



ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Parkers Creek | Photo Credit: Laura Openchain Umphries

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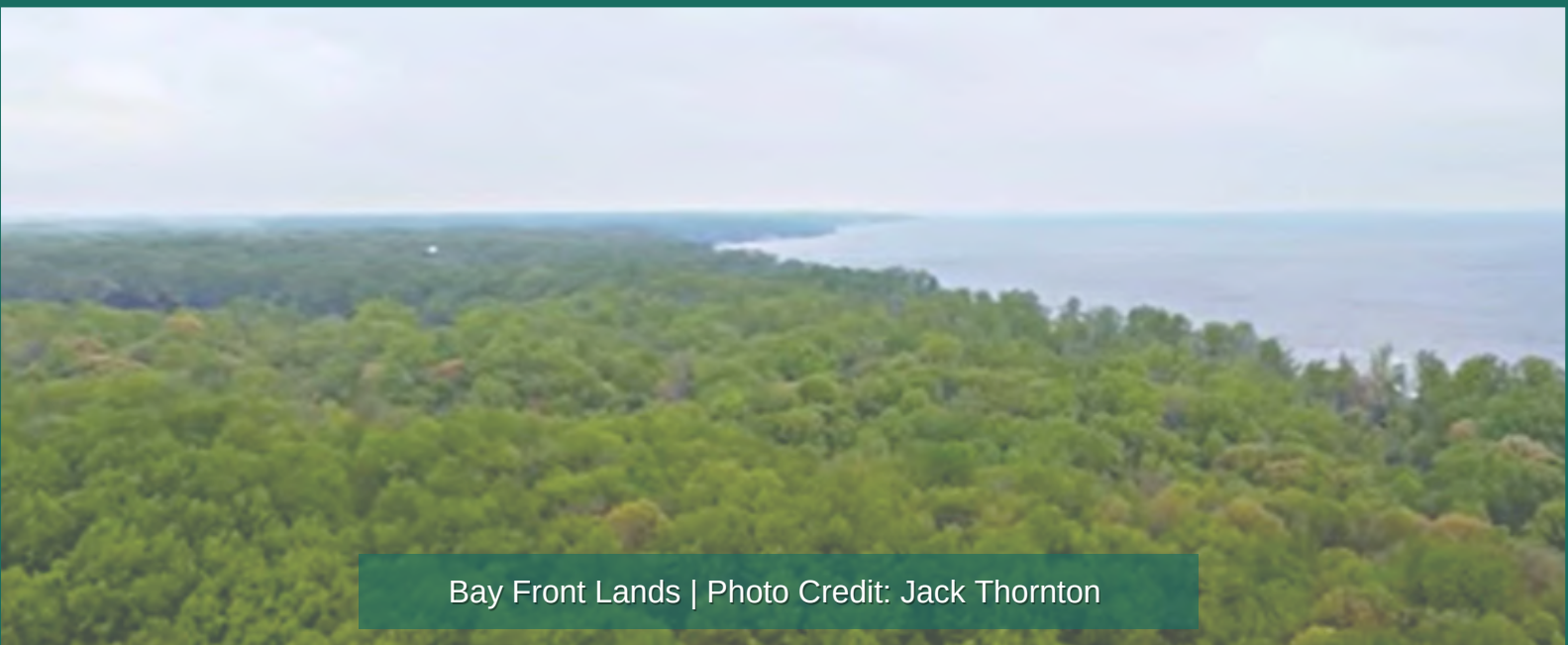
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ACLT MISSION

Connecting People with the Land Since 1986

- We promote land conservation and preservation throughout Southern Maryland.
- We preserve and conserve the natural and cultural resources of the Parkers Creek and Governors Run watersheds for the benefit of this and future generations.
- We provide environmentally sustainable public access to managed properties for educational, scientific, recreational and cultural purposes.



Bay Front Lands | Photo Credit: Jack Thornton



FROM THE DIRECTOR

For many decades, scientists have been warning about the impact of too much CO₂ in the atmosphere. In 2021, most Americans became believers due to:

- The damage from hurricanes on the East Coast, such as Hurricane Ida which swept through Louisiana (killing 33). Then it reformed and intensified, flooding much of the Mid-Atlantic and New York state, causing 57 deaths.
- The extent and intensity of the wildfires that raged on the West Coast spurred on by summer heat that shattered records in five states. The temperature in Salem, Oregon spiked to 116 degrees in June. The normal high is around 74 degrees. Numerous records were broken by double digits.
- Record floods in Europe and China, wildfires in Russia, the Arctic, and so on.

Action needs to be taken:

- at the international level to adopt mutual commitments to carbon reductions,
- at the national level to adopt new efficiency and pollution standards, and
- at the local and regional levels to promote unique local approaches to pollute less, to protect watersheds, ecosystems and wildlife corridors and habits.

ACLT is doing everything we can at the local and regional levels and sharing why these approaches need to be replicated.



A LARGE LANDSCAPE EXPANDED!



**FOR SPECIES DIVERSITY, WILDLIFE CORRIDORS,
ECOSYSTEM SERVICES, AND CLIMATE
RESILIENCE.**



SOUTHERN MARYLAND CONSERVATION ALLIANCE LAUNCHED



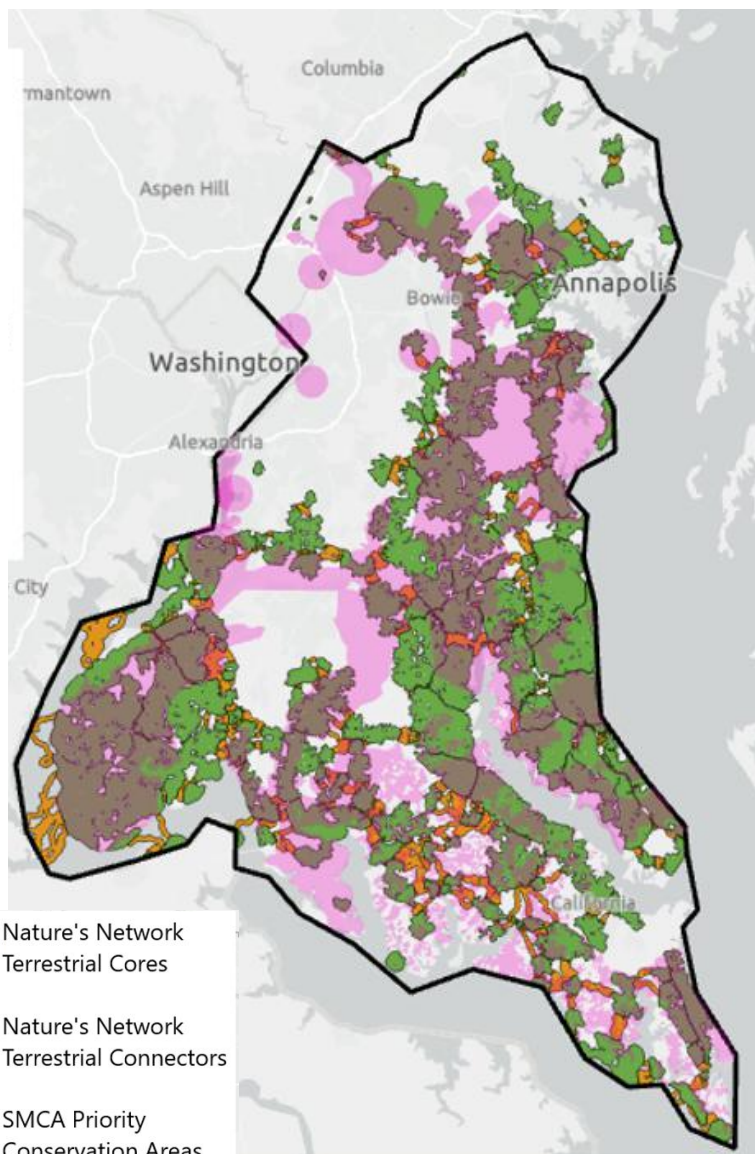
From left: Wendy Stringfellow, Forever MD President, Mary Burke, MET President, John Turgeon, MET Director, Buddy Hance, President, Calvert Commissioners, Joel Dunn, Chesapeake Conservancy President and CEO, and Greg Bowen, ACLT Executive Director

With its 2019 Five Year Plan, ACLT members decided to expand its mission to advocate for protection of lands in the five-county region. So in 2020, we began the process of pulling together land trusts and affiliate groups to address regional land preservation issues that involve whole watersheds in the region and by September 2021, we were ready to launch the Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance (SMCA).

Through the work of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in the past few years, we now know that Southern Maryland has one of the most resilient landscapes in the Mid-Atlantic region and Calvert has the highest percentage of resilient landscapes in Southern Maryland. The reasons for this high percentage of resilient lands include land elevation (well above the flood plain), soils, hydrology, and slopes that produce thousands of microclimates for a wide variety of species.

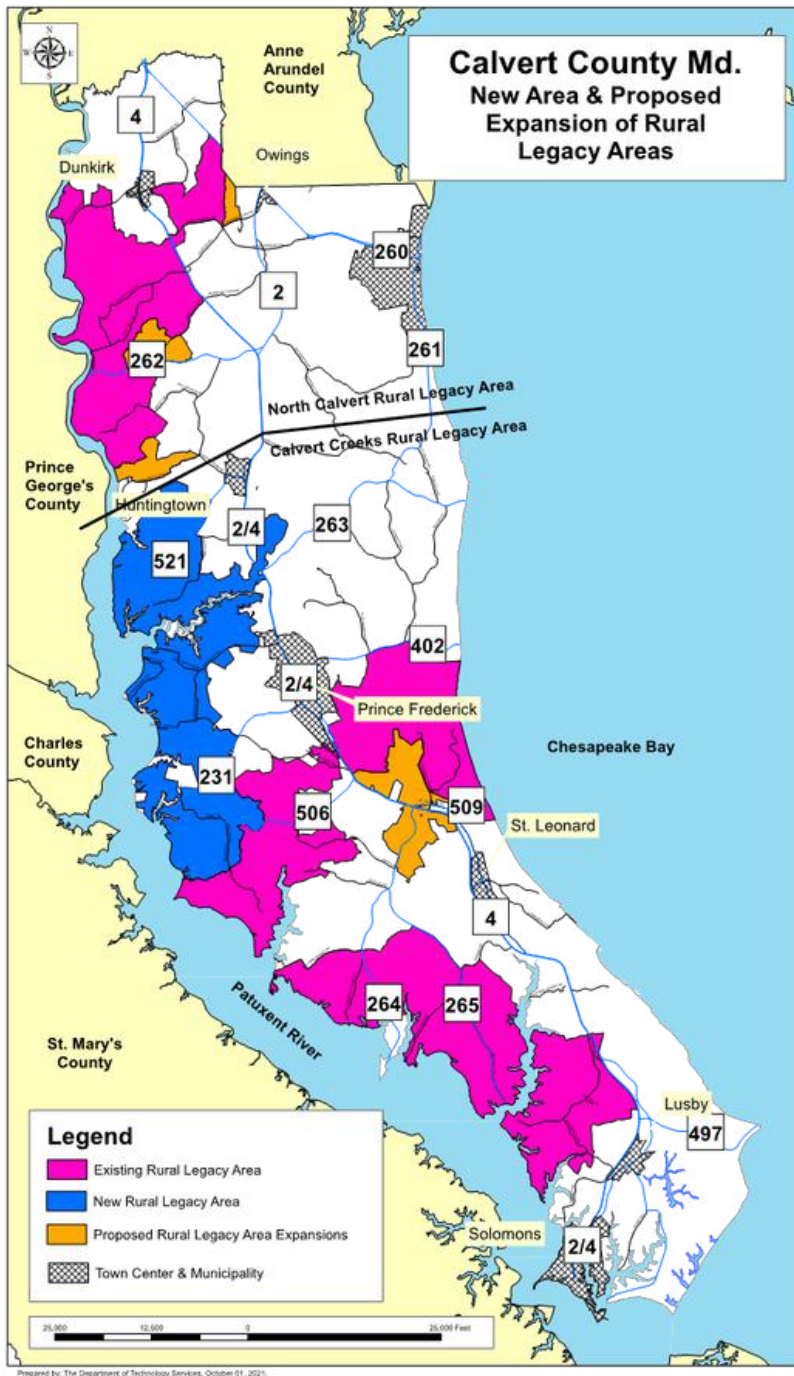
Soon after its launch, SMCA got busy mapping its "Priority Conservation Areas" based on TNC's resiliency map which will be used to fulfill its mission ...

"to conserve and restore Southern Maryland's landscapes, waterways and shorelines that are special to its people, fundamental to its economy, reflected in its culture, and vital for its native fish, wildlife and plants, on which we rely."



- Nature's Network Terrestrial Cores
- Nature's Network Terrestrial Connectors
- SMCA Priority Conservation Areas

PRESERVATION PROGRESS IN 2021



What we have is both a blessing and a responsibility. We have a choice. We can save it or lose it forever.

Beginning in 2020, we worked with county staff and the Sustainable Calvert Network to increase land preservation opportunities in Calvert.

ACLT was able to be represented on a County Commissioner formed committee to review the county land preservation program. It included representatives from the farming community, the development community, and the affordable housing committee.

From the committee came unanimous support for a number of requests with significant policy changes. As a result, the Commissioners instituted a number of actions in 2021:

- Established a TDR Bank managed by the County
- Reinstated previous level of Land Preservation Program funding by reinstating the original 1999 proclamation that increased the recordation tax from \$3.30 to \$5 for every \$500 collected, with the difference to fund land preservation (\$1.70 of every \$500 collected)
- Expanded the Rural Legacy areas (shown in blue and orange on the map).

We are very grateful for the broad support from the TDR Committee members and the interest in protecting working and important ecological landscapes in the County. More importantly, we are grateful to this Board of County Commissioners. In the last year, we have seen the Board take actions that will retain more farmland for future generations. We have seen them vote unanimously for our Rural Legacy funding to protect two key ecological sites-the GRDC Yowell property and the Yoe property, which we have contracted for in 2022.

"Complete, wherever possible, preservation of remaining priority properties in the Parkers Creek and Governors Run watersheds".

- ACLT's 5-Year Plan Objective

MORE PRESERVATION PROGRESS



YOWELL/GRDC PROPERTY | Photo Credit: Miriam Groll

What did we do in 2021? We ended our 35th year by exceeding 3,500 acres preserved! ACLT protected the last unprotected property in a band of land that runs parallel to the Bay shoreline for roughly five miles- from Kenwood Beach to Dares Beach Road.

The Yowell property (formerly known as the Governors Run Development Corporation "GRDC"), was purchased and protected on May 10th. In addition to including Old Growth forestland, it has significant historic relevance and will be part of the Parkers Creek Heritage Trail.

ACLT also now owns one of the tallest cliffs along the Bay, rising to 110 ft above the waters.

2021 LAND ACQUISITION & STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN



Yoe Property
Purchase



Restoration of Historic
Brown's Church



Solar Energy at
Double Oak Farm



Continued Land
Stewardship

Through its diligent work on ACLT's 2021 Land Acquisition and Stewardship Campaign, the Administration and Fundraising Committee made it possible for us to achieve our goals of:

- Purchasing the Yoe property, containing 162 acres with frontage on Route 4;
- Aiding in the restoration of the historically significant Brown's United Methodist Church. The African American community served by this church played a significant role in shaping the Parkers Creek community.
- Installing solar energy at Double Oak Farm to help our farming operation be more efficient and serve as a model for community education; and
- Continuing land stewardship efforts on all ACLT properties.

RESEARCH IN THE WATERSHED



PROTECTING, MONITORING, STEWARDING

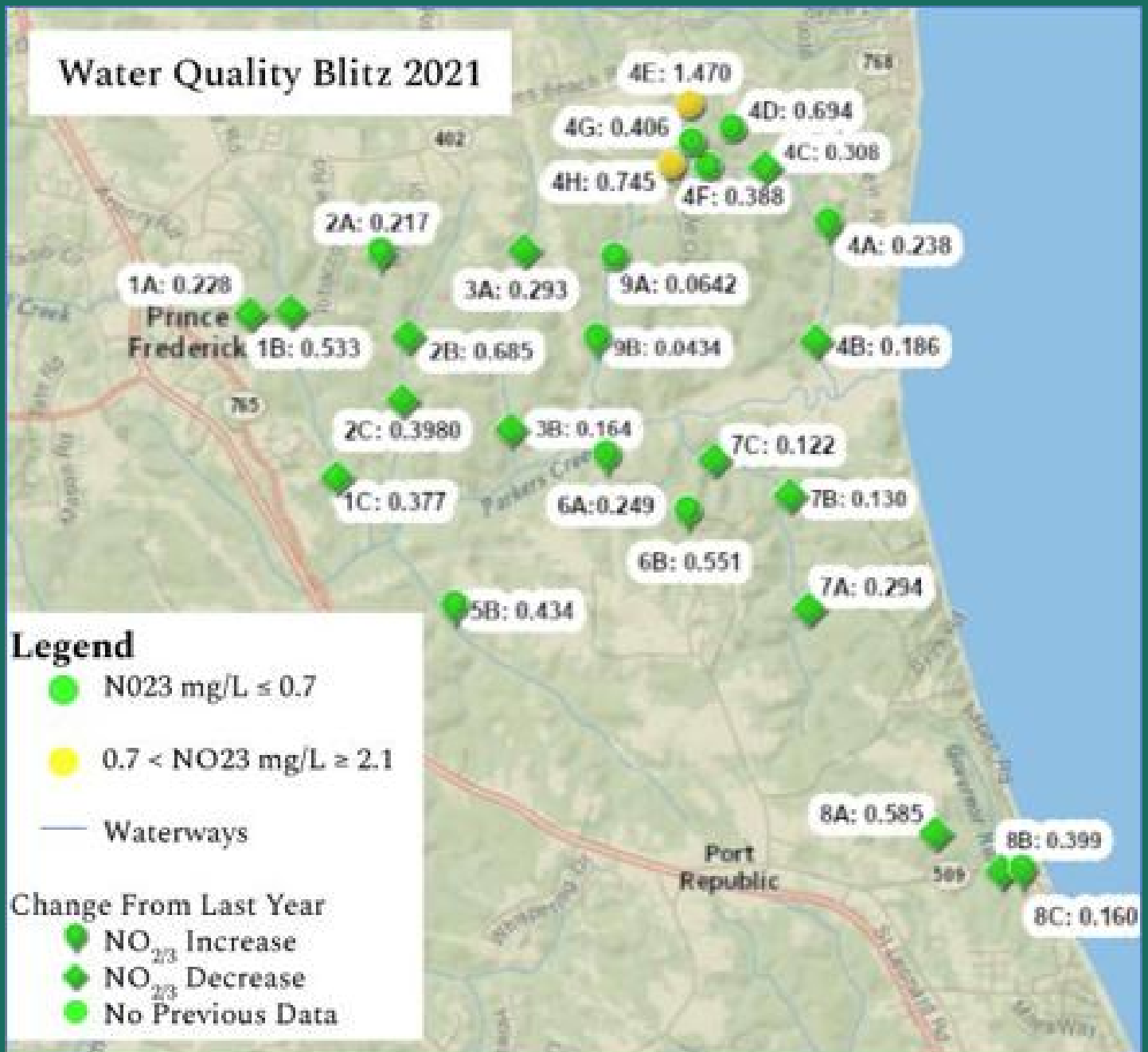


RESEARCH IN THE WATERSHED



At ACLT, our scientific reach is expanding. When ACLT conducted its annual water quality blitz in 2021, this time volunteers from the Friends of Hunting Creek and the Friends of St. Leonard Creek participated in the event as well. We are very excited to see more county residents taking on a stewardship role in their watersheds because it will enhance the prospects of species diversity and wildlife habitat and corridors if we protect a larger working landscape.

Both Friends groups are fortunate to live in watersheds that have good water quality and they want to keep it that way. As shown in the above photo, volunteers from Parkers, St. Leonard, and Hunting Creek watersheds learned from Dr. Walter Boynton how to take samples for the annual blitz which was held on April 3, 2021. Dr. Boynton explained to participants that early in the year, before trees leaf out, is the best time to sample streams to find the average nitrogen levels in the waterways.



Our scientists use a level of less than 0.7 mg/l of total nitrogen as a measure of good water quality. As you can see from the map above, all but two sample sites in the Parkers Creek watershed had good nitrogen levels. Two sites near Holly Hill Farm tested as “fair” nitrogen levels.

What Happens After Phragmites is Killed?



Dale Hutchins and Nicole Stevens installing plastic over phragmites that was cut

For several years, ACLT staff and volunteers have been working to control the invasive *Phragmites australis* from our tidal marshes. Our approach of covering the invasive with 6 mil black plastic for a whole growing season is a difficult task but it has been effective. Smithsonian scientists Dr. Melissa McCormick and Dr. Dennis Whigham have been conducting research in the Parkers Creek and Rhode River marshes to investigate what native plants do best at varying site conditions, which will provide valuable insight for revegetation efforts at phragmites removal sites across the region. We will continue to monitor results, but so far there has been moderate success.



Clara Brill-Carlat and Dr. Dennis Whigham survey the results of the spring planting

In 2021,UMCES-CBL continued its ongoing data collection to measure the impact of sea level rise in a number of stations along the Bay, including Parkers Creek. Four rod surface elevation tables (rSETs) were established in the Parkers Creek marsh in 2014 to measure rates of marsh surface elevation change. The rates of marsh surface elevation change at Parkers Creek continued to rise faster than relative sea-level rise at three of the four test sites.



OTHER WORK

- Dr. Lora Harris has continued monitoring three sites on the tidal portion of Parkers Creek for oxygen and chlorophyll.
- Dr. Chris Rowe continued monitoring amphibians and reptiles on the Preserve. He also worked with Nicole Stevens in creating two new vernal pools.
- Staff and volunteers continued collecting baseline data for macroinvertebrates along the upper reaches of Horse Swamp.
- Alyssa Matanin worked with the Friends of St. Leonard and Hunting Creeks to map basins in the Prince Frederick Town Center and locate failing stormwater management devices.
- ACLT Board Member Birgit Sharp prepared a Report Card for the Parkers Creek watershed, with the help of the Science Committee.

MANAGING THE LAND



PROTECTING, MONITORING, STEWARDING





PROTECTING THE LAND

ACLT has a long history of not only preserving properties to protect them from being developed, but also stewarding the land it owns to strive for ever-increasing resilience and environmental health in the face of many forces that are trying to degrade it. In 2021, ACLT staff and volunteers were vigilant stewards, regularly monitoring properties and addressing threats. For example, on the Kenwood property, illegal ATV use was damaging soil and plants and causing disturbed soil to wash into streams. ACLT notified the authorities, installed signage, and built natural barriers across many access points to protect these forested lands and freshwater streams.

Additionally, we conducted our annual monitoring visit to each fee simple property and completed written monitoring reports in order to maintain our Land Trust Alliance Accreditation. Through this effort, we addressed issues of trespassing, poaching, erosion, and invasive species to help protect the natural resources on all of our preserved properties.



TRAIL STEWARDSHIP & MAINTENANCE

Perhaps the most exciting land management accomplishment of 2021 was the completion and grand opening of the new Holly Hill hiking trail. The new 2.2 miles of trail meander through the forest, streams, meadows, and farm fields on the 405-acre Holly Hill property that was preserved in 2017.

Elsewhere throughout ACLT's 22-mile trail system, proactive improvements were made to reduce erosion and flooding on the trails by designing and installing re-routes and boardwalks where necessary. Volunteers monitored the trails and removed downed trees, mowed vegetation, and ensured signage and blazes were up to date.

HOLLY HILL BARN

The new Holly Hill Trail passes by the historic barn on the Holly Hill property. The barn was leaning badly and at risk of falling down when ACLT purchased the property in 2017. Stabilization of the Holly Hill barn was initiated in 2019 and was completed in 2021.

A viewing platform was installed at one end and signage about the history of the area has been installed. The collapsed barn next to the stabilized barn was removed and the area was cleaned up so that it could serve as the location of ACLT's 35th Anniversary celebration and future events.

The Holly Hill barn is the first of many stops on the Parkers Creek Heritage Trail. ACLT staff is currently working on developing this trail which will highlight various culturally-significant sites throughout the Parkers Creek watershed.



CHESAPEAKE CONSERVATION CORPS

For the last few years, ACLT has been awarded 2 Chesapeake Conservation Corps members through the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT). These Corps members assist with all aspects of land management and complete a capstone project. Last year, the Corps members' capstone projects involved organizing watershed action groups to create support for land preservation and creating vernal pools and other habitat structures to improve habitat for local amphibian populations. In 2021, ACLT Corps members were awarded a grant from CBT to host a day for their fellow Corps members from around the state to come spend the morning working on various land management tasks at ACLT. In the afternoon, these young conservationists took a canoe trip on Parkers Creek or a hike around the ACLT trails.



MARYLAND MASTER NATURALISTS AT ACLT

9TH

Annual Maryland Master
Naturalist Program ... State's
Longest Consecutive Host Site

4,146

Total Hours Completed by All
ACLT Master Naturalists



ACLT hosted its 9th annual Maryland Master Naturalist program in 2021, making it the longest consecutive host site for the program in the state. Twenty people completed the training that was provided in a hybrid virtual/in-person format due to COVID-19. Highlights included a birding field trip, a tree ID class, and the ever-popular nighttime “herp hunt” to look for amphibians and reptiles (pictured above). The trainees are now a part of ACLT’s impressive and dedicated volunteer force.



HABITAT IMPROVEMENT

ACLT undertook many other habitat improvement projects in 2021. In February, we conducted a controlled burn in part of the meadow on the Double Oak property. The goal of the burn was to remove dead thatch material and spur the germination of Chinese lespedeza seeds that were in the soil. While this may seem counterintuitive given that ACLT has been trying to eradicate the Chinese lespedeza for many years, it was done in preparation for an herbicide application that was completed in June. By increasing the germination of seeds in the soil, we could eradicate more of the potential lespedeza plants with the herbicide application that was completed in the summer.





MEADOW RESTORATION

Other meadow restoration efforts included planting the third of four planned meadow buffers around the agricultural fields at Holly Hill. The buffers will provide important wildlife habitat while also filtering stormwater and slowing soil erosion. This is particularly important on the Holly Hill property as the many headwater streams around the agricultural fields are experiencing extreme erosion.

"GRAND CANYON" RESTORATION

One location that has experienced an incredible amount of soil loss and is continuing to erode at a fast rate has become known at ACLT as the "Grand Canyon". In 2021, ACLT began working with a design-build firm with the intention of implementing a nature-based Regenerative Stream Channel restoration project at this site if grant funding can be secured.





CONTROLLING INVASIVES

A lot of time and resources were devoted to controlling an non-native invasive plant that was discovered at ACLT in 2019. Wavyleaf basketgrass is an aggressive non-native plant that has become established on the Double Oak property. After much research and discussion with other resource managers and experts, we established a control plan in 2021 that involved both chemical and mechanical removal.

Staff and volunteers, including school and scout groups, dedicated many hours to hand pulling and cutting the plant to prevent it from going to seed. Additionally, ACLT hired a licensed herbicide applicator to spray the invasive plant in the summer. Control efforts will continue for the foreseeable future and were added to the updated Master Land Management Plan which was adopted in early 2021.



SUSTAINABLE FARMING



Our sustainable agriculture efforts on Double Oak were successful in 2021. We extended our winter growing season by using the high tunnel, replaced the high tunnel plastic, and donated a wide array of produce to St. John Vianney Food pantry that totaled 3,296 pounds. In the food forest, the fruit and nut trees are maturing and 2021 was the first year that we were able to send fruit and nuts to the food pantry. These included blueberries, blackberries, cherries, pears, figs, persimmons, hazelnuts, and peaches. Our "Flower Girls" spent endless hours in their section of the farm, growing gorgeous flowers for visitors and fellow volunteers to enjoy.

3,296

Pounds of fresh produce
donated to the St. John
Vianney Interfaith
Food Pantry



THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!

None of our land management work would be possible without the dedication of our amazing volunteers. In total, volunteers donated 6,696 hours of time maintaining trails and equipment, building and monitoring bird nest boxes, removing invasive species, growing food sustainably, improving our buildings, parking areas, and other infrastructure, and completing all of the miscellaneous land management projects that are required to maintain 24 miles of trails and 3,500 acres of land.

6,696

2021 Total
Volunteer Hours



OUTREACH & MEMBERSHIP



CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY THROUGH
EVENTS, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND MEMBERSHIP
RECRUITMENT



2021 - THE RETURN OF EVENTS & FUN AT ACLT

The lingering effects of the pandemic took us all on a roller coaster ride in 2021, but the Outreach & Membership Committee (O&MC) was far from idle! We had a remarkably successful year as we continued to stay engaged with and expand our reach into the local community.



EVENTS & HIKES

12

Guided Canoe Trips

12

Members-Only Full Moon Hikes

8

On-Site Events

6

Virtual Events

5

Off-Site Events

5

Guided Hikes

2

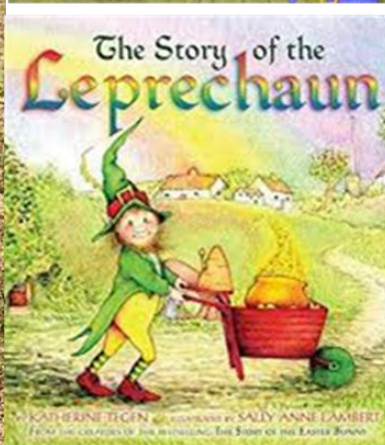
Volunteer Training Sessions

1

Volunteer Appreciation Dinner



TWO NEW EVENTS FOR THE NEW YEAR



We began the year with two new events – one virtual and one in-person. For Valentine’s Day, “Hike for Your Heart” was held virtually, with hikers searching for paper hearts hidden along the trails. The paper hearts were made by hand with recycled paper and embedded with native wildflower seeds.

In March, we hosted a two-day live event (one at each trailhead) celebrating St. Patrick’s Day with a Leprechaun Hunt. The event was based on the book, “The Story of the Leprechaun”. Children searched for clues in a field of shoes to find the pot of gold.



CELEBRATING EARTH DAY



As always, Earth Day was celebrated in a big way with a virtual as well as a live 5K race.

Volunteers also picked up trash along ACLT's two segments of roadway adopted through Maryland's Adopt-A-Highway Program in 2020. One stretch of roadway is along ACLT's frontage on Dares Beach Road. The second is at the southern end of Main Street in Prince Frederick at the headwaters of Parkers Creek.

SIP & SAVE BEER-TASTING EVENT



We were very pleased to be able to host our popular Sip & Save beer-tasting event in September with over 200 attendees. The crowd was invited to sample eleven different beers from breweries in the Chesapeake Bay region while enjoying the music of John Luskey and food from Heidi's Eats Korean BBQ food truck.

Sip & Save was also the kick-off for the 2021 Land Acquisition and Stewardship Campaign. Pictured clockwise on right: the campaign booth and displays, Greg Bowen followed by Robyn Truslow speaking to the crowd, and Board Member Darlene Harrod and Francis Jones representing Brown United Methodist Church.



PARKERS CREEK CHALLENGE

In October, we held our annual Parkers Creek Challenge - a Triathlon with a twist where competitors cycle 9 miles, run 2, paddle up Parkers Creek and back (2.5 miles) and then run another 2 miles back to the South Side Trailhead. This year, three-member relay teams were invited to compete in the Challenge. The winning team came from Prince Georges County, having heard about the event on Facebook. Social media is playing a major role in getting the word out about ACLT and our events.



Parkers Creek Challenge Triathlon



35TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



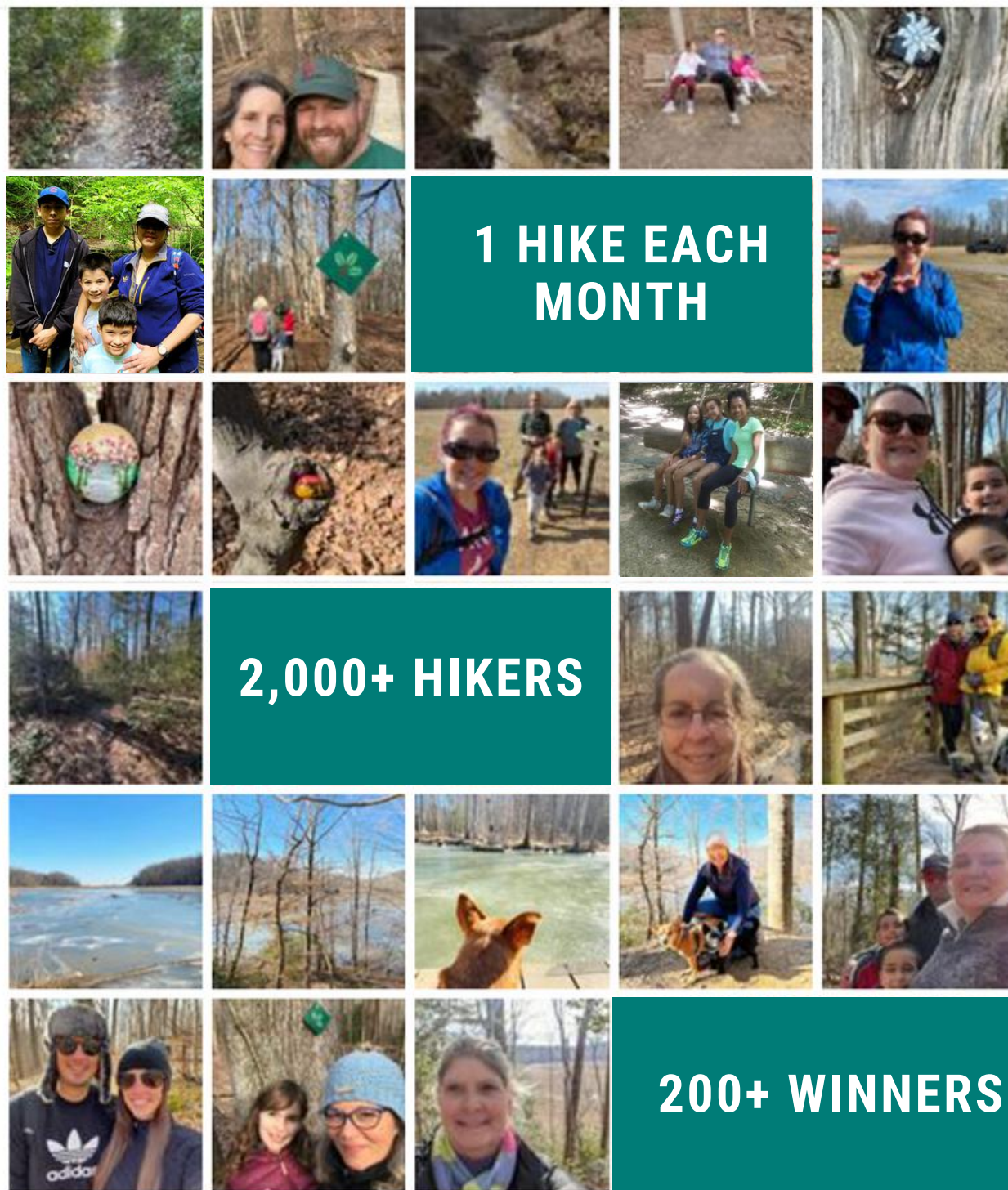
Photo Credit: Carl Fleishhauer



The photo at the bottom was taken soon after ACLT was formed and featured in the November 1988 edition of National Geographic. The photo on the top is a “re-enactment” of the first photo and was taken by Carl Fleischhauer, at the 35th Anniversary Celebration.

Throughout the year, we celebrated ACLT’s 35th Anniversary, culminating on December 4th with an outdoor celebration and Volksmarch. Two hundred attendees hiked from all three trailheads, traversing the brand-new Holly Hill Trail and meeting at the newly stabilized Holly Hill Barn. The event officially opened the barn to the public as the first of many stops on the Parkers Creek Heritage Trail.

12 HIKES IN '21 CHALLENGE



Our most successful virtual event would have to be the 12 Hikes in '21 Challenge, where participants were encouraged to hike at ACLT once a month every month throughout the year. A total of just over 2,000 people participated with over 200 completing the challenge. The ACLT Hiking Facebook Group has over 750 members and is extremely active, sharing beautiful photos from their many hikes.

74K

Trail Visitors in
2021

Many participants are new to ACLT, having discovered our trails during the lock down at the beginning of the pandemic. In 2021, we saw an increased number of participants at events and an increased number of trail visitors - estimated to be approximately 74,000, a 9% increase over 2020 visitors.

MEMBERSHIP

In all we do, the O&MC strives to meet the goals of the 5-Year Plan by increasing membership. In 2021, we expanded the member benefits package to include free canoe trips, merchandise discounts, exclusive members-only events (like our Full Moon hikes), early and discounted event registration, and unique gifts. To go along with the benefits package, a new-member survey was created and is automatically sent out to each new member. The survey gives us insight into the background of our members and their interests. We ended the year with 820 members, a 9% increase over 2020.

820

ACLT
Members

9%

Increase over
2020

The Benefits of Being an ACLT Member



OTHER OUTREACH ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS

Planning and hosting events is not the only thing that keeps the O&MC busy. The Committee is constantly looking for ways to attract more visitors to ACLT's trails, involve more community members in our programs, and increase our membership. Among this year's outreach initiatives:

- Held two volunteer training sessions for Weekend Welcomers and Hike Guides.
- Continued the Weekend Welcome Program, where trained volunteers greeted visitors and answered questions/shared information about ACLT. Over 500 visitors were greeted.
- One of our creative volunteers began painting rocks that are hidden along the trails. Hikers are thrilled to find them and post photos using the hashtag #ACLTRocks. Special editions rocks were painted to commemorate the opening of the Holly Hill Trail.
- With the help of another volunteer, new online games were created and tablets were purchased to allow children (and adults) to try their hand at nature trivia while visiting ACLT's booths at onsite and offsite events. The games have thus far been extremely popular.
- In an attempt to easily share facts and photos with the press, a "Press Kit" page was added to our website. The one-stop page tells the history of ACLT and includes staff bios, high-resolution photos, program details, etc.
- In addition to attending off-site events, we look for ways to network with other nature organizations for our mutual benefit. This year, we participated in Jefferson Patterson Park's Birding Trail Kick-off Event and welcomed the Calvert Library, which set up a Story Walk along the Griffin Meadow Trail.



2022 THEME



ACLT continues to take on a leadership role in the fight against Climate Change. This Annual Report demonstrates that we are continuing to focus our efforts on preserving more land and protecting our watersheds, serving as an example for others. This year's theme is derived from the saying often attributed to Mahatma Gandhi, that we must "Be the Change We Wish to See in the World". We hope that you will join us in the challenge to be that change.

**BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO
SEE IN THE WORLD!**

ACLT BY THE NUMBERS



ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT



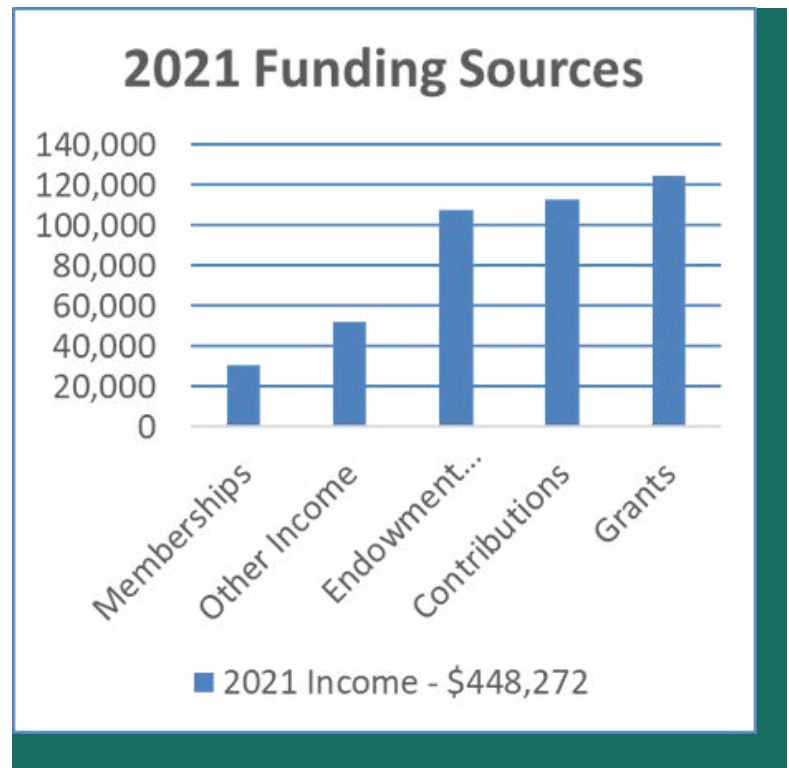
2021 ACLT FINANCIALS

\$448,272

2021 INCOME

\$581,968

LAND & STEWARDSHIP
CAMPAIGN



\$415,355

2021 EXPENDITURES

Reported by Cheryl Place,
Treasurer



ACLT 2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David F. Farr, President
Dawn Balinski, Vice President
B.L. Johnston, Corporate Secretary
Cheryl L. Place, CPA, Treasurer
Richard Aldrich
Walter Boynton
Denise Breitburg
Steven P. Cloak, Jr.
Peter Daly
Bob Field
Darlene Harrod
Ron Klauda
Nathan Novotny
Penny Moran
Shirley Knight
Birgit Sharp
Suzanne Shelden
Robyn Truslow
Fred Tutman
Randi Vogt

ACLT STAFF

Greg Bowen, Executive Director
Autumn Phillips-Lewis, Land Manager
Miriam Groll, Comm. Relations Manager
Janel Young, Office Coordinator
Alyssa Matanin, Regional Land Trust Coord.
Nicole Stevens, CCC Intern (8/20-21)
Alyssa Matanin, CCC Intern (8/20-21)
Clara Brill-Carlat, CCC Intern (8/21-present)
Mary Hoover, CCC Intern (8/21-present)

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