet2 pps. 9-13):

Melissa noted that the Science Committee had their fall meeting in November and recapped their yearly accomplishments. She highlighted the areas they have been working on: the yearly water quality analysis; water quantity, i.e. sea level rise and rainfall and how these would likely affect the Parkers Creek marsh; the ecosystem's adaptation to changing climate; and finally fish, amphibians, reptiles, and birds supported by ACLT property. She then reviewed different projects supporting these areas of interest and their results. In summary, Melissa said that they had gotten a lot done this year, they are thinking about how to improve going forward, and will be having a planning meeting soon to decide what to do next year.

Greg praised the work being done, its importance, and his appreciation.

Executive Director's Report (Greg Bowen - Packet1, pps.43-59 and Packet2 pps. 14-59):

Greg spoke of the success in establishing the Southern Maryland Woodlands National Wildlife Refuge and the importance of the attendees at its dedication, including Senator Chris Van Hollen and Deb Haaland, Secretary of the US Department of Interior.

He introduced Jen Ludlow, ACLT's new Office and Donor Relations Coordinator who will be working to expand fundraising at the federal and state level.

Dan Murphy, US Fish & Wildlife, will be the guest speaker at the Annual Meeting. He will speak about his hopes and aspirations for the National Refuge. He provided advice on how to get SMCA started; SMCA was pivotal in establishing the Refuge.

With regard to the Capacity Grant Progress, Mary applied for and won a grant for SMCA to work with Green Fin on a strategic communications campaign to get the message right on what we should be doing around the watershed and how the message should be conveyed. Clara is working on a National Parks Service Grant for trails planning for the Patuxent River Water Trail. The grant will help with improvements to access points and updates to maps and the water trail website.

Greg reminded everyone of the 2025 schedule and deadlines for Board meetings, budget requests, and committee reports.

He spoke of decisions re: the new Zoning Ordinance and Maps that should have started with the County Commissioners but that instead were made by a few staffers; that the Commissioners were unaware of many of the changes until they were brought to their attention

by a core group who were successful in advocating for improvements to the staff draft. The remaining big concern is the staff's proposal to up-zone thousands of acres of land from Rural Community District to Residential District. The concern is that it will facilitate residential sprawl and adversely impact Parkers, Battle, Hunting, and Fishing Creeks. There is one more public hearing and Greg would like people to attend. He is hopeful that we will win the battle.

Greg noted that we had already discussed ACLT becoming the third member group that selects members for the Board of the Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust. Ralph Eshelman had previously been selected as one of the representatives but has since stepped down and Greg proposed Amanda Knobloch, a scientist at Morgan State's PEARL lab, as a substitute.

He then asked for a motion to approve Amanda Knobloch and Gary Rensing as ACLT's representatives to The Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust. The motion was made and unanimously passed.

Greg brought up a request to film a movie in the Parkers Creek watershed, the proposal included in Packet2. Several Board members objected, citing risks to the environment and to our relationship with DNR, that it is not consistent with the lease agreement, that it involves 70 people and motorized vehicles and firearms and violence, that it doesn't conform to our goals and policies. **A motion was made to not approve the request to film on the property. It passed unanimously.**

Greg spoke briefly of "good news": Seven major US bills for the environment passed by Congress and three deferred. And finally, Greg brought up an accreditation issue. Accreditation staff has determined that we need to add funds for easement enforcement. He asked for a motion to move \$2,500 to Fidelity for conservation easement stewardship. **A motion was made to move the money and label it as suggested. The motion was approved unanimously.**

Adjournment

There being no other questions or comments, a motion to adjourn the meeting was unanimously approved at 10:43 am.

Approved:

BL Johnston, Secretary