# Watershed Observer

**Newsletter of the American Chestnut Land Trust**
**Volume 16 No. 2, Spring 2002**

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**Calendar Highlights**

April 6 — Canoe Trip

April 14 — Holly Arboretum Program Kick-Off Event

April 20 — Earth Day

May 30 — Parkers Creek Oral History Project Presentation

June 1 — Canoe Trip

See page 5 for full calendar.

## Habitat Restoration Program

This spring, ACLT will plant wild celery, a type of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV), in Parkers Creek marking the beginning of an exciting ecological restoration program. SAV was once nearly ubiquitous in the Bay shallows, but decades of human disturbance in the watershed have greatly reduced the abundance of this ecologically important group of species. By planting wild celery in the Creek with the help of local school children and Maryland's Department of Natural Resources (DNR), ACLT plans to improve the wildlife habitat of Parkers Creek, improve water quality, and open the land trust to a new generation of local children.

As their name implies, the various species of SAV are plants that grow in soil below the surface of the water. Like above ground plants, these plants have leaves, stems, and roots; however, unlike their terrestrial counterparts, they contain air-filled cells called aerenchyma (Latin for air filling) that allow the leaves to float upward and collect sunlight. The Chesapeake Bay is home to 16 species of SAV whose distributions are largely controlled by the Bay's salinity (saltiness). Some species like eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) and widgeon grass (*Ruppia maritima*) grow in the saline open bay waters while other species including wild celery (*Vallisneria americana*) and slender pondweed (*Potamogeton pusillus*) are restricted to rivers and the northern extent of the Bay where salinity is lower. Other species are best adapted to grow in between.

These small plants play a big role in the health of the Bay: SAV oxygenates the water through photosynthesis, acts as a refuge for small fish and invertebrates fleeing larger predators, adds to water clarity by slowing water currents that pick up and carry soil particles, feeds migrating waterfowl, and serves as a vital element at the bottom of the food web. Like so many other aspects of the Bay's living environment, its importance is manifest in a number of ways, many of which are likely still undiscovered!

Based on 1930s aerial photographs of the Bay, SAV covered well over 600,000 acres, an area equal in size to slightly over four Calvert Counties. By 1978, its extent had been reduced to 41,000 acres, a nearly fifteen-fold decrease. Reasons for the precipitous decline are almost universally tied to human land use changes that have occurred since World War II. Specifically, rapid growth along the Bay's margins has contributed huge amounts of sediment to the water that have significantly reduced water clarity. Reduced clarity results in less light being able to penetrate the water to the SAV leaves—as with all plants, too little light results in die back. In addition, the

*(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. To date ACLT, which was founded in 1986, has preserved 812 acres and has accepted management of an additional 1700 acres owned by the State of Maryland and The Nature Conservancy.

Editors: Ellen and David Farr

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flow of nitrogen and phosphorous-based nutrients in the Bay has greatly increased. These nutrients stimulate the growth of algae that is detrimental to SAV in two ways: algae block sunlight from reaching the SAV in the same way that sediment blocks light and, when masses of algae die and sink to the bottom, their decomposition robs the Bay bottom of oxygen. Many species of SAV cannot survive in prolonged conditions of unnaturally low oxygen levels.

Recognizing the importance of SAV to the Bay ecosystem, ACLT Board member Ted Graham invited Department of Natural Resource (DNR) SAV specialists to paddle Parkers Creek and assess its SAV condition. It was observed that while some areas of the creek bottom had lush beds, others were bare. Noting this, and taking into account water depth and bottom sediment types, the DNR experts felt that portions of the Creek would make excellent sites for SAV restoration activities.

With the scientific help of DNR, funding from the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT), training by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) and DNR, and the efforts of two local schools, ACLT is an active partner in the DNR's *Bay Grasses in Classes* program. We have partnered with Plum Point Middle School and the Calverton School who are growing wild celery indoors as part of their science curriculum. Later this spring, the young plants will be transplanted into Parkers Creek by the students under DNR and ACLT guidance. The students will also help construct wire mesh cages that are placed over the new beds to deter grazing from geese and ducks. Over the course of the summer, students and ACLT volunteers will periodically visit the creek to monitor the growth of the plants and ensure that the cages are securely in place. If all goes well, we hope to repeat the program in future years to both increase the size and number of the SAV beds and engage more children in this fun and environmentally beneficial activity.

Be on the lookout this summer for stakes in the upper reaches of Parkers Creek that indicate the location of the new beds.

—Dan Sampson
ACLT Land Manager

# Get Involved

## Earth Day 2002

April 20, 2002
Governors Run, Kenwood Beach, Scientists' Cliffs,
Parkers Creek, and Double Oak/Dares Beach

Plans are underway for the 11th annual five-community cleanup and picnic. Dumpsters will be placed at the end of Governors Run Road, in the ACLT parking lot on Scientists Cliff Road, and at a remote location on the northern properties off Dares Beach Road. Directions to special project areas will be announced as we all gather at the ACLT Barn in the parking lot. After the 9 to 12 noon clean-up effort, we will gather on the beach of Scientists' Cliffs for a picnic.

This is always a fun event and we encourage you to bring along the kids, grandchildren, and your neighbors! Water and trash bags will be provided. We need trucks, people-power, and lots of enthusiasm! Anyone wishing to participate in advance planning of special projects, or volunteer your truck, please give Dan Sampson a call at 410-586-1570.

*Remember:* Picnic - 12:00 noon
Scientists' Cliffs Association Community Beach

## ACLT Needs Your E-mail Address to Speed Information Your Way

In an effort to send you the most recent information as soon as possible, and to reduce production costs, ACLT has begun compiling a database of e-mail addresses for members, friends, members of affiliate organizations, and public officials in order to keep our growing community of conservation-minded constituents better informed.

If you are interested in being included on our email distribution list, please send us your e-mail address. Anyone included in the mailing list will have an option to be taken off the list at any time. Though we currently post our recent newsletters, current activities and up to date ACLT information on our Web site, http://acltweb.org, we would like to offer you a personalized method of receiving our time sensitive information in the future. This will allow us to readily contact our own members and other organizations, as well as key officials within county and state agencies.

ACLT does not have any plans to discontinue our mailing of special event announcements, newsletters, or member correspondence via the U.S. Postal Service. We would like to provide our members with their preferred method of receiving information regarding ACLT. **Once received, your e-mail address will not be given to any other organization.** To be added to our email distribution list, please contact the ACLT administrative assistant, Dawn Rosenlund (dawnaclt@chesapeake.net).

## Sponsor a Parkers Creek Water Monitoring Site

Looking for a way to make a difference? Consider sponsoring one of the three Parkers Creek water monitoring sites for a year ($800), for six months ($400) or for three months ($200).

Parkers Creek is a unique resource in Calvert County. It begins as a small stream near Prince Frederick, winds through woods and deep ravines and becomes tidal just below an extensive beaver dam near the remains of an old bridge. On its way to the Bay, Parkers Creek meanders through extensive wetlands suggestive of wilderness. The creek provides an excellent habitat to support a wide variety of wildlife.

The protection and preservation of Parkers Creek is a critical part of the ACLT's mission. Land preservation in the Parkers Creek watershed helps keep pollutants and destructive storm water runoff from damaging the creek. And yet, as the County continues to grow, Parkers Creek is subject to constant pressure. If not properly controlled, new roads, parking lots, septic tanks and the new wastewater treatment plant to serve Prince Frederick all have the potential to damage the creek.

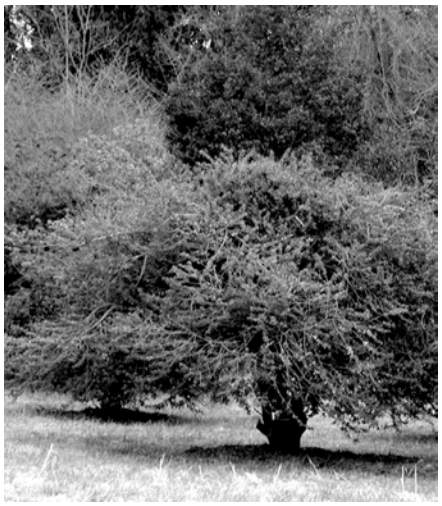
Since 1998, a dedicated group of ACLT volunteers has regularly monitored the health of Parkers Creek. Every two weeks these volunteers collect samples from three sites along the creek. The samples are then processed and prepared for laboratory analysis. The Chesapeake Biological Laboratory (CBL) at Solomons runs a series of tests and sends the results back to the ACLT.

These measurements are essential for understanding the health of Parkers Creek and detecting any trends. The County has adopted a "Parkers Creek Watershed Management Plan," but the plan can only be effective if there are on-going measurements to detect problems, suggest solutions and measure progress. This is the essence of the ACLT monitoring program.

When ACLT began its program, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay provided training and equipment and covered the costs of laboratory analysis. The Alliance is no longer funded to provide this support. This means that the ACLT must find other resources or cut back the monitoring program. Most of the expenses are for the laboratory work at CBL. With the lab work and other expenses, the total comes to about $2400 per year, or $800 per monitoring site.

To sustain the ACLT monitoring program, we're asking donors to make a special contribution. Please consider sponsoring a site for a year for $800; for six months for $400; or for three months for $200. Of course, any amount will be gratefully received. Read more about our Water Quality Monitoring Program on our Web site under "Natural Resources" (http://acltweb.org). If you have any questions, contact the ACLT office.

## Adopt a Tree



The Warrior's Rest Subcommittee of the Land Management Committee is in the process of creating a new program that will assist with ongoing efforts to rehabilitate and maintain the Holly Arboretum at Warrior's Rest. The recent progress of several dedicated volunteers has given us all hope that together we can help save this unique wonderful collection of the genus ***Ilex***. We are in the process of seeking interested individuals or groups to "Adopt a Tree" or a section of the arboretum. Volunteers are currently in the initial processes of vine removal, trimming, and mulching. Once this has been completed, required maintenance should be somewhat easy to perform.

The initial Holly Adoption Program event will be held from 10:00 –3:00 on Sunday April 14 at Warriors Rest. Plan to attend if you are interested in caring for a holly or would like to learn more about the program.

For additional information, contact the ACLT 410-586-1570 or Warrior's Rest 410-495-8058.

# Thank you for your support

## Fall Appeal Contributions Since Winter 2002 Newsletter:

Ms. Nancy Gardner & Mr. James Switzer

## New Members Since Winter 2002 Newsletter

Mr. Darryl S. Allen
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Cunningham
Mr. & Mrs. David Harrell
Mr. & Mrs. Gerald W. Landes, Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Robert D. Prince
Mr. & Mrs. Ivan P. Soroka

## New Corporate Membership

Ms. Lisa Paterson of Paterson Preferred Properties

## Reached Sustaining Membership Status

Mr. Ernest P. Ward

## Memorials

A very special thank you goes out to Ms. Marie Del Bianco, the NAHB Research Center, Mr. & Mrs. John Rouse, Col. Caroline Van Mason, and the Robert Fenton Family for donating to ACLT in memory of Mr. Daniel Priest.

A very special thank you goes out to Mr. & Mrs. Paul Berry, Ms. Margaret L. Niland and Mr. & Mrs. Christopher M. Rosenlund for donating to ACLT in memory of Mrs. Eleanore Prince.

A very special thank you goes out to Ms. Virginia Ayres for donating to ACLT in memory of Mr. Robert Steiner.

## Contribution for Land Acquisition

David and Ellen Farr

## ACLT Calendar of Events

April 14 - **Holly Adoption Program** Event at Warriors Rest (see p. 4).
April 20 - **Earth Day**-Volunteer work crews will be cleaning up 4 community properties on this day. End the day with a picnic and relax among friends!
May 30 - **Presentation on Parkers Creek Oral History Project**. 7 p.m. Calvert County Public Schools' Brooks Administrative Center, 1305 Dares Beach Rd.
September 14 - **Chili Cook-off and Auction.** Enter your favorite recipe in the chili cook-off, make your bids at the silent auction, and enjoy the sounds of a live band. You won't want to miss this one!
October 19 - **ACLT Annual Membership Meeting** followed by a Canoe trip.
October 26 - **Tales of a Haunted Trail** - A safe trick-or-treating celebration held in Annmarie Garden.
December 14 - **ACLT Greens Sale and Hayride**. Greens for the holidays, hot cider, and a hayride to the beach.

**ACLT sponsored Canoe Trips:**
April 6, May 4, June 1, July 13, August 3, and October 5.
Depart from Warrior's Rest and enjoy a scenic tour of Parkers Creek. Reservations are a must. Please call the ACLT office at 410-586-1570 or e-mail to Dawn Rosenlund at dawnaclt@chesapeake.net to register.

# Spotlight on Volunteers

## Jonathan Chappell and Monika Gorzelanska

Before visiting ACLT, I really did not know what a land trust was. When Dan Sampson, ACLT's land manager and a friend of mine from graduate school, told me where he worked, I assumed that ACLT was some sort of research facility working to bring back the American chestnut tree. Now when I drive down Route 4 from the Washington area to Calvert County and see all the "land for sale" signs on the side of the road, I can see how important ACLT is in the rapidly suburbanizing metro D.C. region.

Last year, Monika and I participated in a few ACLT activities including the Parkers Creek Celebration, the annual Chili Cook-off and Auction, and a late summer canoe trip. This year, we plan to volunteer as canoe guides, and water quality monitors, as well as helping out with other projects that come up.

Both Monika and I share a strong interest in the environment. We met in Lodz, Poland, in 1988 where I served as a Peace Corps volunteer and Monika was working for "Sources," an environmental non-profit organization. After returning from Poland in 2000, I moved to the Washington area to take a job as an environmental scientist for the FDA. Last summer, Monika emigrated and we subsequently married. Since her arrival, she worked as an intern and volunteer at several environmental non-profits in the Washington area, including The Nature Conservancy, Friends of the Earth, and American Rivers. Monika is currently looking for a full time position in the non-profit environmental field and studying for the Graduate Record Exam (a necessary evil) in anticipation of graduate studies in environmental sociology.

# Around ACLT

## African American History Studied

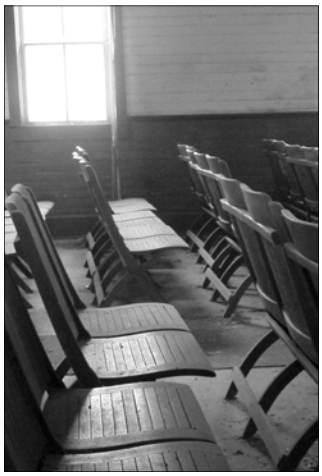
ACLT, in cooperation with Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum, has initiated an oral history project in the Parkers Creek watershed. We hope to learn about the character and location of communities, primarily African American, in the context of the more recent definition of Parkers Creek as an environmental preserve. Archaeological evidence, old maps, aerial photographs, and personal accounts suggest that present settlement patterns in the watershed do not match those of fifty, seventy-five, or more years ago. We hope to learn about these communities by speaking with older members of the local African American community and others about their recollections of the area when they were children and what stories they heard from their parents or grandparents. Funding for this project was made possible by a grant from the Maryland Historical Trust.

While much of the land in Parkers Creek watershed is protected and its cultural structures identified, little has been done to study and preserve the history of the communities of Parkers Creek. Through ACLT's stewardship of the land, many abandoned domestic sites and remnants of earlier communities have been identified, but they have not been examined in their historical context. There are not many people still living who can describe the communities that are and used to be in Parkers Creek, and tell about the relationships among persons and institutions that may have made up the communities. The focus of this grant is to collect the stories that those few people have to share.

Through two previous grants awarded by the Maryland Historical Trust, ACLT has been able to conduct the first systematic archaeological study within the Parkers Creek watershed. Under the 1996 grant, Mathew Reeves conducted an intensive study of the Critical Area (the land within 1,000 feet of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries) surrounding the creek. The 1998 follow up study by Molly Stephens was much larger in geographical scope, focusing on the area north of Parkers Creek and south of Dares Beach Road outside of the Critical Area. Both archaeologists followed the research into the local historical record with field surveys that involving systematic shovel test pits and controlled surface collection. Their surveys found tenant house sites occupied by African Americans from the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries. These sites were located nearer to the Creek and the Bay than present-day clusters of dwellings. It is hoped that the new study will tell us who lived there, what they did, and where they went.

To better understand the history of the Parkers Creek communities, answers to other questions are being sought: Where was, and what defined, the Parkers Creek communities of the past, where are they today? What are the residents' perceptions about communities, past and present? Are and were there institutions such as churches, schools and stores associated with geographical communities? What were they and whom did they serve? How and why did the cultural geography change in the 20th century? For example, the

Browns United Methodist Church on Parkers Creek Road. Exterior and interior views. Photos by Dan Sampson.



north and south sides of the creek were connected by Parkers Creek Road until the 1930's when the bridge crossing the creek was washed out in a hurricane and never replaced; what impact, if any, did this single occurrence have? Did it fragment family and friends; did it change the location and character of places of worship? Questions such as this have resulted in endless speculation, but little data.

To answer these questions Jennifer Morris has been contracted by ACLT to serve as oral historian and principal investigator for the project. Ms. Morris received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology from the University of Maryland and has completed graduate courses in American Folklore at George Washington University. She is employed as a Museum Specialist for the Smithsonian Institution's Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture. Ms. Morris will conduct up to 24 oral history interviews that will be tape-recorded; a biological sketch including photographs will be made of each interviewee. In addition, she will locate specific places and buildings mentioned in the interviews on a map. She will also describe and photograph historic documents, artifacts, and structures relevant to the project.

A presentation on Ms. Morris's findings, enriched with the participation of those interviewed, photographs, and maps, will be held on May 30, 2002, at 7:00 p.m. at the Calvert County Public Schools' Brooks Administrative Center. The Brooks Center was the African American high school before desegregation is now the Board of Education Building located at 1304 Dares Beach Road, Prince Frederick.

This is an exciting and very critical project to help achieve ACLT's mission to conserve the cultural resources and history of Parkers Creek, as well as the natural resources in its charge. The project results will provide a better understanding and appreciation of the deep and long history of human activity within the watershed. The study's findings will be incorporated into materials produced by ACLT for public education and interpretation. The resulting information will directly assist in interpretation of several 19th century domestic sites found during the course of MHT-funded archaeological surveys in 1996-1998. The tapes and images will be available for study and its accessibility will be announced in the local press, in our newsletter, and on our website. Calvert County students, for example, will be made aware of the material and encouraged to use it for History Fair projects, etc. It is also our hope that this project will encourage efforts to document the histories of disappearing rural communities in Southern Maryland. County residents trying to start similar projects in their communities or churches will be invited to learn from the Parkers Creek study. The interdisciplinary body of Parkers Creek studies—environmental, archaeological, and now oral history—will provide a model that other watershed planning groups may wish to emulate.

ACLT is very fortunate to have extremely talented assistance with this project. Serving as project coordinator of the past two archaeological studies and now the Oral History Project, is **Kirsti Uunila**, an archaeologist with the Maryland Archaeological Conservation Laboratory with Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum, and the Historic Preservation Specialist for Calvert County. Ms. Uunila provides logistical support and serves as the link between Ms. Morris and the ACLT team to ensure that the project runs smoothly. ACLT volunteers again share their expertise, as **Carl Fleischhauer** assists with project photography and with duplicating tapes for study. Both he and **Paula Johnson,** an oral history specialist, are available for consultation with Ms. Morris during the project. **Ted Graham** and ACLT land manager **Dan Sampson** will incorporate the mapped information into GIS and will provide hard-copy maps for the final report. ACLT Treasurer, **Paul Berry**, will administer the grant funds.

The Board of Directors of ACLT expresses its sincere appreciation to the Board of Trustees of the Maryland Historical Trust for again entrusting us with the funding to make this project possible. Special thanks also goes to the Calvert County Board of Commissioners, and Delegates George Owings and Tony O'Donnell for their letters in support of our grant application.

Peg Niland,
Executive Director

# Come Join Us!

**Detach and Mail to: The American Chestnut Land Trust, Inc., P.O. Box 204, Port Republic, MD 20676**

**Name** _____

**Address** _____

_____

**Phone** _____ **I (we) learned about ACLT from** _____

**____ Land Saver - $35.00** **____ Land Protector - $60.00** **____ Land Conservator - $150.00**

**____ Habitat Protector - $500.00** **____ Trustee of Land - $1000.00** **____ Sustaining (Lifetime) - $2500.00**

**____ Corporate - $150.00** **____ Youth Gift Memberships -** ***To encourage youth involvement with the environment, memberships will be given to eligible youth in the community. Contact ACLT office for further information.***

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 204, Port Republic, MD 20676 or call (410) 586-1570. 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.

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**Post Office Box 204**
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**April 20**
**Earth Day 2002**