

# American Chestnut Land Trust, Inc.

Post Office Box 204  
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## NEWSLETTER

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### Spring Activities at the ACLT

Our 1990 season opened in early April with the planting of 100-plus chestnut seeds on the high ground west of the parking lot in the newly-harvested area. The trees, now growing in their Tubex Tree Shelters, are easily identified. Oliver Flint and Arnie Petty coordinated the planting effort with the American Chestnut Foundation and our own volunteers.

Shortly after the planting it was discovered that through an error in selection these chestnuts would have no inbred resistance to the blight. Replacements were planted within days by the Foundation. Next Spring, the ACF will provide us with additional, potentially blight-resistant chestnut seeds to replace any that do not survive this first year as well as any whose heredity may still be in question. Meantime Arnie cautions those who like to monitor the progress within the tubes to watch out for the wasps who have taken over the tubes as their shelters.

Last winter we distributed to ACLT members and friends several hundred chestnut seeds that had been sent to us as a gift at Christmas time by Mauricc Ball of Seattle. The American Chestnut still thrives in the Northwest. There were no strings attached to what should be done with the seeds; instructions for both roasting and germinating were provided in the packets. Recent reports indicate that most people chose to grow their chestnuts in pots rather than eat them and found their efforts met with remarkable success. Many of the seedlings have already been transplanted to the ACLT forest while others are growing in protected conditions in backyards scattered throughout the County. We hope the chestnut growers will keep us informed of their progress from time to time.

ACLT's handsome new redwood sign was installed at the main entrance in time for Earth Day on April 22 when we welcomed our band of volunteers who showed up with gloves and trash bags to help ACLT commemorate the 20th anniversary of the global clean-up day. With the many Earth Day programs scheduled throughout the County, the competition for volunteer help was tough, but we had enough helping hands to make a significant impact along our trails. Our SCA neighbors, picking up trash along the Scientists Cliffs County road that same morning, gave us an assist by hauling our trash bags and piles of unsightly debris to the dump along with theirs. Our thanks to everyone who pitched in.

Although we ordered only 2000 loblolly pine seedlings from the Forest Service this spring almost twice that many were delivered. Volunteers, young and old, wielding a variety of planting tools managed to plant some 3700 of the tiny trees before the enormity of their task was fully realized. Before we had to call it quits, we managed to give some away to be planted elsewhere. The seedlings were spread around the harvested areas to the west of the main entrance, the area of the sand and gravel pit to the east of Scientists' Cliffs Road and at the Parkers Creek entrance to our land. We'll be interested to observe in all of these areas the extent to which reforestation is hastened by the planting of seedlings as compared to natural regeneration from seeds already in or on the ground.

To the many diligent volunteers we extend our heart-felt thanks. To our "tree-planting kids" we want to give special recognition: Roseanne Steller, age 11, Kathryn Steller, age 6, Robin Manning, age 10, and Lisa Manning, age 8, who worked like troopers along with the rest of the crews. Whether for clean-up or planting, here are some of the folks we found we could count on: Betty Lou and Phillip Anderson, John Axley, Frank and Margot Caldwell, Bob Douglass, Oliver Flint, Sue Hamilton, John Hollowell, Don Kollmorgen, Jack Krolack, Allan Loew, John Lemerond, Deac (S.T.) Moore, Arnie Petty, Dan Priest, Sandy Roberts, Joe Stell-

er, John Theriault, Lauren Uher, Louise Woerner, Howard Wickert et al. In addition to being among the workers, it was Arnie Petty and John Axley who coordinated the whole effort.

—Aileen Hughes

### Annual Meeting Notice

Mark your calendars for the annual meeting of the ACLT to be held Saturday, October 27, 1990, at Christ Church on Broomes Island Road. The business meeting will be followed by lunch and tours of the ACLT property. Details in the September newsletter.

### Jewell Glass—First Land Conservator in the ACLT Area

Speeding down Scientists Cliffs Road towards the ACLT main entrance, a visitor is likely to overlook an old, cracked sign on the left side.

JEWELL GLASS LAUREL GROVE  
Preserved with the assistance of The Nature Conservancy

As we congratulate ourselves on ACLT successes, let's pause to thank a fine lady, the late Dr. Jewell Glass, for saving a little slice of wild America. Some twenty years before anyone dreamed of a land trust hereabouts, the seven acre Glass property became the Laurel Grove, the first piece of land preserved forever in its wild state in the Governors Run—ACLT—Parkers Creek area. In a codicil Miss Glass added to her will in May 1965, shortly before her death, the property was bequeathed to The Nature Conservancy with the proviso that it be managed by the Scientists Cliffs Garden Club. Later TNC deeded it to the Scientists Cliffs Association subject to the covenant that the land be maintained in a wild state. About once a year a volunteer from The Nature Conservancy comes to inspect the property to make sure no one has cut trees, dumped trash, or otherwise abused this narrow, steeply sloping slice of land dominated by laurel thickets, chestnut oak, and pine. Now that the ACLT has become the local champion of wild and agricultural lands, it would make sense to transfer the Jewell Glass Laurel Grove at no cost from the Scientists Cliffs Association to the Land Trust. Of course the ACLT would be bound by the covenant never to cut any timber. Since the Glass tract abuts the ACLT at one point, the Land Trust should someday redirect the end of the "Laurel Trail" to intersect Scientists Cliffs Road via the Jewell Glass Laurel Grove. At present the Laurel Trail ends up in the back yard of the Robert Pfeiffer residence—originally the house of Jewell Glass after she moved out of Scientists Cliffs.

Only a few area residents remember Jewell Glass. ACLT member George Switzer described her to me as a kind, sweet sort of person who loved gardening and nature. A professional colleague of Dr. Switzer's, Miss Glass was a mineralogist who worked on strategic minerals such as antimony and tin at the US Geological Survey. Moving to Scientists Cliffs in 1940, Dr. Glass filled her cabin with collections of Maryland's rocks and minerals and her yard with flowers. According to the second issue of "Scientists Cliffs News" (1943), "Miss Jewell Glass, from all accounts, will have a great display of flowers around her cabin next year. Wonder how much prettier she is going to make her place." In 1945 she purchased some acreage along Scientists Cliffs Road from Remer G. Sapp and built a new cabin, where she would live out the last two decades of her life.

One of her friends during those later years was Dr. Glenn O. Blough who, among his other accomplishments, wrote natural history and other science books for children. *Soon after September* (1959; McGraw Hill) was partly inspired by his ramblings through the present Laurel Grove and ACLT woodlands. A sign he discovered on the Glass property, "The Road of the Seasons—mostly for walking along", survives in his book. Should we transplant it back into the woods?

This past spring marked the 25th anniversary of Jewell's gift of land. Were she alive today, Jewell Glass would be without doubt an enthusiastic Land Trust supporter, and perhaps we, the ACLT, should award her an honorary membership post mortem. The "display of flowers" around her Scientists Cliffs cabin is long forgotten, but the very same laurels that inspired her bequest to The Nature Conservancy still bloom there on every anniversary of her gift.

It's hard to imagine a finer way to be remembered.

—Peter Vogt, with help Rhoda Switzer and Anne Hanke

### **From the Outreach Committee**

ACLT has awarded two scholarships of three hundred and twenty-five dollars each to Calvert County students who are participating in environmental courses in the Maryland Department of Education's Summer program for Gifted and Talented Students.

*Holly Reynolds*, a student at Northern Middle School, is a resident of Huntingtown. She will be taking a course in Chesapeake Bay studies with a Patuxent River itinerary. Her group will study and travel the Patuxent almost entirely by canoe and work boat and camp each night except while traveling to one of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's residential island centers for the last five days.

*Kyleb Wild* is a student at Calvert High School and is a resident of Lusby. He will be participating in a study called "Living with the Land: A Conservation Experience." His group will be learning techniques necessary for living in harmony with the land. The culminating experience will consist of an island survival trip where he will rely on "nature and his wits" to supply all of his needs.

These students were excited and appreciative of the opportunity presented by these scholarships. It was a pleasure to talk to them on behalf of ACLT.

—Elaine Cochran

### **Bluebirds Etc.**

Our Bluebirds have finished nesting for this year, as have the Carolina Chickadees, which also appreciate our bird houses. Both species usually raise two broods between March and July in our area. Now is the time when you can look inside the boxes without fear of disturbing the nesting birds. The Chickadee's nests are made with soft bits of moss, while the Bluebird's are formed with thin twigs. Both species line their nests with breast feathers. However, now that the young birds have trampled them thoroughly, the feathers are no longer obvious and the nests are flattened, no longer cup-shaped.

Watch for the juvenile Bluebirds on the wires near the edge of the field. Their breasts are streaked, with none of the chestnut color seen on the adults. Also on the wires now you will see the smaller, all blue Indigo Bunting. A larger all blue bird with brownish wings is the less common male Blue Grosbeak.

—Sue Hamilton

### **Conservation Easement to Maryland Environmental Trust Approved**

The granting of a conservation easement on the initial parcels of land owned by ACLT was approved by the Board at its June meeting. The easement, to be held by the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET), seeks to perpetually restrict use of the property, preserve its scenic, cultural, rural, woodland and wetland nature, and prevent the use or development of the property for any purpose that would conflict with maintenance of its open space character. The Maryland Environmental Trust is a publicly chartered, but private and autonomous unit of Maryland's state government that was created by the General Assembly in 1967 "to conserve, improve and perpetuate the state's natural environment." Its easement program is one of the primary ways that MET fulfills its goal of natural environment conservation. The Board is excited about the role MET will play as a partner in protecting our properties. We will report more on this as formal agreement comes to be reached with MET.

—Don Dahmann

### **ACLT Adopts National Operating Standards and Practices**

The ACLT Board of Directors adopted the "Statement of Land Trust Standards and Practices" of the Land Trust Alliance (formerly the Land Trust Exchange) at its June meeting. The Standards and Practices were promulgated by the Land Trust Alliance as national standard guidelines for the responsible operation of land protection organizations such as ours. The Land Trust Alliance represents and serves over 700 local and regional land preservation organizations. It is headquartered in Old Town Alexandria.

The Standards and Practices pertain to both organizational and land transaction activities. A list of the 15 individual standards and a statement of how our practices conform with them is available; a brief summary follows: Standards pertaining to organizational aspects insure that we pursue clearly stated goals in legal and ethical manners, manage our finances in responsible and accountable ways, and devote sufficient time and energy to carrying out our programs. Standards pertaining to land transactions direct us to be selective in choosing, and to be knowledgeable about, any land acquisition project, to conduct all transactions in legally, ethically, and technically sound manners, to consider land acquisition only upon action of the entire Board,

and to be responsible stewards of land that we own.

In reviewing our current operating practices, we found ACLT to already be in substantial compliance with the Land Trust Alliance standards, particularly satisfying for an organization as young as ours (our fourth anniversary will be December 1990). The comparative review of our practices with the national standard guidelines was useful as it forced us to stand back and observe our procedures in a detached way, tighten up a few things, and in general benefit all around from the experience. Our compliance with these standards should be assuring to each of us as members, to neighboring landowners, potential donors, public agencies, and the citizens of Calvert County.

—Don Dahmann

### **Brushhooks and Brawn Needed**

As a result of the heavy Spring rains our seedlings are thriving, our forests are gloriously lush, but some of our most popular trails are becoming seriously overgrown. It will take more than clippers to clear them. If you own a Weedeater or a brushhook and are willing and able to give us a few hours of volunteer time, please let us know the extent of your availability. For your protection and ours, these on-going maintenance activities are to be coordinated through ACLT's land management committee according to an over-all plan. As we draw up our long-range plan, we would like to know we can count on you. Send a note to ACLT Land Management Committee, Box 204, Port Republic, MD 20676 or call 301-586-1749 for more information or to volunteer.

—Aileen Hughes

### **Newsletter Needs Your Input**

The editors welcome member's contributions and suggestions. If you have something you would like to share with the membership or can suggest a topic you would like to see covered in the newsletter, please let us know.

### **Calvert County Agricultural Land Preservation Program: ACLT Responds to Proposed Changes**

Recently the County's Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board (Ag Board for short) has proposed a number of changes in the County "Agricultural Land Preservation Program." The ACLT and other landowners involved in the program were invited to comment on the proposed changes, and so we did. The ACLT Board endorses some of the changes, but one of them, if adopted, will probably greatly decrease the amount of land preserved in Calvert County. To appreciate the issues, ACLT members are first offered the following short tutorial on how the present program works.

It was realized at least as early as the 1973 "Pleasant Peninsula Plan" that Calvert County would eventually lose all of its farm and forest land to development if nothing was done. An Ag Preservation Committee was appointed to study the problem, and in the late 1970's the County adopted its innovative Agricultural Land Preservation Program, whose purpose was (and is) to preserve viable agricultural and forest land in the County. The program, subsequently copied by Montgomery County, utilizes the free market system to cluster but not increase the total County population allowed under current zoning, which limits the lot size to 5 acres (with certain exceptions) in the many thousands of acres of rural land. Suburban sprawl was not eliminated, but it was to an extent contained.

The system is based on "Agricultural Preservation Districts" (APD's), sometimes called "sending zones," and "Transfer Development Zones" (TZs, or "receiving zones"). Landowners with sizable (50 acres or more) chunks of prime forest or farm land may petition the County to receive APD designation. Most of the landowners are individual farmers, but a few are corporations like the ACLT. In return for signing the land into an ADP, the land owner agrees not to develop his land for eight years, and in return he pays virtually no taxes and enjoys certain other benefits. The APD can be extended after the eight years are up, at the discretion of the owner. An APD owner may sell "Transferable Development Rights" (at 1 TDR per acre of APD land) to a developer who has petitioned the County to have some parcel of land more suited to development designated as a Transfer Zone. Once the APD owner has sold any TDRs, his land is preserved in perpetuity. The TDR purchaser uses them to increase the number of lots beyond that normally allowed (1 per 5 acres) in the rurally (RUR) zoned part of Calvert County—more than half of the County's 140,000 acres.

Five TDR's are required for each extra lot created. Within 1 mile of town centers, a transfer zone may have up to 1 lot per acre (i.e., 4 extra lots on each 5 acres), but outside the 1 mile perimeters, transfer zones have a lower density (1 lot per 2.5 acres, or 1 extra lot on each 5 acres). Transfer zones are not allowed in the very best farmland, the Designated Agricultural Areas, which are mostly on the lowland plains along the Patuxent River.

Thus a 100 acre transfer zone within one mile of town center perimeters requires the purchase of  $(100-20) \times 5 = 400$  TDRs and therefore will ensure the preservation, in perpetuity, of 400 acres of viable farmland or forest land somewhere else in Calvert County. A 100 acres low-density (2.5 acre lot size) transfer zone outside the 1-mile limits preserves less land  $((100/2.5-20) \times 5 = 100$  acres). However, there is vastly more undeveloped RUR-zoned land (about 60,000 acres) outside the 1-mile limits vs. inside (about 7,500 acres).

In the dozen years since it was adopted, the program has saved 3500 acres, and a similar area (3200 acres) has been preserved under the State preservation program, under which the State purchases easements. An additional 7,000 acres are enrolled in APDs but, while eligible for TDR sale, cannot be counted as preserved. These acreages are small—only 5% of the County's acres has so far been preserved—but a solid beginning has been made. In recent years most of the preserved land (including the ACLT) has been enrolled under the County program because TDRs have sole at a higher price than the State easements, and because of the long transaction time under the State program.

The County program is administered by one of the senior County planners, Mr. Greg Bowen, and the County-appointed Agricultural Preservation Board (Mr. Edward Allen, Chairman). One of their duties is to approve or reject applications for APD status. The ACLT has dealt frequently and constructively with the AG Board and with Mr. Bowen.

Now for the proposed changes. Four of them are major, and three of these four are for the good—i.e., they will strengthen the program and perhaps increase the acreage eventually preserved:

1.) Eligibility criteria (soil types, slopes, tree-growth indices) would be loosened, so that more land could be enrolled in APDs. ACLT recently received \$13,000 for Virginia pines cut from about 26 acres of what once was worn-out tobacco land which, by itself, would never qualify for APD status under the present system. The point is that even poor land can grow commercially valuable crops—trees, at least, and the associated wildlife—and will restore the soil for possible reuse as farmland should the need arise.

2.) The Ag Board further proposes that the County guarantee (by making up the difference) a certain minimum value for TDRs. This will provide more incentive for a landowner to preserve his land vs. selling for development. The extra funds, small compared to what the County spends on roads, schools, etc., would come from moneys received from the State and earmarked for land preservation purposes.

3.) The Planning Commission alone would approve or deny applications for Transfer Zones. At present a public hearing before the County Commissioners is also required. In the past many transfer zones were approved by the Planning Commission as being in the best interests of Calvert County but rejected by the Commissioners largely to placate landowners objecting to transfer zones (even at the low density of 1 house per 2.5 acres) in their vicinity. The Ag Board feels, and the ACLT agrees, that the Commissioners should not be pressured to deny a transfer zone which satisfies the statutory requirements. Denial of transfer zone requests has cost the County many hundreds of acres of APD land that could have been preserved. The ACLT urges landowners to band together to SAVE the viable farmland and forest land that remains (as we have done) instead of fighting the transfer zones whose function it is to save land.

4.) This is the proposed change the ACLT strongly opposes: The AG Board wants to limit transfer zones to within 1 mile of town centers. As a result the demand for TDRs will be greatly reduced and the MAXIMUM POSSIBLE area of farm and forest land that could be preserved will be about 20,000 acres, a mere 15% of the County area. The remaining 85% could be developed. In particular, some 50,000 acres of RUR-zoned land will be lost to large-lot (1 house per 5 acres) sprawl subdivisions. If the present system is maintained, there is at least the chance that a total of 40% or 50% of the county could be kept in productive farmland and forest land and other scenic open space.

Two options for developing 50,000 acres of RUR-zoned land are given below. Which is the better solution for the taxpayer who has to pay for roads and other infrastructure, for the nesting forest-interior bird who needs large unbroken forest areas, or for the preservation of viable forestry and farming?

(A) 10,000 houses spread evenly across 50,000 acres, equivalent to 500 subdivisions, each consisting of 20 houses, each on 5 acre lots, with no viable farm or forest land left and a large mileage of roads, utilities, and services to be built and maintained.

(B) 10,000 houses built on 25,000 acres of transfer zones, equivalent to 250 100-acre subdivisions, each consisting of 40 houses, each on 1-acre lots, with 60 acres of each subdivision left as community open space. The other 25,000 acres in APDs, with permanently preserved farm and forest land.

Most people would agree that (B) is vastly preferable to (A). The "2020 Report" which looks to the environmental future of the entire Chesapeake watershed deplors the trend toward increasing per capita use of open space—from 0.18 acres in 1950 to 0.64 acres today. Large-lot suburban sprawl subdivisions are not the way to accommodate the millions of new residents expected in the watershed in the coming three decades.

Please let the Ag Board and the Board of Commissioners know that you do not approve of limiting transfer zones to the 1-mile limits. The future of a large acreage—100 times the area of the ACLT—is at stake.

—Peter Vogt

### **Land Conservation Victories**

The following is reprinted from the May 1990 issue of the newsletter of the Maryland Land Trust Alliance.

"Land trusts were big winners in this year's legislative session. First, the Consolidated Land Preservation Act of 1990 removed the funding cap on Program Open Space which will mean approximately 40 million additional dollars per year in public land acquisition funds. More importantly, the Act also allows Program Open Space funds administrators at both the state and county levels to make grants or loans to local land trusts for acquisition projects consistent with Program criteria. As part of this same legislative package, a new \$500,000 "Land Trust Grant Fund" was created which will enable MET [the Maryland Environmental Trust, see related article] to make grants and loans to local land trusts for a variety of acquisition projects. Finally, MET received budget approval for a land trust support grant program, to be named the Janice Hollmann Grant Fund, which will make small grants to local trusts for administrative costs. The timing for these new initiatives are as follows: Phased Removal of Cap (July 1, 1991), POS Land Trust Authority (July 1, 1990), MET \$500,000 Grant fund (July 1, 1991), and Janice Hollmann Grant Fund (July 1, 1990)."

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