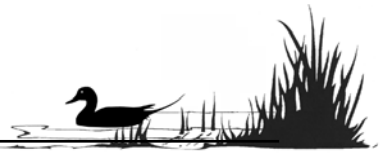


# Watershed Observer



NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT LAND TRUST - VOLUME 21 NO. 4, FALL 2007

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## CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

- DECEMBER 8, 2007 – ACLT GREENS SALE, 11:00 A.M.–2:00 P.M.
- FEBRUARY 9 – ACLT ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING, 9:30 A.M. – 12:00 NOON
- FEBRUARY 16 – GUIDED WINTER WOODLAND HIKE, 1:30 P.M.–3:30 P.M.

SEE [HTTP://ACLTWEB.ORG](http://acltweb.org) OR PAGE 10 FOR FULL CALENDAR AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

## ACLT's Raison d'Être

*"...Branding ... involves the organization in a rigorous examination of its character and its plans, in order to reach audiences on which its very existence depends."* — Ben Edwards, a principal with Art & Science Group, a North Carolina-based national consulting firm.

Over the past year, the ACLT Board of Directors has been engaged in just such a rigorous examination of the character of the American Chestnut Land Trust in an effort to reach new audiences.



Parkers Creek, Alan Eckert Photography

## Our Name

The discussion began, in September 2006, when the Membership and Outreach Committee raised with the Board of Directors the issue whether ACLT should consider changing its name due to the perception by some members of the committee that the name does not adequately describe the organization and tends to divert attention from ACLT's actual mission. The office regularly receives telephone inquiries from members of the public about the American Chestnut tree. Almost invariably, at conferences or other meetings, people will see the name American Chestnut Land Trust on my name badge and strike up a conversation about chestnuts.

Depending upon how much time is available I will usually explain that the very first property that ACLT purchased contained a living specimen of an American Chestnut tree which served as the Maryland State Champion tree of the species until the tree was blown down in the winter of 2006. Invariably, this leads to an interesting but "off message" discussion about

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)



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Published quarterly by the American Chestnut Land Trust. The ACLT is dedicated to the preservation of Calvert County, Maryland's Natural and Historical Resources. Since it was established in 1986, ACLT has preserved over 3,000 acres. We own 911 acres, manage 1,780 acres owned by the State of Maryland, and hold conservation easements on 360 privately-owned acres.

Editors: Ellen and David Farr

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*(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)*

this magnificent former keystone species of the Eastern hardwood forest or about the chestnut blight introduced into the United States by Japanese chestnuts and sometimes I can even begin to bring the conversation around to the subject of the dangers of introducing “exotic” or nonnative species. In situations where there is a limited opportunity to educate someone about the mission of the ACLT, however, it is frustrating to be sidetracked by having to first dispel the notion that our mission relates to the American Chestnut tree.

In its discussions, the Membership and Outreach Committee could not come to a consensus on whether the name was still appropriate. It was pointed out that the American Chestnut Land Trust has earned a good reputation in the greater land trust community and had also built local name recognition over its twenty year existence. On the other hand, it was also stressed that a name change could be done successfully, but only if there was a consensus among the members of the ACLT. A name change had been discussed on a number of occasions in the past without resolution. At the September 2006 board meeting, this issue was put to rest, at least for now. It was decided that the land trust should maintain the existing organizational name for at least the next five years.

**ACLT's Mission**

In the course of its meetings over the next several months, the Membership and Outreach Committee discussed the important and unique aspects of ACLT. Land preservation and land management are central to ACLT's mission and the Parkers Creek watershed is the central focus of that effort. The emphasis on preserving cultural as well as natural resources on ACLT preserved properties was also seen as a key aspect of ACLT. “Protecting Calvert County's Natural and Cultural Resources” is a tag line that is often associated with the ACLT name.

Another unique aspect of ACLT among land trusts is our support for public access. Our mission statement says that “we promote sustainable public use of preserved properties for educational, scientific, recreational and cultural purposes.” To carry out this mission we offer a wide variety of events and stewardship activities that bring people to the land as well as allowing public access to the trails from “dawn to dusk” 365 days/year.

The committee asked, “What is our competition?” They listed sites like Flag Ponds, Calvert Cliffs State Park and Battle Creek Cypress Swamp, all of which are publicly-owned parks rather than other land trusts. The committee asked, “How can we differentiate ourselves in terms of ‘a place to go’ compared with these other natural areas?” It was suggested that “ACLT is a community—our members and volunteers make a connection both with the land and with the other people in the organization.” “Connecting people to the land” was suggested as a possible new tag line.

At the November 2006 meeting of the Board of Directors, the committee presented a skit to the other members of the board to impress upon board members the importance of their role in educating the public about ACLT's mission. In the skit, two “new arrivals” in the county, played by members of the committee, were introduced to members of the ACLT board, played by

other members of the committee, and the land trust was explained to the new arrivals. The board was given a list of Frequently Asked Questions about the American Chestnut Land Trust, which will be incorporated into ACLT's website. In these FAQs, we restated ACLT's mission "in plain English" as follows:

- We preserve land and assist others in the preservation of their land;
- We connect people to the land through social and educational events and activities, volunteer stewardship activities, guided hikes and canoe trips, and self-guided trails; and
- We manage the lands we have preserved to ensure that the natural and cultural resources they contain continue to be protected.

We also answered other frequently asked questions such as: "What community need does ACLT meet?"; "What is special about Parkers Creek Watershed?"; "Why is there only 'limited access' to the Warrior's Rest Sanctuary?"; "Why does ACLT allow hunting?"; "How does ACLT accomplish its mission?"; "How is ACLT funded?"; "Do I have to be a member of ACLT to attend an event or use the trails?"; and "I support what ACLT is doing to preserve land in Calvert County. What can I do to help?"

All of this self-examination ultimately is intended to help us better explain the land trust to the public.

### A New Logo

In January 2007, the Membership and Outreach Committee reported to the board that its agenda for the year included a new logo, new stationery, a revised website, a new brochure, a new membership database, and a revised visitor sign-in form for the trailheads. The first of these initiatives was to be a new logo. The committee sought and received approval to hire a graphic designer to work with the committee to create a "succinct visual expression of ACLT's identity."

This proved to be a herculean task, taking over ten months to complete. The committee reviewed many creative designs by two very talented graphic designers who attempted to capture the many facets of ACLT. We began with the concept that we wanted the new design to relate to our proposed new tagline "connecting people to the land," but inserting people into the design proved difficult to execute. Committee member Caroline VanMason then suggested that Parkers Creek should be the focus since preservation of the Parkers Creek watershed is really at the core of our mission. This, likewise, was problematic. Parkers Creek itself has so many facets that it was difficult to capture the wetlands, the woodlands, and the wildness of the watershed in a single image.

In the end, it was one of our members - Ellen Farr - who sat down one night with "the only two magic markers on my desk" and hand drew the design that you see below. Despite my efforts to remain in the neutral role of "staff" to the committee, I forwarded Ellen's design to the committee with the comment, "I don't want to unduly influence anyone, but I am really excited about this new design! I think it is a breakthrough, at long last." "WOW! This is it," exclaimed committee member Denise Breitung. "I love the design, colors and clean lines" remarked Marcy Damon. Finally, we had something that the entire committee was excited to recommend to the board. Jen Seidel of Design Mason Graphics took Ellen's drawing and created a digitized version and added the lettering.

In the image, you are looking westward from the Chesapeake Bay, at an orientation similar to the aerial photograph at the beginning of this article. The green symbolizes the watershed and the blue, of course, the creek. The letters "aclt" rest on the preserved land on the south side of Parkers Creek where the story of the land trust began. It is a nod to ACLT's past as we retool for the future. We hope you like it!

Karen H. Edgecombe,  
Executive Director



## From the President's Desk ...

### Land Trust Alliance 2007 Rally - Denver, Colorado

The annual Land Trust Alliance Rally offers many things - field trips, seminars, workshops, keynote speeches, exhibits and a chance to connect with other conservationists from across the country. Rally also provides an opportunity to learn about the future of land conservation and reflect on ACLT's future. This year, it was held in Denver and drew more than 2000 attendees. It did not disappoint.

Rand Wentworth, LTA's Executive Director, set the tone with his welcoming address, celebrating the LTA's 25th anniversary and spelling out challenges for the next 25 years. Since LTA's inception, the land conservation movement has much to celebrate. The number of land trusts has grown from 400 to more than 1700 and over 37 million acres have been conserved. A darker picture emerges when looking to the future. Growth pressures will continue to threaten much of what's left of our natural and cultural heritage with conservation pre-empted by development. Another disturbing trend is the increasing use of condemnation by government agencies and utilities as they seek low cost sites and corridors for roads, utility lines and other public projects. To counter this, Rand sets forth three challenges for the land trust community: focus on pace, quality and permanence.

**Pace** - According to LTA, it will take about 500 million acres of permanently protected land "to sustain wildlife and healthy natural systems in the United States." This is about double what is currently protected and translates to an investment rate of some \$20 billion per year for the next thirty years, about double the current rate. This is achievable through a combination of private investment coupled with local, state and federal funding. In addition to continuing to explore possibilities in the Parkers Creek watershed, ACLT and its members can help assure that Maryland's unique Program Open Space funding remains protected and can weigh in as needed to ensure that federal legislation and budget levels are supportive of conservation.

**Quality** - Public trust and confidence in the land trust community is critical to future success. Not long ago, Congress took aim at the whole approach to tax deductions for donated easements and the IRS is now auditing some 900 easements nationwide. LTA responded by working with Congress to protect key tax provisions in federal law and by meeting frequently with IRS to help

ensure that their audits focus on tax fraud not legitimate land trusts. At the same time, through its Standards and Practices and the recently developed Accreditation system, LTA is working with local land trusts to ensure the kind of credibility needed to build and maintain public trust. ACLT follows the Standards and Practices and intends to seek formal accreditation through the LTA.

**Permanence** - Condemnation and other legal challenges to easements pose yet another threat to significant amounts of land considered permanently preserved. Most land trusts don't have the financial resources to mount a legal challenge in case one is warranted. To address this, LTA is designing a legal defense fund; is recruiting pro-bono litigators to help land trusts as the need arises; and is developing a litigation insurance program to fund legal costs if a conservation easement is violated or challenged in court. LTA would love to hear from any ACLT members inclined to donate pro-bono legal services.

Beyond these, Rally provides a forum for considering the future of land conservation, from diversification to contributing to solving climate change to helping protect public health. This draws on the experience and expertise of the many land trusts that attend. For ACLT, it provides much to reflect on as we think about our position and our responsibilities - local, state and national - and whether we want to accept Rand's challenge.

Ted Graham, President

### **MARK YOUR 2008 CALENDAR**

## **Member Notice**

The 2007 Annual Membership Meeting of the American Chestnut Land Trust will be held on Saturday, February 9, 2008 from 9:30 a.m.-12:00 noon at St. John Vianney Catholic Church in Prince Frederick, Maryland.

# Around ACLT

## ACLT Welcomes Charity R. Higgs as New Community Relations Coordinator

Greetings to all,

I am truly honored to be part of the American Chestnut Land Trust and its staff. My name is Charity Higgs and I am the new ACLT part-time Community Relations Coordinator.

I was born and raised in Southern Maryland. I grew up with both a love and respect for the land. Being an only child and living in what I used to call, "the boonies," my best friends became the wooded paths and the wildlife around me. Who knew a stick could become so many clever play things? My parents and my own family reside in Hughesville on part of the original 109 acre parcel I enjoyed exploring as a child. Ironically enough, my husband Chris used to play in the woods that adjoined our land as a child as well. Our paths finally crossed in a high school art class and have been zigzagging together ever since. We have a three-year-old daughter, Claire, who loves the outdoors. She is fascinated by the prints leaves make on the concrete after a rain and, of course, the "Disney Princesses."

I am a photography graduate of the Savannah College of Art and Design in Georgia. Savannah was a perfect setting for photography with its nearby beaches, swamps, historic parks and cemeteries all loaded with Spanish moss. Just over the Savannah Bridge was a wildlife preserve full of insects, birds and alligators which always made for great images. Savannah was also home to a diverse group of people which was an invaluable learning experience. Movies and music videos were always being filmed around town, you never knew who you might run into.

After college I was able to live and work in other states including Virginia, Florida and Mississippi. In 1999, I returned to my home in Southern Maryland; it has the best of everything. I have enjoyed working in several areas of interest including photography, advertising/marketing, print publishing and graphic design.

My personal mission is to make everyone's experience with the American Chestnut Land Trust the best it can possibly be. I look forward to being actively involved with the ACLT board, committees, members, staff and volunteers in making all of the ACLT's visions a reality.

Thank you to everyone at the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner for such a warm welcome. It was a pleasure to meet all of you. I especially want to express my sincere gratitude to Karen Edgecombe, Liz Stoffel, Pat Tantom and Seaona deGennaro for paving the way and opening your hearts to me. I look forward to working with you all.



Charity R. Higgs,  
Community Relations Coordinator



**ACLT ANNUAL GREENS SALE  
AND BEACH HAYRIDE  
SATURDAY  
DECEMBER 8, 2007  
11 A.M. – 2 P.M.**

**WARRIOR'S REST SANCTUARY  
1920 SCIENTISTS CLIFFS ROAD  
PORT REPUBLIC, MD**

Get a jump on your holiday decorating and shopping. Purchase bunches of holly or evergreens to craft your own decorations or purchase ready-made wreaths or garlands. ACLT inspired jewelry, hand-crafted tiles, or tee shirts would be wonderful additions to your gift list. And, don't forget to give a Gift Membership. For additional information visit <http://acltweb.org> or phone 410-414-3400.

## 2007 ACLT Silent Auction and Celebration

### A beautiful evening of fun and good-humored bidding

The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual ACLT Silent Auction and Celebration was held September 29<sup>th</sup> at the Scientists' Cliffs Community House and under the adjoining "big top" tent. It was a beautiful fall evening with more than 200 members and their guests gathered to celebrate and raise funds for ACLT. "This was a wonderful event bringing ACLT's friends together for a great cause", exclaimed Event Chair, Joy Bartholomew. The sale of tickets to the event covers all of the costs of hosting the event so that 100% of the proceeds received from donated auction items can be used to support ACLT's mission.

Past auction donors were invited to a pre-auction cocktail party, hosted by Mimi and John Little and Donna and Paul Wilson at the home of Pat and Abbey Griffin. The price of admission was donation of an item for this year's auction.

This year's donors provided an impressive array of auction items including, a one-week sailing trip in Tahiti, lodging at a Florida "Tree House", a champagne dinner and box seats at the opera, unique handcrafted pottery, jewelry and a wine-tasting event. Also featured were beautiful watercolors and paintings, unusual works of art, and deluxe wine baskets filled with delicious treats. ACLT members could travel the culinary world with offerings of an "Evening in Morocco" dinner, Foods & Wines of France, or enjoy a "Famous Scottish Whiskey Cake".

A delicious catered dinner was served by Blue Wind Gourmet featuring Maryland grown foods. Accompanying the dinner was Maryland produced wine from Basignani Winery.

With the bidding concluded and dinner served, the Calvert Dance Band and guest soloist, Harriet Yaffe, entertained enthusiastic listeners and energetic dancers with their big band sound.

"A successful event such as this is the result of many hours of planning and hard work by our staff, members, and volunteers", said ACLT Executive Director, Karen Edgecombe. "ACLT is extremely grateful to Event Chair Joy Bartholomew and all the auction volunteers, donors, contributors, sponsors and supporters. Members are telling me they can't wait until next year!"

Patricia Tantum,  
Outreach and Communications Coordinator



Top: Pam & John Ambler along with Jeremy Stone enjoying the evening. Left: Andrew Sager was the winning bidder of this unique chess set. Right: Paul Blayney was a very busy bartender throughout the Auction.

A special thank you to our volunteers for their help before, during and after the 12<sup>th</sup> annual silent auction and celebration: Jerry Adams, Guenever Aldrich, Jack Andrews, Nancy Baer, Joy Bartholomew, Paul Blayney, Steve & Laura Blayney, Denise Breitburg, Marie Bundy, Dr. Andrea Clarke, Carl Fleischhauer, Glynn & Dagmar Frank, Ted Graham, Abbey & Pat Griffin, Bill Haile, Katie Hanlon, Dave Hartful, Dan & Debbie Hildebrand, Paula Johnson, Anne Cole Johnston, Elizabeth Johnston, Mimi & John Little, Sandra & Gary Loew, Gene & Carolyn McHugh, Dr. Steve Peters, Janette Petersen, Maggie Reynolds, Janice & Chuck Rodgers, Roberta Safer, Elise Schryver, Patrick Simpson, Mark Smith, Peter & Jennie Stathis, Donna & Paul Wilson, and Harriet Yaffe.

Thank you to those who contributed items to our successful 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Silent Auction and Celebration:

Sneade's Ace Home Center; Hair Priority; Jacqueline Morgan Day Spa; Wentworth Nursery; College of Southern Maryland; Jerry Adams; Richard & Guenever Aldrich; C. Douglass Alves, Jr.; Kimberly Arbuthnot; Terri Beck; Barbara & Stan Benning; Paul and Doris Berry; Paul & Mary Blayney; Dan & Tina Boesz; Ray Bogle; Nick Bohaska; Sidney Bowen, Bowen's Florist; Grace Mary Brady; Denise Breitburg; Anne Brown; Marie Bundy; John and Judith Ayres Burke; Bill and Kelly Chambers, The Show Place Arena; Susan Cole; Ann Crain, Vista Bay Studio; Mike & Seasona deGennaro; Paul & Diana Dennett; Ralph & Mary Dwan; Leslie Eckmann; Rick & Terry Farman; Dave & Ellen Farr; Christine Ferrandino, The Cliff House B&B; Carl Fleischhauer; Pat & Celeste Furey; Reid Goforth; Ted Graham; Brian & Lisa Griffin; Frank & Joan Harris, J.F. Harris Fine Jewelry; Mary Beth Harry; Dan, Jane, JJ, & Dan Jr. Head; Beverly Wycoff Jackson; Anne Cole Johnston; Bill Haile & Joy Bartholomew; Jeff & Nancy Klapper, Main Street Gallery; Mickey Kunkle, MK Creations; Valerie Lancaster, Healing Spirit Hands; John & Mimi Little; Jody Longhill; Heather & Darren Maertens, Maertens Jewelers; Jane Manning; Bill McGillicuddy; Carolyn & Gene McHugh; Patrick & Ginny Murphy; Julia Musengo; Virginia O'Neill; Jeffrey R. Owens, CFO, Clyde's Restaurant Group; John Parker, World Gym; Janette Petersen; Rob Plant, Blue Wind Gourmet; Chris and Maggie Reynolds; Sandy Roberts; Ellen Robinson; Roberta Safer; Charles and Mary Serpan, Bohemian Home Bakery of Bethesda; Susan Shaw; Mark Smith; Elizabeth Stoffel; Jeremy and BJ Stone; George and Marla Surgent, Seaworthy Small Ships; Patricia Tantum; Scott Thompson; George Tornell; Brian Treece, Banana Banner Signs; Marcia van Gemert; Caroline VanMason; Peter Vogt; Donna and Paul Wilson; Alan Wilson; Harriet Yaffe

## Volunteers – A Heart Felt Thank You!

Despite the torrential downpour, ACLT volunteers enjoyed a buffet barbeque dinner Friday night, October 26<sup>th</sup> at Double Oak Farm. The ACLT staff hosted this enjoyable evening to honor and thank our dedicated volunteers for their help and support. This event was just a small token of our appreciation for the hard work and devoted service our volunteers provide throughout the year.

Although the weather put a damper on some of the outdoor fun we had planned—including a bonfire complete with marshmallows roasted on bamboo stakes to make s'mores—Double Oak Farm was at its seasonal best with pumpkins, gourds, candles and twinkling lights. Attendees were introduced to our new Community Relations Coordinator, Charity Higgs and her husband, Chris. Excited volunteers welcomed Charity and Chris and eagerly chatted with them both throughout the evening festivities.

While munching on a pulled pork sandwich, Southern Maryland Hunt Club President, Bobby Pearson discussed upcoming ACLT events and projects with Land Manager, Liz Stoffel. Fortunately for our guests, both Bobby and Liz were too busy enjoying the evening's camaraderie and forgot to canvass for volunteers.

Throughout the evening volunteers related stories about their ACLT volunteering adventures, caught up with neighbors, and enjoyed good natured humor. See, folks, volunteering isn't all work. Join us and see how much fun you can have!

Patricia Tantum, Outreach and Communications Coordinator

## IRA Window of Opportunity

**Why a Window?** – The Pension Protection Act includes an opportunity for charitable giving. This opportunity **expires December 31, 2007** and is unlikely to be extended. Therefore, only one month remains to use this unique provision for some advance tax planning and also help ACLT build its Land Management Endowment. The Land Management Endowment is critical to ACLT's ability to fulfill its obligations to manage our preserved properties in perpetuity.

**What Part Of The Law Are We Talking About?** – The Act provides an opportunity for people age 70 ½ and older. Such individuals are required to take a taxable "required minimum distribution" (RMD) from their IRA each year. If the individual also receives a pension and social security, it is possible that this will place them in a higher tax bracket than necessary. The Act provides an opportunity to transfer any amount up to \$100,000 from an IRA directly to a qualified public charity, such as ACLT, and exclude this amount from their gross income at the federal and state level. Such direct transfers are not deductible as a charitable deduction, but rather are utilized to directly reduce the individual's gross income which may be more beneficial to the taxpayer in certain circumstances.

**Aren't All Charitable Contributions Tax-Free?** – Typically, a donor may only deduct a contribution to a charity up to 50% of his/her adjusted gross income in any given year. Those individuals who have large IRAs that are likely to be subject to income and estate taxes at death may wish to give more to charity now and reduce the tax exposure for their beneficiaries upon their death. For the remainder of this year only, a donor can make a charitable contribution which would exceed 50% of their adjusted gross income and still receive a tax benefit by using the tax-free IRA charitable distribution provision of the Pension Protection Act.

**Can I Utilize The Direct Transfer Provision Of The Law And Still Take Some Or All Of My Required Minimum Distribution?** – Yes! This law permits you to both enjoy your income from your IRA and benefit your favorite charity. You will only include in your gross income, that portion of the RMD that you actually receive; the amount donated to charity will be excluded.

**How Can I Do This?** – 1) Talk with your financial advisor before making the donation in order to arrange for a proper transfer; 2) talk with Karen Edgecombe, ACLT Executive Director, about your pending donation to ACLT's Land Management Endowment; and 3) receive a written acknowledgment from the ACLT showing the date of the contribution and the amount donated.

Barbara Benning,  
Member, ACLT Board of Directors



# Land Manager's Corner

## Phragmites Research on Parkers Creek

Many of our *Watershed Observer* readers know that the Warrior's Rest property, the beaches, and marshes around Parkers Creek are used by application for scientific research and educational study purposes. People often ask about the types of education and research being conducted there. We have a number of professors who bring students to teach them about bay ecology. In the navigable mile and a half of the creek there is every ecological zone of the whole Chesapeake Bay. From open bay to barrier beach, to salt marsh, to brackish wetlands and finally to a freshwater palustrine stream under forest canopy; Parkers Creek is a wonderful laboratory, with great diversity. Others come to study the minute details within this diversity.

In early November, on a beautiful sunny 70-degree day, I was able to accompany two researchers from the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC) who are conducting a study of *Phragmites* populations around the Chesapeake Bay. *Phragmites australis* or Common Reed is a wetland plant that grows up to 15 feet tall. The study began last year, to test the viability of seeds in undisturbed forested wetlands against those in disturbed areas where urbanization has taken place. Last year's study, found that the plants in disturbed areas produced viable seeds but the *Phragmites* plants in preserved areas like Parkers Creek did not produce viable seeds which would limit their spread by seed. Plants that lack sufficient nutrients normally put out as much seed as possible to try to survive. The study's finding was somewhat counterintuitive, as disturbed and urbanized areas have many more nutrient inputs (fertilizers) than areas where forests take up and hold most of the nutrients. In short, the urban plants should be putting out less seed (or non-reproductive seed) and the Parkers Creek plants should be trying harder to survive (because of less nutrients) by putting out viable seeds. So researchers, Karin Kettenring and Dennis Whigham, came back to find out more.

Kettenring and Whigham took samples of seed heads (for seed viability studies) and green leaf samples (for DNA) from many of the *Phragmites* patches on the beach and all along the creek. They paddled up by canoe, then took off on foot and were able to quickly cross the marsh to get to the reeds. I tried to follow along and after falling, waste deep in muck, several times - I told them I was

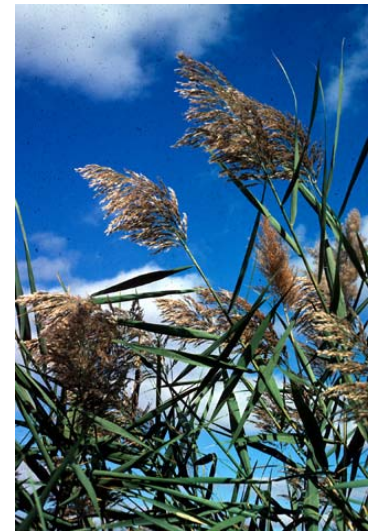
there for "comic relief".

They said they teach new researchers how to walk in this environment and, even knowing the tricks, it is still fairly inhospitable. Most of the *Phragmites* in the marsh is a non-native invasive variety, but two of the patches they came across may be native varieties of *Phragmites*; so the DNA studies will be very important.

Studies of fossils show that *Phragmites* has been in the Americas for 40,000 years. Studies of natural peat deposits show that *Phragmites* has been on the Atlantic coast for nearly 8,000+ years. This native variety was well mixed (ecologically balanced) with other native tidal wetland plants until a change occurred, according to a University of Maryland researcher, Kristin Saltonstall. An aggressive, non-native, slightly genetically different, haplotype variety was brought to the Americas by Europeans and began to spread in the 1800s. See: <http://www.invasiveplants.net/phragmites/phrag/natint.htm>. In Saltonstall's studies, she found evidence of native *Phragmites* in Maryland in current times only in Allen, Maryland. In the past, it had widespread distribution. If the SERC study proves that there is a native population here at Parkers Creek it will be a significant find.

*Phragmites* has been an important plant in human history. Native Americans used *Phragmites* to make arrow shafts, weaving mats, drying frames, flutes, pipe stems, and nets. In Europe, *Phragmites* was used for pen quills, bedding, brooms, packing material, and is still used for thatched roofs and bagpipe making. The plant is reported to have medicinal uses in folk medicine. It is also used to feed livestock and to make starch. The European variety was probably brought to the U.S. in ships in the 1800s and has spread quickly throughout the country.

The European variety of *Phragmites* out-competes both the native variety of the reed and other marsh plants (such as wild rice, cord grass, sedges) and because of this ability, it is able to set up a monoculture. A diversified



*Phragmites* sp. Photographer: R. A. Howard (Photo Courtesy of the Smithsonian Botany Plant Image Collection.)



marsh habitat provides food and shelter for many animals including migratory birds. At Jug Bay, a study of rails (secretive marsh birds) found that their populations suffered when wild rice was supplanted by *Phragmites* (the bird's body mass was lower). A University of Delaware plant biologist, Harsh Bais, may have found the key to why the introduced variety of *Phragmites* is so aggressive. The plant secretes gallic acid from its roots (which breaks down the structural protein in other plants' roots), thus killing native plants and allowing the invasive variety to take over their territory. The native variety of *Phragmites* also sends out this toxin but not at the same high concentrations as the European type (<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/10/071012084128.htm>).

Research, such as Karin Kettenring's and Dennis Whigham's, in Parkers Creek is essential to figuring out the best way to prioritize our work in controlling invasives. *Phragmites* may not be a major threat to an undisturbed forested marsh if its seeds will not germinate or if it is a native variety. We cannot know the best course of action without this type of study. The flipside is that it may be very important to control the European variety of *Phragmites* in areas that are being disturbed by new development such as the upstream part of the Parkers Creek watershed that lies in our growing town center. Parkers Creek is a wonderful outdoor laboratory and despite a few bruises, I am glad I got to spend a beautiful day learning from it.

If you want to help out please join ACLT's invasive plant control team, The Vine Vindicators, or if you would just like to visit Parkers Creek next year join one of our guided canoe trips scheduled from April through October.

Liz Stoffel  
Land Manager



Top: Liz Stoffel with *Phragmites* on the beach. Bottom: Dennis Whigham of the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC) with *Phragmites* on the cliff.

### LAND MANAGEMENT WORK DAYS

1/26/08	Vine Vindicator Work Day	7/26/08	Vine Vindicator Work Day
2/23/08	Vine Vindicator Work Day	7/26/07	Barn Work Day
3/29/08	Vine Vindicator Work Day	8/16/08	Vine Vindicator Training Day
3/29/08	Barn Work Day	9/06/08	Arboretum Work Day
4/26/08	Vine Vindicator Work Day	9/13/08	Vine Vindicator Work Day
4/26/08	Barn Work Day	10/18/08	Vine Vindicator Work Day
5/31/08	Vine Vindicator Work Day	10/19/08	Barn Work Day
6/28/08	Vine Vindicator Work Day	12/06/08	Arboretum Work Day

## ACLT Calendar of Events – 2008

Saturday, February 9, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon – *2007 ACLT Annual Membership Meeting* – A chance to meet other ACLT members and find out about what the ACLT has accomplished in 2007.

Saturday, February 16, 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. – *Guided Winter Woodland Hike* – Dress appropriately for this memorable afternoon hike. Join the ACLT staff for winter views of Parkers Creek and the Chesapeake Bay.

Saturday, March 8, 9 a.m. – 12:00 noon – *Hiking Trail Maintenance Day* – Join ACLT staff and volunteers as we work on the hiking trails in preparation for spring and summer hikers. Cook out and picnic lunch for volunteers at Noon.

Sunday, March 30, time to be announced – *“A Sense of Wonder: A Play Based on the Life of Rachel Carson”*. Acclaimed actress Kaiulani Lee has written and will perform this one-woman play based on the life and works of environmentalist Rachel Carson. St. John Vianney Family Life Center. Admission fee.

Saturday, April 12, 9 a.m. – 12:00 noon – *Spring Guided Hike on Gravatt East* – Enjoy the newly spruced up trails and spring’s early offerings on the East Loop Trail.

Saturday, April 19, 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon – *Earth Day* – Volunteer crews will be working along roadsides and on selected projects. This is a great way to meet ACLT neighbors, members, and volunteers while helping improve our Calvert County community. A picnic lunch will be hosted at the end of the day's activities for volunteers.

Saturday, June 7, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. – *Parkers Creek Celebration at Double Oak Farm* – A day of family activities, celebrating the birds, trees, bees, and beetles of Calvert County along with the natural and cultural resources of Calvert County.

Saturday, June 14 – *Parkers Creek to Flag Pond Canoe Trip* – Start early to get in shape for this seven-mile paddle. ACLT will be partnering with Calvert County Natural Resources Division in coordinating this event.

Saturday, September 27 – *13<sup>th</sup> Annual Silent Auction & Celebration* – Bid on donated items at the auction, catch up with other ACLT members and enjoy the evening at ACLT’s annual fundraising event!

Friday, October 24, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. – *Volunteer Appreciation Dinner* – The ACLT staff hosts this enjoyable evening to honor and thank our dedicated and faithful volunteers.

Sunday, November 2, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon – *Fall Foliage Hike at Double Oak* – You can’t beat the fall colors at Double Oak Farm! Don’t miss the last guided hike of the year. (Remember to set your clocks back one hour.)

Saturday, December 13, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. – *Greens Sale and Beach Hayride* – Purchase fresh cut evergreens for holiday decorations, drink hot cider and take a hayride to the beach.

*In addition, ACLT offers guided canoe trips from April through October. The 2008 canoe trip schedule will be published in the Winter 2008 newsletter and on our Web site, <http://actweb.org>.*

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT ...

## New Members

ACLT would like to welcome the following new members who have joined since the Summer 2007 newsletter:

Ms. Rachel Baruch  
Mr. & Mrs. Steve Bashore  
Ms. Jacqueline Bowles  
Mr. & Mrs. Dickson Carroll  
Mr. Robert Cimini  
Mr. Bryan Dekin  
Mr. Jay Downs  
Mr. Patrick Dunn  
Ms. Susan Kavet  
Mr. Kevin McGillicuddy  
Mr. Bobby Pearson, Jr.  
Ms. Vicki Florian & Mr. Allan Shneron  
Mr. Alan Townsend

## Spring Appeal

The Staff and the Board of Directors wish to thank the following member who made a contribution to the 2007 Spring Appeal since our last newsletter:

Dr. Kathleen H. Miller

## Gift Memberships

Thank you to the following members who donated a gift membership since our last newsletter:

Mr. & Mrs. William McGillicuddy

## General Contributions and Designated Gifts

Thank you to the following for your generous gifts:

Mr. Brian J. Griffin (Honeywell Hometown Solutions)

Through the National Capital Area Campaign:

Ms. Betty Lou Johnston

Frances Garcia and Mary Esparza, in honor of the birthday of Col. Caroline VanMason, USA (Ret).

Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Armstrong for the donation of two photographs: Percy Howard Barn and Eagle Soaring over Parkers Creek.

Mr. Carl Fleischhauer for the donation of a book entitled "Patterns from the Golden Age of Rustic Design" and for the donation of a gently used Husqvarna Rotary Lawn Mower.

Mr. & Mrs. Eugene McHugh for the donation of a new Black & Decker 2-Tool Combo Kit with Cordless Drill/Driver and Circular Saw.

Mr. Tom Carmany for the donation of a leaf blower and wood for carpentry projects.

RADM & Mrs. James Greene for their donation for Volunteer Appreciation Dinner decorations.

## Auction

Thank you to our supporters and sponsors of the 12th Annual Silent Auction and Celebration:

Basignani Winery (sponsor)  
Blue Wind Gourmet (sponsor)  
Dr. Andrea Clarke (Dessert and paper goods)  
Jeff and Nancy Klapper (Invitations)  
Dr. Stephen Peters (Floral arrangements)  
The Show Place Arena (sponsor)  
Brian Treece (Banana Banner Signs)

Our thanks to those who made contributions in support of the 12th Annual Silent Auction and Celebration:

Mr. and Mrs. Louis Amtmann  
CDR and Mrs. Freeman R. Dodsworth  
Ms. Ann C. Dunnington  
Ms. Carolyn Ebel  
Senator & Mrs. Bernie Fowler  
Dr. Edward U. Graham  
Dr. Edward Hacskaylo  
Mr. Conrad Hoska  
Ms. Elizabeth Johnston  
Mr. & Mrs. Ellis Knox  
Mr. James E. McWhorter  
and Ms. Yasmin Abadian  
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Mihalcik  
Mr. & Mrs. Norman Prince  
Ms. Helen Rubino Turco  
Mr. Klaus Zwilsky and Ms. Roberta Safer  
Mr. & Mrs. James Sanders  
Dr. & Mrs. John R. Saunders, Jr.  
Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan R. Warner

## Memorial Contributions

Thank you to the following members who made memorial contributions since our last newsletter:

In memory of Ruth Arbuckle who was a Charter Member and longtime supporter:  
Mr. & Mrs. Tim Dolan  
Dr. Edward Hacskaylo  
Ms. Sallee L. Holder  
Ms. Jane Klemmer  
Ms. Annie Moore  
Mr. & Mrs. Warren Prince  
Col. Caroline VanMason (USA, Ret.)  
Mr. Alan Wilson & Dr. Stephen Peters

In memory of Laura Craddock, daughter of members Mr. & Mrs. Dean Farver:  
Mr. & Mrs. Jon Ambler

In memory of Robert Boesz, brother of ACLT Charter Member, Daniel Boesz:  
Col. Caroline Van Mason, USA (Ret.)

## Matching Gift:

Thank you to the following company who matched Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Kirby's donation:  
Wiley Rein & Fielding LLP

# Come Join Us!

Detach and Mail to: The American Chestnut Land Trust, Inc., P.O. Box 2363, Prince Frederick, MD 20678

Name \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ I (we) learned about ACLT from \_\_\_\_\_

## Regular Membership

## Corporate Membership

\_\_\_ Land Saver - \$35.00

\_\_\_ Habitat Protector - \$500.00

\_\_\_ Land Saver Corporate - \$150.00

\_\_\_ Land Protector - \$60.00

\_\_\_ Trustee of Land - \$1000.00

\_\_\_ Land Protector Corporate - \$250.00

\_\_\_ Land Conservator - \$150.00

\_\_\_ Sustaining - \$2500.00

\_\_\_ Land Conservator Corporate - \$500.00

The American Chestnut Land Trust is a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization. A copy of the current ACLT financial statement is available on request. Requests should be directed to the American Chestnut Land Trust, Inc, P.O. Box 2363, Prince Frederick, MD 20678 or call (410) 414-3400. For the cost of copies and postage, documents and information submitted under the Business Regulation Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland are available from the Secretary of State.

**American Chestnut Land Trust, Inc.**  
**Post Office Box 2363**  
**Prince Frederick, MD 20678**

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548  
PRINCE FREDERICK  
MD**