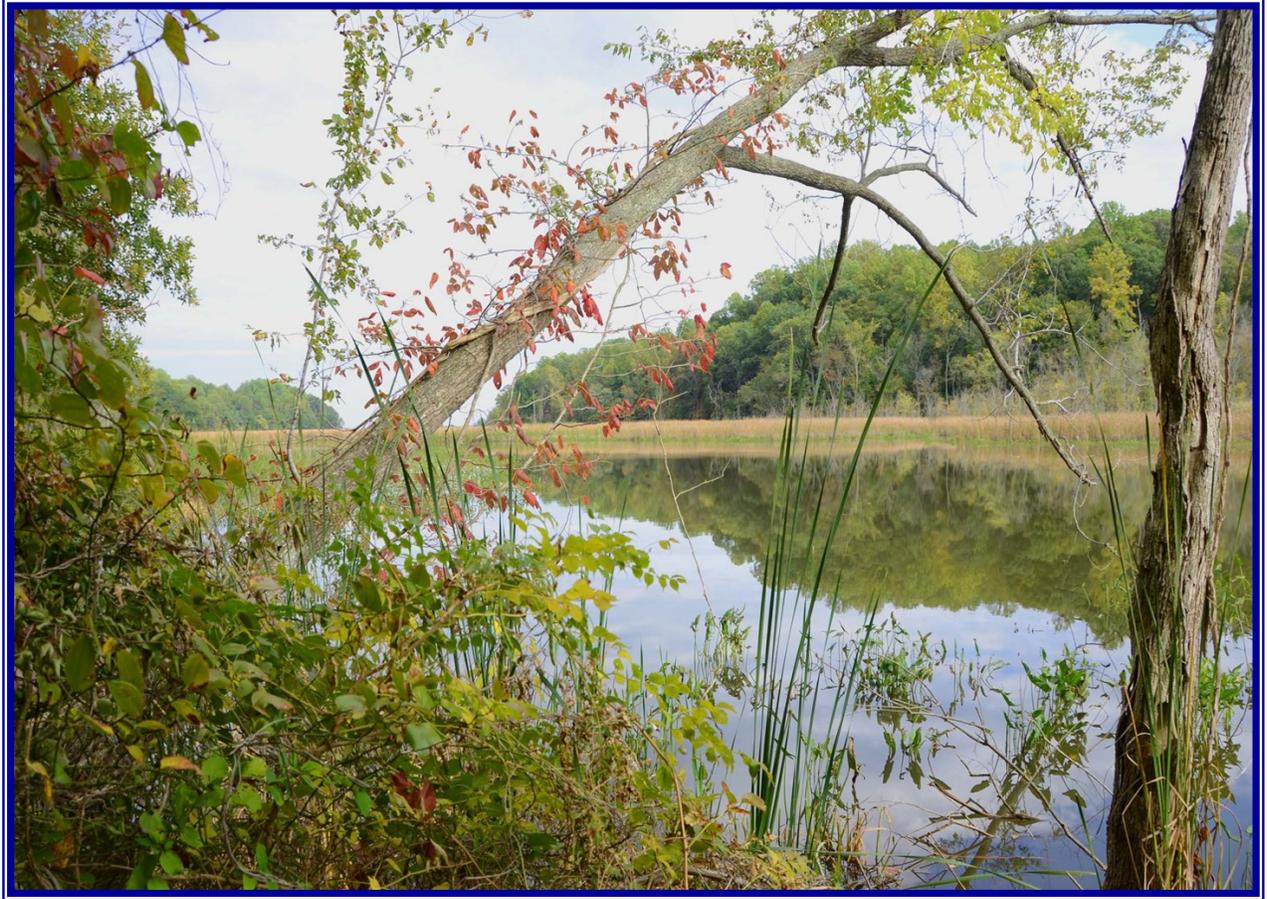


American Chestnut Land Trust



Photograph by Jeff Crespi

2015 Annual Report



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**American Chestnut
Land Trust, Inc.**

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2015 Board of Directors

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2015 ACLT Staff

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Community Relations Coordinator

Autumn B. Phillips

Land Manager

Janel Young

Office Coordinator

Volunteer Office Staff

Ginny Murphy

Susan Helmrich

Membership Coordinators

**Volunteer Farm Manager
RT West**

ACLT Mission Statement

“We promote land conservation throughout Calvert County, Maryland. We provide environmentally sustainable public access to preserved properties for educational, scientific, recreational and cultural purposes. We protect the natural and cultural resources of the Parkers Creek and Governors Run watersheds for the benefit of this and future generations.”

ACLT’s 2015 Accomplishments

2015 has been a year of transition for ACLT. After Karen Edgecombe announced her plans for retirement in January, the Board formed a committee and set about finding a replacement. I was asked to serve and began work in August. All of the staff have worked at ACLT for less than two years, but we come with a breadth of training and experience. The team has coalesced and we are dedicated to ACLT’s mission and Strategic Plan.

True to the Strategic Plan’s vision of serving “as a catalyst for effective land preservation throughout Calvert County by means of alliances and partnerships with other nonprofit organizations, governmental entities, businesses, . . .”, the Board has continued to help with the establishment of the Sustainable Calvert Network. Eight county organizations joined by the conclusion of 2015. More about its work in our Outreach section.

Fortunately, Karen did not go far. At the request of Board members, she has rejoined the Board!

Gregory A. Bowen,
Executive Director



View near the trail head of the Prince Frederick to Bay Trail. David Farr

Land Acquisition and Preservation:

By the end of 2015, the Trust was in the final stages of purchasing a 20.9 acre property from St. John Vianney Catholic Church. This purchase will allow the Trust to help protect the headwaters of Parkers Creek and the viewshed of the Prince Frederick to Bay Trail. This acquisition will bring ACLT's total acreage to 986.

Our most recent acquisition, the Harrod property, is already being put into use. As described on page 5, our volunteers completed a trail through the Harrod property to connect with

Laurel Trail which runs through the Gravatt West property.

A grand opening event for Karen's Trail was held on November where the Trail's namesake did the honors!



Land Management:

ACLT's land management program was in full stride in 2015. Under land manager Autumn Phillips' leadership, a number of habitat enhancements were initiated, including those for threatened and endangered species. Once threatened and nearing extinc-



tion, wood ducks populations have stabilized and these migrant waterfowl are regular visitors to Parkers Creek. To help ensure that they have a home in the watershed, Autumn and our intrepid volunteers built and installed wood duck boxes along the marshes of Parkers Creek. Barn owl boxes were also installed on various barns throughout the Parkers Creek Preserve to provide habitat for these birds which are rare in Calvert County and a screech owl box was installed

in a tree at Double Oak Farm.

It is commonly known that pollinators are at risk in the United States. Honey bees, native bees, and butterflies have been losing habitat and are impacted by pesticides.

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) reports that

“three-fourths of the world's flowering plants and about 35 percent of the world's food crops depend on animal pollinators to reproduce. More than 3,500 species of native bees help increase crop yields. Some scientists estimate that one out of every three bites of food we eat exists because of animal pollinators like bees, butterflies, moths, birds, bats, beetles, and other insects.” NRCS urges everyone to improve pollinator habitat.



ACLT helped to increase pollinator habitat by installing a pollinator garden at Double Oak Farm in 2015 with the help of Master Naturalists. Volunteers also helped to establish milkweed beds at the farm. Monarch butterflies (also threatened by loss of habitat) rely on milkweed for food and as a nursery and home. Volunteers saw many monarch butterflies around the beds and they saved seeds to plant more beds in 2016.

Ed Kobrinsky introduced Hugelkultur along the EDGE garden. It is an advanced permaculture method from Europe that requires minimal watering and less maintenance once it is established. The mounds are made of wood debris, leaves, and soil and covered with compost and are one of the most popular features on the garden. It is in one of the Hugelkultur mounds that we harvested a 26 pound “swan” Sweet potato.



The farm’s first year as an **Agriculture to Support the Community Program** was a big success. Fresh, healthy food was delivered each Wednesday within hours of harvest thanks to RT and his crew. Recipients were pleased and grateful for the variety and quality of the produce. ACLT’s community farm and garden project was also supported in 2015 by a BGE (Baltimore Gas & Electric) Green Grant.

By no means have all stewardship efforts been focused on the fields. ACLT volunteers began the year planting hy-

brid American chestnut trees on the Harrod property. Once a dominant Eastern forest species, the native American chestnut has all but disappeared. Our Land Management Committee is hoping that these hybrids can bring back the creamy white canopies of flowers in the spring and the delicious nuts in the fall. The fledgling American



chestnut grove can be viewed from the new Karen’s Trail, which opened to the public in November and is part of nearly 20 miles of trail managed by ACLT and its volunteers.

Of course, a key part of land management is passing on knowledge to those interested in caring for the land and our ecosystem. We are so happy to be a host of the Maryland Master Naturalist Program. This year, we assisted in the training of 18 new Master Naturalists, bringing the total number of participants in class over the past 3 years to 49, many of whom are donating hours of work to ACLT upon completion of the classes.



Outreach and Membership:

At the beginning of 2015, Community Relations Coordinator Pam Shilling set out a strategy for Membership and Outreach Development that focused on goals established in the Five-Year Plan. The plan was to pursue those goals through increased events on ACLT properties and through online activity.

Our event calendar for 2015 was the busiest ACLT has seen in many years. Our 2016 events launched in March with the annual meeting that began our process of thanking Karen Edgecombe for her nine years of service as ACLT Executive Director.



This meeting also served as the kick off to our new farm program. With our switch from a “CSA” to an “ASC”, ACLT friend Bernie Fowler Jr. presented Farming 4 Hunger’s successes. The non-profit not only raises food to donate to the Maryland Food Bank, it also engages the community to get involved in the charitable work as well, which we emulated during 2015 on a smaller scale.



April saw our schedule adjusted a bit to replace the Earth Day trail run with an Earth Day Clean Up and a Guided Family Hike. We were so pleased when the Calvert Re-

recorder’s Katelyn Scritore, who joined us for the hike, wrote a wonderful article about ACLT and our North Side trails.



A visit from 90 Huntingtown Elementary School second graders was another wonderful outcome of our Earth Day events. A hiker from the Earth Day Guided Hike, Mrs. Willanette Lohr, enjoyed ACLT so much she contacted us to coordinate a field day for the eager and active group of students. This visit occurred just before our 2015 Family Day which invited family’s to visit the garden/farm, learn about turtles, fossils and geocaching and even visit with DNR’s owls and hawks.



During the summer, Double Oak Farm began its revised program. Dozens of volunteers cared for and harvested the farm as well as tended to the new “Educational Demonstration Garden Experiment” – our educational garden. To share the bounty and spread the word about the new farm program, we began our 2nd Sunday Farmers Markets. Held in June, July, August and a modified version for the October Calvert County Farm Festival. Guests were invited to purchase naturally grown vegetables, tour the garden/farm, and enjoy local vendors like Mrs. Moo’s Organic Ice Cream and Local breweries and wineries. These events brought over 450 guests to ACLT, many of which were new visitors.

2015 marked the 20th Annual Dinner & Auction. To celebrate the milestone ACLT hosted its first chili cook-off in 9 years. Nearly 200 people filled the Vianney Room at St. John Vianney’s Parish Center to enjoy delicious chili and bid on excellent auction items.

To round out the year, we expanded the Holiday Greens Sale events. This year, we offered two wreath-making workshops one on Thursday night and one on Friday morning. Thirty class attendees and 25 volunteers made dozens of beautiful holiday wreaths and helped create a fun and festive Holiday wreath and greens sale.



In addition to our expanded event schedule, use of ACLT’s website and social media pages increased substantially. As of January 2015, 71% of online American adults used Facebook. For this reason, to grow our social media strategy we focused on increasing Facebook “likes” and engagement. In November 2014, ACLT had 683 people who liked our Facebook Page. In 2014, the highest unpaid reach a post received was 1700 views. As of November of 2015, we have 1097 likes (an increase of 60%) and we have a post that reaches over 1000 views every week with the highest number of views on one unpaid post being 11,900.

Treasurer's Report:

Operating income and expenditures in 2015 compared favorably with 2014. Once again, we are happy to report that ACLT received a clean, unqualified opinion on our 2014 audit from our auditors, Mullen, Sondberg, Wimbish & Stone, CPA. ACLT is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization as recognized by IRS and a registered charity with the state of Maryland. The preliminary, unaudited financial figures for 2015 are presented below. Final audited financial statements are expected by June 2016 and will be available for inspection upon request. Cheryl L. Place, CPA, Treasurer

American Chestnut Land Trust, Inc.

Summary of Financial Status for Calendar Years 2014 and 2015
(unaudited)

Income:	2014	2015
Memberships	19,194	19,222
Contributions and Memorials	85,881	106,050
Grants, Operating	109,436	111,420
Grants, Restricted	4,970	0
Program Income	43,769	35,326
Support from Land Management Endowment	84,900	95,928
Double Oak Farm CSA/ASC	15,915	5,716
All Other Income	<u>2,833</u>	<u>90</u>
Total Income	366,898	373,752
Expenditures:		
Land Acquisition and Preservation	40,643	39,218
Land Management	106,484	102,739
Outreach and Member Services	92,427	94,015
Administration and Fundraising	62,851	60,654
Restricted Grants	1,960	3,900
Double Oak Farm CSA/ASC	18,246	4,512
All Other Expenditures	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total Expenditures	322,611	305,038

Year-End Special Fund Balances

Land Management Endowment Fund	2,199,584	1,976,586
Forever Endowment Fund		103,802
Land Acquisition Fund	269,625	325,767
Easement Legal Defense Fund	50,000	50,000
Building Fund	76,974	64,801
Easement Monitoring Fund	14,921	14,921
Repair and Replacement Fund	30,491	24,685
State Land Management Fund	22,674	21,622
Double Oak Farm CSA	2,092	3,296
Restricted Grants Carryover	6,346	3,830

