

American Chestnut Land Trust, Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

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Charter Memberships to Close

Now is the time to join us as a Charter (life) Member or upgrade your regular membership. October 1, 1987, settlement date, will be the last day to become a Charter Member of the American Chestnut Land Trust. A contribution of \$2500 confers charter membership.

The goal of the Board has been to raise the down payment and closing costs, approximately \$410,000, through contributions. Other means of financing, such as the sale of development rights, grants, and corporate donations, will be sought to pay off the balance of the purchase price and to establish an operating budget.

This is your opportunity to join a unique organization, Maryland's first Land Trust, and be a part of . . .

ACLT Forest Preservation—

A "thank you" and "get well" gift to the Chesapeake Bay

How do we repay the Chesapeake for all the sunrises and moonrises, the fishing and sailing trips, the crab cakes and oysters on the half shell? Sadly, we repay her with toxic chemicals, turn her green with the algae blooms of overfertilization and brown with run-off mud. We rob her depths of oxygen, leaving dead oyster bars as funeral mounds to gradually disappear in anoxic, sulfurous slime. This is the way we treat what some have called the world's greatest estuary, what the Indians called the "Great Shellfish Bay"—the original meaning of "Chesapeake."

There are 15 million of us in the Bay's watershed, and we—each of us—do our bit of individual and collective damage. Is the trickle from one family's septic drain field, the fertilizer from one family's garden, or the cadmium worn off one family car's tires too trivial an aggravation of the Bay's problems? Is not then one vote also too trivial to make a difference in an election? Should it ever become epidemic, such "logic" would be deadly to democracy—and to the Chesapeake Bay. Multiply our individual wastes by 15,000,000 and the aggravation is no longer trivial.

In fact, the present sickness of the Bay is now well documented scientifically and well publicized in the media. Nonscientist Bay watchers have long suspected it from the sharp declines in water clarity, oysters, striped bass, and aquatic grasses. A Chesapeake cleanup initiative is now under way, at last, but the Bay's watershed continues to fill up with more people, with no limit in sight. Restoring the Bay's water quality to the 1950's level and holding it there despite continuing population growth and development is an immense technological and political challenge. There is no whisper of trying to restore the Chesapeake to its 1608 condition, for that is as likely as Captain Smith himself rising from the grave to tell us about the Chesapeake he saw.

In terms of its abundant wildlife, magnificent forests, and clear, productive waters, the Chesapeake watershed of 1608 was a paradise, notwithstanding that it had been peopled for thousands of years. When Smith's party explored it, all but a small percent of the Bay watershed was a vast forest. A forest of 40 million acres which retarded erosion and sponged up the rain, releasing the excess gradually to a myriad of clear streams winding their way to the tidewater. By measuring nutrient loads on a few of our remaining woodland streams, Dr. Walter Boynton of the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory estimated that the present flushing of

nutrients into the Bay is some 400% higher than in John Smith's day. As we all realize now, those excess nutrients stimulate algal blooms which in turn rob the waters of both sunlight and, upon decomposition of the algae, of oxygen.

Which brings us to the American Chestnut Land Trust. In 1984 the Environmental Protection Agency documented what was suspected before—that "forestland contributes pollutants to the Bay on a scale that is orders of magnitude lower than what is contributed by urban or suburban areas." (Quoted from a Chesapeake Bay Foundation release of 11 February 1987.) Most of the 450-acre tract targeted by the ACLT for acquisition is forested and this forest is close to the Bay (just outside the 1000 foot "Critical Area"). The value of the ACLT preservation effort for the Bay is obvious. A tax-deductible charter membership in the ACLT preserves over an acre of woodland, Local woodland that you can *walk on* and *enjoy personally*, woodland preserved in *perpetuity*. There are many good reasons to preserve woodland in this region of rapidly disappearing open space; the Chesapeake Bay is one of the best reasons.

As we daily use (and abuse!) the Bay, let us clear our conscience and give her something of value in return. It is truly a small price to pay for such great benefits received.

—Peter Vogt

Treasurer's Report

We have exciting news this month. We are very close to our \$400,000 goal! We need only \$16,000 in additional contributions by October 1st. Our situation, in summary, is: bank accounts \$299,278, down payment \$85,500 for a total of \$384,778.

Those of you who have indicated interest or who have pledged additional contributions may be contacted by a member of the fund raising committee during the next few weeks. We are anxious to reach our goal so that we can be assured of making that October 1st payment.

The other good news concerns our development rights. To bring our new members up to date, the County Commissioners accepted the property into the Agricultural Preservation Program. The Board established the property as two parcels, each of which can be treated as a separate unit. Because the value of the development rights has been rising lately, and because we had received some inquiries, we recently sent a letter to local developers advising them that we were considering selling a portion of the rights and requesting proposals. We have received proposals and, if we can negotiate reasonable prices, we may sell some of the rights much earlier than we originally projected. As most of you know, we have five years to pay off the \$450,000 balance of the \$850,000 purchase price. We may be able to do this considerably ahead of schedule.

ACLT Members

The Editors apologize for any errors or omissions in last month's newsletter. We hope the following list is up do date. Please contact us or a Board member if we have listed your name incorrectly.

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Mark your Calendar for the Annual Meeting

Plan to attend the first Annual Meeting of the American Chestnut Land Trust, to be held at 10 a.m. on October 24 at Christ Church on Broomes Island Road. The business meeting will be followed by lunch and a tour of the property. Details in the next newsletter.

Board Meeting

The next ACLT Board meeting is scheduled for September 26. Meetings are held at the Battle Creek Nature Center at 10:00 a.m. and are open to all.

Message from the President

To pick up on a theme from my "Dear John" letter in the last newsletter, it is truly amazing to reflect on the representatives of the original colonies meeting at Philadelphia over the course of a very hot summer in 1787. There was no air conditioning, their clothes were heavy and flies made sleep difficult. But they persisted. Besides drafting our Constitution, these stalwart citizens of the various states, while speaking for "We the People of the United States of America," were establishing an American tradition of "Volunteerism."

This tradition has remained strong in Calvert County and has borne fruit in the work of the ACLT Board of Directors and the various committees. By this time next month the "land trust" will be a reality with the acquisition of the Gravatt/Miles tract. Just the other day Ed Hacskaylo stepped down as Secretary of the organization. He will remain on the Board, but a long-planned trip to England to visit friends and professional associates required him to give up these responsibilities. Who then would visit the Post Office daily, log in the mail, maintain records, acknowledge contributions, answer inquiries and do the many other tasks that Ed has faithfully and cheerfully performed over the last nine months? The answer was promptly given by Elaine Cochran. With Dan Priest agreeing to take minutes at the Board meeting, Elaine agreed to take over for Ed until the annual meeting, which will be held in late October.

Our need for volunteers will be ongoing. Once the land is acquired, the effort will turn to management of the woodland preserve. The property must be maintained to allow public use, to embrace the environment and to protect sites of historic interest. We will need lovers of wood as well as scientists and secretaries. Can you help?

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