

# Newsletter



## What's Happening

### Rural Legacy Update

Awards have been made for the Rural Legacy Program throughout the state, with an award to Calvert County for 1.5 million dollars. The area selected is located along the north and west side of Battle Creek from the headwaters to the confluence of the Patuxent River. Several working farms and woodlands have the potential for protection by conservation easement through this award.

### New Computers for ACLT

*Please bear with us...* A major change is taking place as we convert all of our 600 membership records and many years of documents to a new computer system. We ask everyone to please look carefully at how newsletters and other correspondence are addressed to you. We've hired an excellent data entry clerk to re-enter everyone's membership data and we have enlisted a few very competent proof readers. However, if you have any corrections or questions, please do not hesitate to contact the office. Also, our membership coordinator, Ginny Murphy, will be a few weeks behind for awhile. Ginny's volunteer job involves sending out our membership renewal notices and acknowledgements and recording all membership data. If we ask you to renew your membership at, say \$10,000; you might want to give us a call!

### Annual Audit

ACLT's annual audit by Mullen, Sondberg, Wimbish & Stone, P.A. has been completed, showing the trust using sound business practices. Special thanks to our treasurer, Paul Berry, for

the tremendous amount of time he puts into keeping our books, writing checks, and producing reports for grants, our board, and the Budget and Finance Committee. This committee, chaired by Ed Greene is responsible for the preparation of the annual budget, long-range financial plans, and monitors the approved budget. The committee also monitors the financial records and activities of ACLT, including investments.

### Coming Events

#### Fall Canoe Trip

Scheduled for November 1, 10:00 am. Depart from Warrior's Rest. Reservations a must. Please fax, e-mail, or call in the number in your party and whether you are bringing a kayak or canoe.

#### Greens Gathering and Hayride

December 12. Don't miss this ACLT "favorite." Greens for the holidays, hot cider, and a hayride to the beach!

### Bow Hunting Season Opened September 15

Hikers need to be aware that the bow season for deer is underway and lasts until mid-January. A fluorescent orange sign at the parking lot will alert you that one or more of three hunters is on the Gravatt tract. Double Oak Farm hunters put out an orange cone and hikers can check their location on a "hunter sign-in map."

### Annual Membership Meeting

The American Chestnut Land Trust's annual membership meeting will be held on **October 24, 1998**, at St. John Vianney Church off Main Street in Prince Frederick. Coffee and donuts will be served at 9:30 a.m. and the meeting will convene at 10:00 a.m. Lunch and trail hikes on ACLT property will follow the meeting.

We are pleased to announce that this year's keynote speaker is William Matuszeski, Director, Chesapeake Bay Program Office, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Bill Matuszeski has been the Director of EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program Office since November of 1997. As such, he is Chairman of the Implementation Committee for the Bay Program, a cooperative restoration effort by the States of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia; the District of Columbia; the Chesapeake Bay Commission representing the three state legislatures; and EPA as the representative of the Federal Government. The Bay Program is the premier watershed restoration effort in the United States.



**Newsletter of the  
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The Newsletter is 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 the ACLT, which was founded in 1986, has preserved 810 acres and has accepted management of an additional 350 acres owned by the State of Maryland.

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## From the President's Desk

On Friday, July 3, ACLT lost a good friend with the death of Louis L. Goldstein, the Comptroller of the state of Maryland from 1958 until his death. Many considered him Mr. Calvert County since he represented the county in the state legislature beginning in the 1938 and since Route 4, the "Main Street" of Calvert County, is dedicated to him. He was famous for his politicking across the state, but he was everywhere in the county shaking hands and wishing people well with his signature greeting "God bless you all real good."

The photo on the facing page was taken at the 1992 ACLT Annual Meeting when Louis was the keynote speaker. At that time, ACLT was only 6 years old and just beginning to conserve environmentally sensitive land, having acquired the Gravatt, Russell, and Kenwood tracts totaling approximately 600 acres. By contrast, Louis had been conserving land in the county since the 1930s totaling in the thousands of acres. When you paddle your canoe up Parkers Creek, most of the pristine woods and marshes are there because he bought the properties and left them alone. What a heritage he gave us!

Yes, we had our differences. Before the 1992 meeting we had opposed him on a commercial development project located at the headwaters of Parkers Creek. Still, he came to encourage the work that ACLT was doing. When we applied for a state loan to assist with the purchase of Double Oak Farm, he guided it through the Board of Public Works. In May of that year we were back in Annapolis to support the state's acquisition of two major tracts on Parkers Creek which we had agreed to manage for the Department of Nature Resources. Again, he gave his support to the project asking only that we state on the record that there would be public access to the properties. Mary and I were unable attend the funeral, so the day before we drove to Annapolis where Louis' casket lay in state in the Capitol. We were struck by the diversity of people there to pay their last respects—young and old, black and white, politicians, state employees, and just friends. We spoke with a young woman who was an auditor in the Comptroller's office and she said that he was wonderful boss. We are saddened to say goodbye to Calvert's original conservationist.

Ralph Dwan, President  
September 1998

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Left to right: Commissioner Hagner Reed Mister, Ralph Dwan, Jr., the late Eileen Hughes, The Honorable Louis L. Goldstein. ACLT 1992 Annual Meeting.

## Notes from Land Management

### Stalking the Exotic Invasives

*exotic invasive: a plant or animal that 1) was introduced to an area rather than being native, and 2) is so successful that it replaces native plants or animals*

Everyone has heard of Kudzu, the infamous vine that was brought to the south for soil stabilization purposes and has proved to be a major plant menace, capable of taking over vast acreages and even whole houses. The ACLT is fortunate not to have this exotic invasive plant, but we have several of our own, one of which, Oriental Bittersweet, may soon rival Kudzu in reputation. Bittersweet, *Celastrus orbiculatus*, is a horticultural ornamental, and indeed its bright orange fall and winter berries are both pleasing in a natural setting and an object of desire in the floral trade. Last year a crew of dedicated volunteers, led by Carolyn Van Mason and Peter Vogt, earned seven hundred dollars for the ACLT by harvesting bittersweet and selling it to Washington area florists to be used as garlands and wreaths.

The down side of this hardy plant is that it is spreading throughout the ACLT and surrounding properties like wildfire. Its berries are relished by birds, and while those of us who watch

birds appreciate that they are attracted to our local bittersweet, it is well-known that birds are the guilty parties when it comes to spreading seeds.

What would be the harm in allowing bittersweet to take over our woods and fields? Like other exotic invasive vegetation, including kudzu, bamboo, and english ivy, this opportunistic plant would eventually dominate local vegetation to the extent that little else would remain. Trees and bushes would be smothered by vines; other plants wouldn't even be able to start growing where the ground is covered by them. Bittersweet and some of the other exotics do have food and shelter value for certain bird species, but if they took over to the exclusion of other plants, such as oak trees and grape vines, habitat and food for other birds and animals would be curtailed and eventually eliminated.

It has long been a goal of the Land Management Committee to try to control some of the exotic invasive plants on ACLT property, and achieving this goal has become even more critical with the recent revision of some of our forest management plans. ACLT has enrolled all its land in the Calvert County Agricultural Preservation District program. If our property were

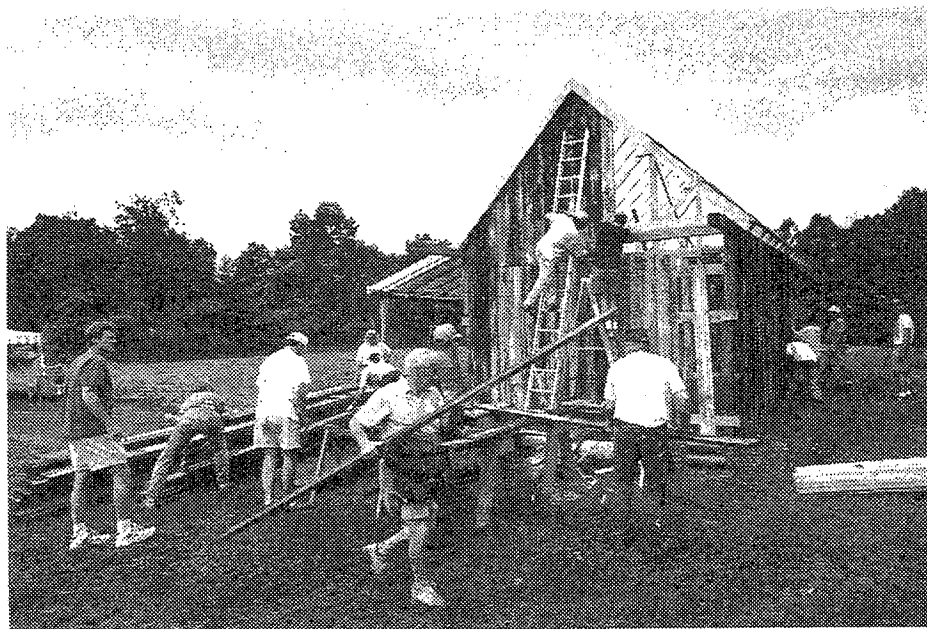
farmland we would have to comply with soil conservation plans. Since most of our holdings are woodlands, we have had forest management plans drawn up by private and DNR foresters. In the early days of the trust we were managed as a tree farm and expected to undertake timber harvests from time to time. Now our landowner objectives have evolved to 1) natural heritage and recreation and 2) fish and wildlife habitat. Included in revised plans for the original (Gravatt) tracts are a timetable to establish boundaries for the undesirable plants and begin reducing their spread.

Management of these invasive plants is simply too great a task for volunteers. As mentioned in the last newsletter, a hardy group put in almost 40 hours one Sunday in late May sawing down bamboo on the east side of Gravatt Lane. Within a month the new bamboo sprouts were already 20' high. Dave and Ellen Farr have continued to work almost every weekend on cutting culms and applying herbicide to leaves. A group of National Aquarium campers led by Dodie Ferrier sawed down quite a few culms one very hot day in late July. Between the Farrs' contributions, another day or two of large group efforts, and continued vigilance for several years (forever?) we may be able to remove the bamboo on this one side of the trail and contain it on the other. But that would be one small accomplishment with a great deal of work.

Bamboo is a lot easier to control than bittersweet. ACLT has turned to Envirens, Inc., a professional ecological restoration company, to begin a chemical assault on the bittersweet and other nuisance vines. No one likes to use herbicides, but even the most puritanical environmentalists agree that they may be the only solution to a situation beyond control. Envirens began work on August 26 using a short-lived herbicide. The vines should begin dying back within two weeks of application. The site will be reinspected later in the fall

*(Continued on page 5)*

## A Barn of Our Own



*Putting on the siding of the new barn, June 20, 1998.*

About the middle of May, drivers along Scientists' Cliffs Road were startled to see a number of tall poles stuck into the ground in the field adjacent the ACLT's main parking area. People who hadn't been keeping up with the newsletter articles, and maybe even some who had, wondered whether we were embarking on construction of a Stonehenge-type monument. The poles were especially striking for the first few days, before they had been straightened and set into concrete, because they were tilted at odd angles and looked like the work of a tipsy giant. In fact, these were the structural supports for the new equipment storage barn, which was virtually finished little more than a month later and has been housing trail maintenance tools ever since.

The work really began last fall, when John Lewis, assisted by Dick Simpkins, harvested a number of straight locust poles from timber stand 5A. This is an area deemed overstocked by our forester and in need of thinning, as well as being accessible by truck. Locust has always been used locally for

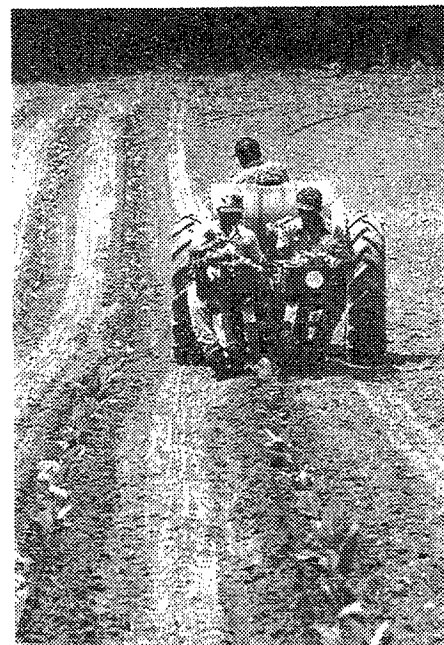
fence posts and structural supports because of its resistance to deterioration. Many of the neighborhood log cabins were originally built on locust pilings. Although the rest of the barn construction materials were not grown on the property, it was felt that using our own locusts would personalize the barn while saving money.

John, Dick, and a few other helpers worked on finishing the framing of the barn until June 20, when the barn-raising was held. This was a highly successful collaboration between the Land Management and Membership & Outreach Committees, and was well-attended despite its being a hot summer day. By 8:00 a.m. there were at least a dozen volunteers installing siding on the barn wall, with many more joining in as the morning progressed. Workers ranged in age from about seven to seventy, with both genders represented. All of the walls were finished, and close to half of the roof. A separate party of volunteers went down the road to install siding on an outbuilding at the Howard Farmsite, a more low profile project,

but no less appreciated. In the meantime, food and drink were prepared and served to the accompaniment of fiddle and guitar music played by Elgin Perry and friend. Children went on pony rides down the entrance lane, participated in a "Forest Treasures" scavenger hunt devised by Leigh Hamilton, and competed in the limbo contest. In the other field, the Wallace family and colleagues were planting the year's first tobacco. This was a surprise bonus, and added to the fun and interest of the day.

Somewhere around seventy-five people were present at one time or another. Everyone enjoyed themselves and felt a great sense of accomplishment to see the skeleton of poles and lumber transformed by their own efforts into a recognizable barn.

Leslie Starr



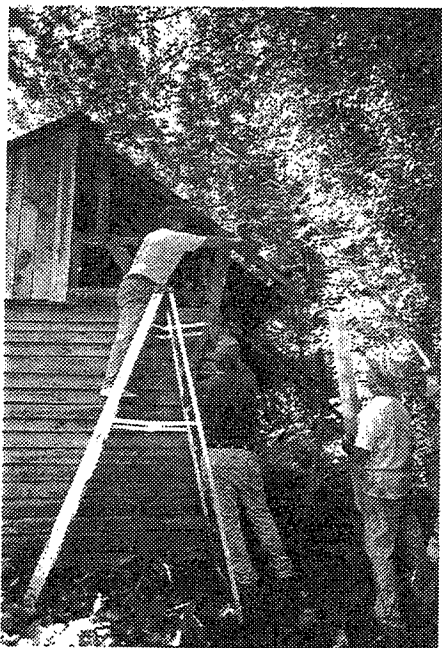
*Planting tobacco, June 20, 1998. Wayman "Frankie" Wallace is driving the tractor while Claude Brooks, Jr., left, and Joe Wall insert the started tobacco plants into the "fingers" of the planter.*

## What else did we do on barn-raising day?

### *Fixing an old building.*

While most of the crowd was occupied with the barn raising, a group of six went to work on one of the historical buildings at the ACLT. The team consisted of Ken Romney, Jim Sanders, John Theriault, Bob Douglas, Art Cochran, and this writer. The structure is a former outbuilding on the old Percy Howard farm, standing on the west side of Scientists Cliffs Road, between Gates C and D.

The outbuilding is partly framed in log, with elements cut by hand and held together with wooden pins, several of which are visible from the interior. The building's original clapboards were hand riven and, although most have been replaced by newer mill-cut siding, several courses of the riven material are visible at the tops of the side walls, in a protected zone just below the eaves. Hand-riven siding can date a building to the eighteenth-century but this siding



*Working on the outbuilding at the Percy Howard farm, July 20, 1998. Jim Sanders on the ladder nails siding onto the gable, assisted by Art Cochran and Bog Douglas. Ken Romney is barely visible at the extreme right.*

is secured with cut nails, a late nineteenth century development and suggestive of post-Civil War construction.

It is not practical to restore this building but it is well worth stabilizing the structure to slow or stop the deterioration. Saturday's work team cut and installed replacement siding in the two gable ends to protect the exposed framing and replaced several clapboards along the western wall. Later in the day, a piece of corrugated galvanized sheet metal was installed to replace a rusted section of the roof.

### *Planting tobacco.*

Adding to the educational festivities on barn-raising day, was Frankie Wallace and his crew, planting their 1998 crop of tobacco in the field south of the entrance lane. Wallace's crew included Claude Brooks, Jr., of Prince Frederick, and Joe Wall, of Port Republic. The planting machine that broke down on the job last year performed well this time and more than half of the approximately three acres were planted.

Speaking to this writer, Joe Wall explained that the ACLT's tobacco fields were very familiar to him. About thirty-five years ago, as a child, he lived with his family in a house that stood at the western end of the fields, not far from where the privy stands today. His father, also named Joe Wall, had been an employee of Flippo Gravatt, who owned the house. Wall said that he grew up helping work these fields. The house burned about twenty years ago, after the Wall family had moved to other quarters.

Carl Fleischhauer



*(Continued from page 3)*

to gauge success, and Envirens will no doubt be back to do more spraying next season. If the spraying is successful, there will be far fewer berries for the birds to spread and for the florists to sell. The birds will be fine; there is plenty of food in the area. The florists might be disappointed, but the conscience of ACLT will no longer be burdened with contributing to the spread of bittersweet in metropolitan Washington.

*Reminder:* If you find yourself walking on the ACLT Port Republic trails in the next two months, remember that the dying vines you see will be ugly for awhile, but will ultimately be replaced by desirable native vegetation.

Leslie Starr

## Trail Concerns

Visitors to the ACLT trails on Scientists' Cliffs Road in the last six weeks or so will have noticed that portions of two trails are currently closed. They are the northern section of the Flint Trail and the steep hill on Gravatt Lane. The decision to close these trail sections was made by the Land Management Committee at its July meeting after receiving advice from Steve Stadelman, our DNR forester, and Ranger April Havens, a manager at four southern Maryland State Parks. In the revised forest management plans Steve had recommended closing part of the Flint Trail to mountain bikes. He and April joined Peg Niland and Leslie Starr for a walk on June 30 to assess trail conditions. Ranger Havens concurred with Steve's recommendations about the Flint Trail and went a step further to suggest it might also be closed to pedestrians for safety reasons. Steve had also suggested that water diversion devices be installed on the Gravatt Hill, and at its meeting the committee thought it would be best to close this trail section to all users in the meantime.

The Flint Trail is a very narrow path running adjacent to the Jett Stream

on the western edge of the larger Gravatt Tract. It was developed by Oliver and Carol Flint and is a favorite of birders and other naturalists. Because it is on the edge of the streambank and is being undercut, it poses a safety hazard for trail users. Because of its soft soils it is highly susceptible to erosion. The committee had decided over a year ago to close this trail section to mountain biking. After it was learned that this trail was also a favorite of mountain bikers and that they would avoid it during wet conditions, the trail remained open until late this July. So far there has been no discussion as to what could

be done to make the trail safe enough to reopen permanently.

The Gravatt Lane hill has been eroding for quite some time and has reached the point where it is severely rutted. Pockets of leaves over mud and soft dirt make it treacherous for both walking and biking. It is the committee's intention to construct water diversion devices during the next year, after which the trail will reopen.

These trail closings are symptomatic of a larger issue before the Land Management Committee and the ACLT as a whole: what uses of the land are desirable, appropriate, and sustainable.

The committee met in July to discuss whether activities other than hiking should continue to be allowed on the property, as many feel that increased mountain bike riding has accelerated erosion. The subject proved to be too hot to handle, and the committee recommended that ACLT president Ralph Dwan appoint an ad-hoc committee to study the question of trail usage. This committee is in the process of being formed and has been charged with not only determining trail use policies but also what should be done with all ACLT owned and managed properties.

Leslie Starr

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**ANNUAL MEETING  
OCTOBER 24th**