

American Chestnut Land Trust, Inc.
Post Office Box 204
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NEWSLETTER

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Editors: Ellen and David Farr

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Report from the President

It would be difficult to face another year as ACLT president without the knowledge that we have a strong board, a dedicated administrator, and a willing crew of member volunteers, although we can always use more help in the field and in the office. The annual meeting is always a shot in the arm and I want to thank those who helped, especially Trudy Mihalcik. We will miss the retiring board members, Sue Hamilton, Charlene Sturbitts, Peter Vogt, and Margaret Young, but I know that they will continue to work for ACLT. One example of continued service after retiring from the board is Bob Ulanowicz taking a morning off from work to fly our video camerawoman over Parkers Creek to catch the fall colors.

The new Board of Directors will meet on November 12, and the main focus will continue to be the completion of the Michael property acquisition. The written contract has been submitted and a joint application has been made to the Calvert County Agriculture Preservation Board for acceptance of the property as an Agriculture Preservation District (APD). Our application to the County's Revolving Loan Fund has received initial approval and will go before the Commissioners later this month. We expect our application to the MET grant program to go to the Board of Public Works for final approval on November 23. With the various pieces coming together, we anticipate that we will soon be calling in your pledges for a December settlement. If you have not already made your pledge toward settlement and/or for payoff, please do so today.

Finally, I would like to go back to the video. We applied for and received two grants totaling \$5,000 and have hired a company to produce a 7-10 minute video on Parkers Creek. The focus will be to let this unique watershed and those who have experienced its treasures tell the story in order to demonstrate the importance of preserving the scenic, scientific, environmental, cultural, and recreational values of the creek and its ecosystem.

Michael Property Update

We are progressing steadily towards our scheduled purchase of Kenneth Michael's 135 acres by December 31st—and we have many of you to thank for your support.

Our application for a loan from the Calvert County Revolving Fund remains on track. The County staff refers loan requests to the Trust for Public Lands (TPL) to obtain a professional, impartial analysis of the application and the likelihood the loan will be repaid on schedule. We received word this week of the TPL's strong recommendation in favor of granting our loan request up to \$325,000. Similarly, our application for a loan from the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) continues to receive strong support from the MET staff and is scheduled to be considered by the Maryland Board of Public Works at their November 23rd meeting.

Our fundraising efforts also continue to be rewarded as we have cash or pledges for \$75,000 towards our \$100,000 goal. This includes 26 "leadership" contributions of \$1,000 or more. In addition, we have pledges towards our \$20,000 annual goals for 1995 through 1999: 1995 = \$9,300; 1996 = \$9,100; 1997 = \$5,000; 1998 = \$4,000; 1999 = \$4,000. I encourage each of you who have not yet contributed to follow their example to put us over the top on this critical purchase.

For those of you who were not at the Annual Meeting, we are encouraged by the actions of other organizations and individuals who support our goal to preserve this last "econiche" in Maryland on the western shore of the Bay. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) purchase of the Jett farm, a key property, continues to move forward. In addition, Dr. Turner has initiated discussions with the ACLT and the State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) with the purpose of preserving approximately 800-1,000 acres owned by himself and his sister, Virginia Somervell. Their proper-

Board of Directors

Ralph H. Dwan, Jr., President
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Carl Fleischhauer
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Mimi Lacouture
Ewing Miller
Robert Pfeiffer
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John Mark Switzer
Caroline E. Van Mason
June Whitson
Alan Wilson

ties wrap around the Michael property on the north and west and extend to Parkers Creek. Their intent is to sell approximately 100 acres bordering Plum Point Road to Calvert County for the Community College and to preserve the balance through an environmental lease. The DNR staff will develop a proposal for their consideration.

As is often the case for local land trusts, we have been able to exploit our small size and flexibility to protect a property that is key to protecting a significantly larger resource. We still need \$25,000 to reach our \$100,000 goal. Now is the time to put us over the top.

—Gary Loew

DNR to Protect Warrior's Rest

Program Open Space, the land acquisition agency for the Department of Natural Resources, is in the process of finalizing the public acquisition of the Jett Property, one of the most important and significant properties which make up the Parkers Creek natural area. Through the efforts of The Nature Conservancy, acting as Agent and Negotiator for the State of Maryland, a deal was reached with the heirs of Dr. Jett, concluding five years of efforts to permanently protect the property.

The DNR and the Conservancy have sought permanent protection for Parkers Creek for the protection of the many endangered species which live on the site and its uniquely pristine marshes, swamps and cliffs. Almost a mile of bay front property, some of which was threatened by an established subdivision, is included in the purchase. The area will be managed for habitat protection and research.

The land will be acquired with the Heritage Conservation Fund, a special allotment of Program Open Space monies set aside specifically for the protection of threatened and endangered species habitat and significant natural areas. Program Open Space was initiated in 1969 and is funded through a property transfer tax that links the rate of open space development to the rate of development.

—Jonathan McKnight, Special Projects Officer
Environmentals Project, Program Open Space

[Editor's Note: The ACLT Board of Directors applauds the diligence of the representatives of the Jett family, The Nature Conservancy, and Program Open Space for this successful effort.]



New Board Members for 1994/1995

Five new members were elected at the annual meeting to serve on ACLT's Board of Directors during the coming year, and Caroline Van Mason, a charter member and board member since 1986, was reelected. These members represent a variety of interests, as indicated in their biographies.

Mimi Lacouture is a recent member of ACLT, but already a sustaining member and a strong supporter who became interested when the land trust began serious efforts to preserve the area to the north of Parkers Creek. Mimi has been a resident of Calvert County for ten years and lives south of Dares Beach Road near Dares Beach. She has had a publishing business in Prince Frederick and is currently focusing on publishing a children's environmental magazine, *Tarkin Adventures*. Her community service has included the Calvert County Environmental Commission and the board of Alternatives for Youth. Mimi will make a significant contribution by representing ACLT in the area north of the creek.

Gary Loew needs little introduction to ACLT members. A charter member, he served on the board and as treasurer of the corporation from 1986 through 1991. In the past year he has worked effectively as the co-chair of the Land Acquisition/Preservation Committee, concentrating on the Michael purchase. Although Gary and his family live in Dunkirk, he owns property in Scientists' Cliffs.

Ewing Miller is a sustaining member of ACLT and resident of Washington, DC, and Scientists' Cliffs. A professional architect, now retired, his work took him to London, Philadelphia, and Indiana before moving to Washington, DC, in 1987. Large-scale planning was often part of his work, including planning for recreation, parks, trails, cabins, land use, and land protections. His professional experience will add strength to the ACLT board.

Robert Pfeiffer is a charter member of ACLT and county resident living near the land trust's property on Scientists' Cliffs Road. Bob is an aquatic biologist with experience in education and management. He taught biology in the Calvert County Public schools, owned and operated his own construction business, and recently served as the Program Manager of a small environmental foundation in Washington, DC. He is currently the Director of Weatherization and Energy Assistance for Prince George's County. Over the years Bob has worked with ACLT committees and has helped with numerous projects.

Alan Wilson is a sustaining member of ACLT with residences in both Washington, DC, and Scientists' Cliffs. Alan is now an independent consultant in

information technology application in the federal government, after having retired from a twenty-six year career with IBM. He has been on the ACLT membership committee for the past two years. His concern about land management and conservancy in Calvert County, and his interest in ACLT's outreach programs will benefit the land trust.

—Paul L. Berry

Trail System Plans Near Completion

After the fall land management committee meeting on September 17, a small subcommittee stayed to finalize plans for the trail system revival, which will ultimately include assigning trail and loop names, blazing all the trails, and reprinting the map and trail guide. I think we have arrived at a system which addresses many concerns. There will still be colored trail loops so that visitors can choose a color to follow without becoming confused. The loops will consist of separate trails whose names reflect natural features or pay homage to local family names. We hope to be able to offer a trail guide printed in color which should simplify understanding of the map. It is possible that a small donation will be requested to help defray the printing costs of such guides, as is done in many other hiking areas.

There will be three large loops on the original tract west of Scientists' Cliffs Road, all beginning at the main entrance, and one loop on the so-called east tract just south of East View Farm. The main trails on the west tract can already be regarded as two concentric loops, the outer one of which is mostly low-lying and follows streams, and the inner one consisting of two ridge trails. We have designated the outer loop as the *Stream Loop*, to be blazed yellow, with the *Flint Trail* (now blue) on its westernmost edge and the *Swamp Trail* (already yellow) on the east. The inner loop is the *Ridge Loop*, blazed red, with the *Bloodroot Trail* to the west and *Gravatt Lane* to the east. Also starting at the main entrance is the *Laurel Loop*, which goes west from the tobacco fields through the laurels and ends up behind the Pfeiffer property. From there one can go out to Scientists' Cliffs Road via the boundary trail, which climbs up and down a ravine, or by following the Pfeiffer driveway. Persons using the driveway should remember that they are walking across private property and be considerate of the residents who generously permit this privilege. Efforts will be made in the future to link the trail with the footpath recently created on the site of Old Bayside Road, which presently starts just north of Pfeiffer's at the small parking area across from East View Farm and permits a pedestrian bypass of Scientists' Cliffs

Road by cutting through the woods to just south of the main entrance's tobacco fields.

The loop on the east tract will be called the *East Loop* and is made up of several trails. Beginning at the oak tree next to the East View Farm driveway one follows the *Old Range Trail* to the new *Turkey Trail*, which crosses a lovely hilltop and goes downhill to intersect the *Steve Easter Trail*. The loop, which will be blazed green, continues west on the *Steve Easter Trail*, northwest on the *Switzer Trail*, and meets the *Matteson Trail*, another new trail created to eliminate the need for hikers to walk along Scientists' Cliffs Road. The *Matteson Trail* is just a footpath in some places, and at the top of a ravine crosses a corner of the Boesz's property, so again please be mindful of the resident's privacy. Eventually a bridge will be built across the ravine to keep the trail on ACLT property. By following the *Matteson Trail* through the woods south of Scientists' Cliffs Road you end up in the holly grove adjacent to the *Old Range Trail* just a few feet from where you started.

Weather permitting, blazing of the trails will take place this winter and be done in time for spring visits to the ACLT. Once all the trails are in place the map can be finalized and produced. We would ultimately like to create an extensive trail guide containing everything anyone knows about the land, but this is beginning to look like a project for the millennium.

Thanks to all who made suggestions and criticisms, and special thanks to Carl Fleishhauer and Mac Fried whose time and expertise provided the final impetus to create this revised trail system.

—Leslie Starr

Canoe Trip

Selection of October 1 as the day for a first group canoe excursion on Parkers Creek for members and guests of the land trust was a stroke of genius. The weather was perfect—neither hot nor cold, no wind to make “rounding the bar” where the creek meets the Bay a problem, no insects to combat, and finally water a temperature that would have been tolerable had someone been unlucky enough to go overboard (none did!).

Thanks to the cooperation of the Calvert Marine Museum, the land trust was able to borrow canoes which were made available to participants at the launch site. Vivian Marsh, our efficient and effective trip coordinator insured that safety precautions were observed, and he was able to pair up more experienced paddlers with rank amateurs (those never before in a canoe). The canoes remained a flotilla on the way up the creek so that experts who understood the plants

and animals of the area were able to identify for everyone some of the special features easily missed.

Peter Vogt explained the transition from briny vegetation at the mouth to fresh water plants at the site of the old Prince Frederick Road where we turned. Peg Niland identified across the reeds a number of smaller streams entering Parkers Creek through the expanded wetland area. Steve Bunker identified eagles in a snag close to the Russell Property which is “our” frontage on the creek. Migrating birds were few, but Monarch butterflies en route to Mexico were sighted.

Cameras seemed to be standard equipment. Additionally a professional was engaged to provide some footage from which a video for educational and informational purposes can be developed.

At another season, flowers rather than seeds would be evident, and a different time of day brings different birds sighted. Trips will be planned for other seasons to take advantage of that diversity. However, experience indicates that no more than two trips should be planned for a day. These will be scheduled well in advance so that your plans can include this opportunity for an interesting, fun, even challenging experience in an area to whose preservation the land trust is committed.

—Caroline Van Mason

In Support of ACLT

I want to close out my seven years as land trust Vice President by imploring each of you to be as generous as you can in support of ACLT land purchases. Whether you do it to save wild critters in general, or your furry favorites; to salvage a bit of our region’s shrinking native biodiversity; to protect the Chesapeake’s water quality through saving forested watershed; to save some of our rich but vanishing agricultural or archeological heritage; to save roadside wooded or farmland scenery; to maintain land for commercial crop and saw timber production; or to set aside increasingly scarce outdoor recreation land for yourself and your descendants, who will live in an ever more crowded land. Or, as I do, for all of the above reasons.

When you make out that check to the ACLT, don’t think of it as giving money away. Think of it as investing in something you care about, something tangible with enduring value, something alive today, tomorrow, and a thousand years from now, alive with myriads of creatures, an Alexandrian library that science has scarcely begun to decipher. Think of the accidental discovery on ACLT land of a wildflower so rare we have the only known colony in the state. Had the ACLT not been created, the tiny colony, located in

a prime building area, would have been bulldozed away without anyone having ever known about it. What would have been lost, in cash value? We don’t yet know how to answer that. Think of what else might be out there, yet to be discovered, or perhaps yet to recolonize a place whence it was extirpated centuries ago.

Think of the leveraging power your dollars have—in TDR sales, tax savings, and in convincing other families or organizations to contribute to this grand venture. Think of how developed the Mid-Atlantic states are today, and how fast the region is growing, and then think of where our descendants a hundred years hence will still be able to go to take their children for a “walk in the woods” and get away from the sounds of eighteen wheelers, air conditioners, lawn mowers, power saws, and just for a while, other people.

Think back to the way the Bay country was when John Smith explored it 386 years ago this summer. Indian villages were scattered along the tidal rivers, but most of the land was, as Smith described the Calvert cliffs shoreline, “extreme thicke of small wood so well as trees, and much frequented with Wolves, Beares, Deere, and other wild beasts.” No such wilderness survives in our region. But, with hard work and generous contributions, we can still partially restore some of the land in the Parkers Creek watershed to what John Smith called “Plaine wildernes, as God first made it.” To me restoration of a few square miles to something like a patch of the original wild America is the finest of the many good reasons to contribute money to land purchase. But the clock is ticking—we are running out of time and undeveloped land.

—Peter Vogt

Twenty Years Ago: Bill Gay, the first latter-day “parker”?

Who can canoe Parkers Creek, explore its wooded watershed, or scan the dramatic bay front cliffs without wishing that all this could somehow be saved as a park? We can’t know who first entertained the thought, but Bill Gay may have been the first to promote it. Fortunately he left a paper trail of his efforts.

A veterinarian and biomedical researcher at NIH, Dr. William Gay owned a summer cabin called “Time ’n Tide” in Scientists Cliffs from 1968 to 1982. Early in 1974 he had proposed the “Parkers Park” idea to The Nature Conservancy, which has championed it ever since. Bill corresponded with another Bill, the Conservancy’s William F. Nickel, III, “Coordinator Chesapeake Bay Program.” The two Bills even dis-

cussed a Parkers Creek nature preserve over lunch at the Cosmos Club.

Prefiguring current efforts by the ACLT, Dr. Gay compiled lists of cognizant naturalists, as well as data on Parkers Creek landowners and their properties. Nickel asked Gay about “the status of other landowners’ thinking in the area and also some insight into your ... thoughts.” In his reply dated 17 September 1974, Gay wrote that he has been “over considerable, but by no means all of this land.” He offered to introduce Nickel to people who could describe the “tremendously rich animal and plant life here.”

If 1974 didn’t bring a park to the Parkers Creek watershed, at least it was a watershed year for County land use planning, then in its very infancy. Then-Commissioner Bernie Fowler was leading the County into its first comprehensive planning effort, which resulted in the benchmark “Pleasant Peninsula Plan.” Among the goals articulated in the PPP (and still touted today!) were the expansion of “public access to major water bodies by the acquisition of waterfront land for ... parks,” to “encourage reforestation and tree farming” and “maintain the rural nature of the County, and provide wildlife habitats” and to conserve “unique scenic vistas, areas of botanical or zoological value, special geologic features, and areas of archeological significance.” Another objective, to “encourage new residential developments to locate in existing population centers (villages) to avoid urban sprawl” anticipated the subsequent creation of “town centers” but, as the last two decades have shown, did precious little to curb sprawl development.

Bill Gay promoted Parkers Creek not only with TNC, but also with the PPP Land Use Committee. In a letter (30 April 1974) to committee member Barbara Hinshaw, Bill advanced Charles County’s “Myrtle Grove” and the Ithaca (New York) “Sapsucker Woods” wildlife refuges as potential models for Parkers Creek. While impressed with Sapsucker Woods bird refuge, Gay considered it to have “much less potential than Parkers creek which is on the Bay, on a major US flyway, provides enormous sources of natural food and shelter for most bird species that could exist in North America. Also a large variety of fur bearing animals. With only modest management I feel sure Parkers Creek would be a model among wildlife refuges.”

Today, twenty years later, Bill Gay still shares the same permanent residence in Bethesda with his wife Millicent. Parkers Creek is still not a nature park, with Bill’s dream at once both alive and refractory. In the note she attached to her husband’s Parkers Creek materials, mailed to me some weeks ago, Millicent

Gay described Parkers Creek as “a beautiful natural area that should be preserved for land and water animals and birds and people to enjoy.” Who could state ACLT goals any better?

Our favorite tidal creek got its current name from a third Bill—William Parker, an English Puritan to whom was “patented” 600 acres of what was then still wilderness along the cliffs north of the creek. That was in the early 1650’s. Parker is a tradesman’s name like Carpenter or Smith, and once meant “keeper of a park.” So, centuries earlier still, an ancestor of Parkers Creek’s namesake must have been a park steward somewhere in England. If Parkers Creek does become the wildlife refuge Gay envisaged, it will be managed by a new line of lower-case “parkers,” among them ACLT volunteers. Bill Gay, who first seriously promoted the concept, will be their spiritual ancestor.

—Peter Vogt

ACLT’s 1994 Annual Meeting

Encourage by a beautiful fall day, over one hundred members and friends of ACLT attended the 1994 annual meeting on the morning of Saturday, October 15, at the St. John Vianney hall in Prince Frederick.

As the first order of business, President Ralph Dwan presented ACLT’s 1994 Conservation Award to Karen H. Edgecombe for her work with the county’s Environmental Commission; her work as general counsel of the Plum Point Environmental Land Trust, including that organization’s efforts toward the creation of a county revolving loan fund for land trusts; and her more recent work with the Calvert Farmland Trust. The Edgecombe family—husband Glenn, daughters Emily and Lindsay, and Dr. Edgecombe’s parents—were present at the awarding of the framed plaque, designed by Mitzi Poole.

ACLT’s principal effort of the year involved the planned purchase of the Kenneth Michael farm located to the north of Parkers Creek. This required extraordinary efforts on the part of the Land Acquisition/Preservation Committee, chaired by Gary Loew, and ACLT’s administrator Peg Niland. Gary Loew presented a brief summary of the planned property acquisition, with slides to demonstrate its importance to ACLT’s efforts to preserve the Parkers Creek watershed.

Six members were elected to the Board of Directors for the coming year. One incumbent member, Caroline Van Mason, returned to the board, while the following new members were elected: Mimi Lacouture, Gary Loew, Ewing Miller, Robert Pfeiffer, and Alan Wilson. Outgoing board members who were thanked for their service and presented with mounted

aerial photographs of Parkers Creek were Sue Hamilton, Charlene Sturbitts, and Margaret Young. Retiring members Steve Bunker and Peter Vogt were not present but their service was recognized.

Members especially enjoyed the talk by Thomas D. Saunders, director of the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET). Mr. Saunders organized his remarks under three headings: What MET is doing, what Maryland's land trusts are doing, and what ACLT has accomplished. MET was created in the 1960's, but has been accepting conservation easements only since the 1970's, now totaling 46,000 acres in Maryland. When he came to MET there were only eight land trusts in the state, but now there are forty. In MET's early days, the emphasis was on specific pieces of land in specific areas, but now the trust has broader objectives for preservation—controlling growth, saving watersheds, wetland, natural areas, and even towns.

MET works in partnership with other conservation efforts, including the state's land trust. These local land trusts can focus on the protection of specific properties, but they also are important in spreading the conservation ethic in the community, both formally and informally. They can educate land owners on ways to protect land and natural resources. ACLT's accomplishments have impressed the MET staff and board. Not only has ACLT taken dramatic steps to protect the Parkers Creek watershed, it has influenced the attitudes of Calvert County officials and the county's citizens.

The final report at the annual meeting was given by Ruth Mathis, representing the Maryland Conservation Council. Very recently, a fourth land trust has been formed in Calvert County: The Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust, involving most of the 1,017 acres owned by Columbia Natural Gas north of Cove Point. This area of freshwater marsh and a barrier beach was acquired by Columbia in 1972 and developed for the receipt and off-loading of liquid natural gas by ship. Efforts of the Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy, MET, and others, resulted in several environmental adaptations. For the past fifteen years, however, the operating facility that occupies about 100 acres has been inactive, though the entire area has been well-protected by Columbia Gas. The company has been trying to find new uses for the facility and if this activity is approved, Columbia will fund the new trust with a grant of \$300,000, and \$125,000 yearly for twenty-five years.

At a brief meeting of the Board of Directors following the adjournment of the annual meeting, the following officers were elected for the coming year: Ralph Dwan, president; Gary Loew, vice-president; David Farr, treasurer; and Paul Berry, secretary.

—Paul L. Berry



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