

American Chestnut Land Trust, Inc.
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NEWSLETTER

Volume 10 - Number 2/3

Editors: Ellen and David Farr

Summer 1996

ACLT Annual Meeting and 10th Anniversary Celebration

You are cordially invited to attend the ACLT Annual Meeting and celebration of our 10th Anniversary on Saturday, October 26, 1996 at 2:30 p.m. in the afternoon. This will be held at the Scientists' Cliffs Community House which is located at Acacia and Alder Roads ("Gate A" entrance) in Scientists' Cliffs, Port Republic, Maryland.

There are so many accomplishments to celebrate as the Land Trust enters its second decade of providing magnificent open spaces for the citizens and visitors of Calvert County. In just ten years, ACLT has preserved 790 acres of land; during the same period, other landowners, and the State of Maryland have protected more than 840 additional acres in Parkers Creek and Governors Run watersheds.

The 10th Anniversary party, "Celebrating Calvert Country," will begin immediately following our annual meeting. Enjoy a Country Barn Dance featuring live music and country line dancing (with instructions), dinner and refreshments, auction, an exciting hayride into the Land Trust properties, and general fun for families of all ages. There will be interesting prizes for members who want to participate in a country barbecue and chili cook-off contest.

Message from the President

It is hard to believe that we will be celebrating ACLT's 10th birthday this fall if you consider the date of incorporation the legal equivalent of being born. Peter Vogt would say that the period of gestation was much longer than the nine months for humans and he would be right, since ACLT originated as the proverbial "gleam" in Peter's eye. But like many human children, ACLT has grown and matured far beyond our initial expectations, as if childhood, adolescence and college were all squeezed into the first 10 years. Now we're looking at graduate school as we start working on a new 5-Year Plan that will consider the future of an entire ecosystem. More on that from Ewing Miller (via Alan Wilson) is included in this newsletter. I promise a summary of our first 10 years for the fall issue.

Thanks again to all the volunteers who turned out for the Earth Day clean-up and work-days on the Ken-

wood tract and Warrior's Rest. The Navy showed up at Dr. Jett's Holly arboretum in the form of Jim Greene (Rear Admiral Retired) and Pat Murphy (Captain Retired). I didn't know that sailors were so handy at attacking the land. After some

years of benign neglect, the assault at Kenwood had two brigades. The first was led by Leslie Starr and John Lewis against the overgrown trails assisted by various volunteers and equipped with the newly-acquired Gravelly bush hog which carried the day. The second brigade, captained by Art Cochran, set boundary marks on the east side of the property. This contingent included Eric Vogt, Jay Switzer and myself and immediately encountered stiff resistance in the form of heavy undergrowth that concealed the survey stakes and poison ivy everywhere. An important beachhead was established for further efforts in the fall.

And I must say a word of appreciation for those who stepped up their involvement with the administrative chores during Peg Niland's recent bout of illness (heart attack, angioplasty, etc.). Without the help of Paul Berry, June Whitson, Padi Hollowell and others, I'm not sure how ACLT would have kept going. Peg is out of the woods for now both figuratively and literally, since she is recovering and back on the job but with restrictions and medication. We rejoice in her return and sincerely hope that there will be no more frantic trips to the Washington Hospital Center's Cardiology Unit.

This issue contains an update of progress on acquiring the Commodore tract, and I want to thank all those who contributed to the Spring Appeal. We are also promoting pledges towards the payoff of the loans on Double Oak farm and I am relieved to report the recent sale of 110 TDRs from that property. Under the terms of that sale, we should be able over 3 years, to reduce the loans from the Maryland Environmental Trust and Kenneth Michael by \$242,000 which is almost half of those loans combined. Another bit of good news is that we received a grant in June of \$10,000 towards Peg's salary from the Spring Creek Foundation of Washington, DC.

—Ralph Dwan

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ACLT Revises Brochure and Membership Rates

Our new brochure is hot off the press and looks terrific! It sports new colors, a photo, and a map that shows all the protected land from Western Shores to Dares Beach. Pick one up at the office or sign-in boxes in the parking lots on the Gravatt tract and Double Oak Farm and pass it on to a prospective new member.

After much debate, the Board of Directors has enacted a modest membership rate increase—the first increase in our ten year history. There have been significant increases in the costs associated with producing our newsletters which go to every member four times a year. The basic membership, now called “Land Saver,” has increased from \$25 to \$35; however, we have added a free “Youth Gift Membership” category for eligible youth in the community to encourage involvement in the environment. This category will be funded by donations of \$25 per membership. If you know a young person in the community who you feel would benefit from a membership, please contact the office. The enclosed membership forms also make it easy for you to contribute to the establishment of this fund.

Family Day Picnic at Double Oak Farm, June 22, 1996

We knew it was a special event when Ellis Scott Jones, age 7, took the microphone to tell us “ACLT is important because I want my children and grandchildren to have fun walking in the woods like I do.”

All 125 of us had a special day, not too hot, lots of good food prepared by Mimi Lacouture, Nedd Fried, Julie Nisonger, and of course the Niland group—Peg, Beth, and Diana. The beer was donated by the Patuxent Architects, Inc.

As Elgin Perry played his guitar and sang, Annie Moore and Padi Hollowell painted bugs and lizards on little faces, Diane Nestor sent groups out on a nature scavenger hunt, Mark and Elaine Nisonger helped with Limbo contest discovering hidden talent in ACLT, namely Donna Ari, Ewing Miller, Mac Fried, and Josh Lewis. A popular spot was the fossil display set up by Sandy Roberts and Dave Bohaska. The volleyball court was set up, as well as a trampoline, a hammock, and a continuous showing of the popular Parkers Creek video. Judy Landis was there documenting the fun on a video tape which she donated for our records.

Events like these are fun for everyone, particularly when we have such willing helpers as the Hollowells, Bob Pfeiffer, Shirley Mihursky, and Janet and Jack Andrews. Yes, Scott Jones said it for all of us: ACLT is important, we all want our grandchildren to have fun walking in the woods.

Emergence of the Double Oak Conference Center

Over the past six months, our uses for the Double Oak Farm have been so varied that we now see the place not just as our northern most protected property with the

beginnings of a trail system, but as an emerging “Conference Center.”

What was once a hunting lodge, now hosts gatherings for school children, families, other environmental organizations and county and state officials. The ACLT holds board meetings at Double Oak, it was the site for this year’s Earth Day picnic and, most recently, enjoyed by over 120 members and guests at our second Annual Family Day Picnic. Both the Environmental Fund of Maryland and the Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources Southern Regional Team have found Double Oak to be a great place for a meeting and a catered lunch—especially when followed by a trip to Warrior’s Rest and a canoe ride up Parkers Creek!

While Chespax, the county school’s environmental education program, has been using ACLT lands for a few years, it was our pleasure to co-host with Plum Point Environmental Trust (PPLET) an “indoor” program for 51 students, teachers and support staff. Funded by Dupont’s Conservation Fund, PPLET and ACLT worked with students from Northern and Calvert High Schools doing a feasibility study on connecting the two trusts’ properties via a hiker/biker trail. The entire place was put to use as the crowd broke into groups to plan a public opinion survey, a wetland crossing, and plotting trails through the open space of subdivisions along the proposed trail route.

Now that the place has been “discovered”, we are looking for a few good men and women to serve on a committee to oversee its use and prioritize improvements. If you have an interest and have a little time to give, please call Peg Niland at the office or at Double Oak Farm, 535-0924.

Double Oak Farm Pledges



When a payoff schedule was developed back in 1994 to convince Kenneth Michael, the County and the State that ACLT could carry the debt necessary to buy Double Oak Farm, there were two key elements that represented the organization’s major assets, namely, transfer development rights (TDRs) and members. As noted in the President’s report, ACLT has recently sold 110 TDRs to begin a major reduction in the debt. Now we must try to increase the pledges from our membership, which were projected at \$20,000 per year over the 5-year payoff period. You will see from the graph that we came very close to our goal in 1995 but we are still short for 1996 and

more so in the succeeding years. If you are able to make a pledge, please call the office 410-586-1570 and Peg Niland will send you a pledge form. Annual pledges are due in December and you will receive a reminder.

ACLT to Embark on a New Five-Year Plan

As ACLT enters its second decade, it is important to examine what we want to accomplish during the next five years and how we should best proceed. It is hard to believe that it has already been five years since ACLT adopted its last "strategic" plan. That plan defined "the level of activity ACLT will devote to acquisition, land management outreach and fundraising efforts. This 1991 plan has served us well; we have met or exceeded the majority of objectives laid out five years ago.

Now, it is time to update and revise the plan to provide direction, consensus and commitment among the Board of Directors and the ACLT membership towards shared goals into the next millennium—through the year 2001.

ACLT is the major partner in the preservation of the Parkers Creek and Governors Run watersheds. We need input from you, the ACLT membership, on what is needed to preserve the remaining properties in the watershed. In order to establish an effective ecosystem management plan, we want to include action items supporting land management, outreach and membership administration and fundraising.

We will be contacting you very soon to get your valued ideas. We have obtained the services of a volunteer professional facilitator to incorporate your thoughts, and those of the Board, into our new strategic plan.

Please call 410- 586-1570 if you would like to participate in this important activity.

From the Land Management Committee

Trails

Visitors to the ACLT Gravatt tracts (our original property in Port Republic) have found the trails in relatively good shape this summer, as evidenced by favorable comments in the sign-in log. Part of this is due to Mother Nature, as we have recovered enough from the '94 ice storms so that falling debris is less commonplace and good growing conditions have produced an abundance of wildflowers. The acquisition of a new mowing device has aided trail maintenance and lessened our dependence on the large Massey Ferguson tractor, which can only be operated by a few people. Early this summer the ACLT purchased a Gravely walk-behind from L. J. Elter and Sons of Huntington. It came with a 30-inch bush hog deck, which is good not only for mowing but also for controlling vines and undergrowth in such areas as the cedar trees at the main entrance and around the Wallace homesite. We are probably also going to buy a 40-inch grass deck, which would make a wider path for trail mowing and be slightly easier to use. (The bush hog deck is designed to rise up in the air in order to get above large objects to be mowed, which makes it a little hard to keep on the ground when mowing uphill.) The Gravely also features a detachable sulky seat, for those who prefer not

to mow on their feet. The only problem with this wonderful new equipment has been the dearth of volunteers. Aside from the hunter-volunteers, almost all trail mowing (as of late July) has been done by one vertically challenged person of the female persuasion. (Other land management volunteers have mowed some of the cultural sites and have promised to mow in August.) If you enjoy our ACLT trails, please consider donating a few hours mowing time for next summer. A lot can be accomplished in a small amount of time.

Trails at Double Oak Farm, the ACLT's northern property, are always in good shape, thanks to Peg Niland and her family. The trails are now open from dawn to dusk without reservations, although visitors may want to call ahead as the gate will be occasionally locked under certain circumstances. (Call the office at 586-1570 or Double Oak Farm at 535-0924. Visitors can walk along through a working corn field and descend into cool woods to arrive at the new mini-boardwalk erected this spring. From Double Oak Farm one can also explore the 116 acres recently purchased by The Nature Conservancy. The former Ward property adjoins Double Oak to the southwest and is currently without trails but open to the public.

Wildflowers

As mentioned above, this has been a good year for wildflowers. Starting in early April with bloodroot and spring beauty and followed soon by may apples, the ACLT trails have been a showcase for a multitude of lovely native flowers. Early summer brought delicate toadflax and field pansies to the entrance lane, and vivid golden ragwort along the Swamp Trail. On the shady Easter Trail wood sorrel and wild geranium bloomed in early June, followed a few weeks later by the uncommon black snakeroot. Mid-summer featured striking combinations of venus' looking glass, butterfly weed, black-eyed susans, and yarrow on the entrance lane, and a wealth of lizard tails in damp areas. Heading into late summer we can expect flowering spurge, goldenrods, partridge peas, and asters in the fields. Cardinal flowers, arrowhead, turtleheads, and monkey flowers, although not abundant, may be found in swampy areas.

There has been some interest in starting a native flower garden between Scientists' Cliffs Road and the main entrance parking lot. This would be limited to plants suitable to the poor soil and sandy conditions, but with so many flowers already found in the ACLT fields it would be nice to feature some of them in a special bed visible to all visitors and passers-by. Other native plants suitable to the area but not already present such as bee balm and purple coneflower, could also be included. David and Helen Didion have generously volunteered to head this project, which should properly begin this fall with site preparation. Anyone interested in participating could call the Didions in Calvert County at 410-586-3884 or in Cheverly at 301-772-5845. Messages may also be left with the land management committee at the offices 410-586-1570.

[continued inside back cover]

ACLT Fall Calendar



September 14	11:00–5:00	Calvert Farm & Country Festival – Join our friends from Calvert Farmland Trust at Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum and visit ACLT’s display. Enjoy live music, crafts, animal petting zoo, auction, and demonstrations. \$5.00 admission
September 15	10:00	Trail Work Party at Double Oak Farm – Help is needed to widen existing trails and install a gate. Lunch provided.
September 29	2:00–5:00	Discovery Day – Exploration of Warrior’s Rest. Walks through Holly Arboretum, canoe rides, and other educational activities. RSVP.
October 12 and 13	10:00–5:00	Patuxent Appreciation Days – be sure to visit ACLT's booth in the environment tent.
October 16–18		Office Closed for National Land Trust Convention
October 26	2:30	Annual Meeting – <i>Tenth Anniversary Celebration</i> (Scientists’ Cliffs Community House, Gate A entrance, Acacia and Alder Roads)
	4:30 (approx.)	Hayride
	6:00	Country Barn Dance

Tenth Anniversary Celebration

“Celebrate Calvert Country” is the theme of this year’s Annual Meeting as ACLT commemorates its **tenth anniversary**. We return to the trust’s place of origin, the community of Scientists’ Cliffs, with a shortened meeting followed by a hayride and a Country Barn Dance. There will be country line dancing (with instructions), a chili and barbecue cook-off, live music, a silent auction and a few surprises thrown in! *Mark your calendars now—this will be a celebration you won’t want to miss!*

Hunting on ACLT property

It's that time of year when woods walkers need to be reminded that hunting may be taking place in our area. On the ACLT Gravatt tracts (along Scientists' Cliffs Road) we have a bow hunting program whereby people who have donated 24 hours of valuable labor are permitted to hunt deer with bows and arrows. Our hunters are extremely trustworthy and hardworking individuals who mainly enjoy just being outdoors and watching wildlife, although occasionally a deer is harvested. The bow season runs from September 14 through the end of January. There is no hunting on weekends or holidays, nor weekdays between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. or Fridays after 10:00 a.m. Anytime one of our hunters is on the property there will be a vivid cautionary sign posted at the main entrance. Hikers might consider wearing bright colors as a precaution but are in no danger from one of our authorized hunters.

Bow hunting will be permitted at Double Oak Farm weekdays before 10:00 a.m. and after 3:00 p.m. and Saturdays until 10:00 a.m. There will also be shotgun hunting all day Monday through Saturday during the firearm season, November 30–December 14, subject to state regulations. Hunting will not occur on Sundays, federal holidays, or during ACLT-approved special events.

Hunting on East View Farm

We understand that the East View Farm, on Scientists' Cliffs Road adjacent to our eastern Gravatt tract and the southern portion of Scientists' Cliffs, has been leased by a local hunt club for all game this year. This means that anyone walking the East Loop trails particularly the Range and Turkey Trails and parts of the Easter Trail, should be aware that hunters may legally be hunting close to the trails. All ACLT boundaries have been posted and hunters should not fire across the boundaries, but hikers should be cautious. Wearing of bright colors is recommended, and visitors should be particularly wary during the firearm season, the two weeks from November 30 through December 14.

—Leslie Starr

Wish List and Thank You

Recent donations include a computer, computer programs, and a file cabinet from Ken Romney. John Jones also donated a computer and a printer. We now have a second workstation in the office for volunteers and an off-site location for land management. Thank you!

Now, for our next request: Does anyone have a canoe they are willing to donate? As our outreach and educational programs grow, our need for canoes has become urgent. If you have one that you no longer use, we can put it to good use.

Emma Commodore vs. ACLT, et al.

Being served with a summons and complaint is generally an unpleasant experience but this is good news and an excellent introduction to this report on the status of the proposed Commodore acquisition. The suit by one of the heirs of William H. Commodore, deceased, joins ACLT

and the other heirs in an action to determine who owns the 2 adjacent tracts (20+ acres each) on Parkers Creek Road and to appoint a trustee to sell the Commodore property and compensate the heirs.

The Board of County Commissioners has submitted a Resource Management Improvement Grant proposal to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources for \$37,500 to provide approximately one-half of the anticipated cost of this purchase. ACLT has agreed to advance costs related to the suit and the requirements of the grant, which will be reimbursed at settlement, and to pay the balance of the purchase price. The end goal of these complicated proceedings is to clear ACLT's title to the 20+ acres of the Russell tract (purchased in 1990) situated on Parkers Creek Road and to allow ACLT to take title to the adjacent Commodore tract. This will allow us to open trails to the hills on the Russell tract that overlook Parkers Creek.

Where do we stand in the effort to raise our share of the purchase price? The combination of funds donated in response to the Spring Appeal letter and to the Aileen Hughes Memorial Fund gives us approximately \$25,000. In addition, we have received a gift of stock valued at \$5,500. With settlement projected to take place in the fall, we are confident that we will have the funds necessary to provide our match for the purchase. Assuming that all the pieces come together with the grant and the suit, this will probably be ACLT's final land purchase and will bring Aileen's many years of doing the groundwork to a successful conclusion.

—Ralph Dwan

Cultural Resources Survey in Parkers Creek

The ACLT has received a grant for \$27,500 from the Maryland Historical Trust to conduct a survey of prehistoric and historic cultural resources in the Parkers Creek watershed. This archeological survey will be carried out in close cooperation with Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum (JPPM).

The grant funds the first phase of what is hoped will be a multi-phase activity. A sense of the full range of possible discoveries is suggested by the following paragraph from the introduction to the survey plan:

The watershed is noted for its natural resources but has also witnessed a long succession of human occupation. Local farmers have collected stone tools, European ceramics, and other items. Augustine Hermann located the town of Warrington at the mouth of Parkers Creek on his 1673 map. The county's first Quaker meeting house was located near the creek at "the Cliffs." Generations of farmers, landholders, tenants, and pound-net fisherman have lived in the watershed or used its resources.

The survey will be carried out by archeologist Matthew Reeves. Professional guidance will be provided by Kirsti Uunila, Calvert County's Historic Preservation Specialist and research staff member of JPPM. Matt comes to us from Syracuse University where he is a Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology. He and his wife Tanya have

moved to North Beach and even before our contract was finalized, he had already begun his background research.

This fall Matt will need assistants. If you have an interest in working with Matt and are physically able to handle long, rugged walks and do hand excavation, contact Matt at 410-257-2596. For those less physically inclined, the late spring will bring the need for volunteers to help catalog and wash artifacts.

—Carl Fleischhauer

Hance-Chesley Cemetery and the Calvert Garden Club

The Calvert Garden Club has completed its rehabilitation of the historic Hance-Chesley cemetery on the ACLT property. The project entails not only landscaping and the installation of new benches but will also provide an historic marker and an interpretive brochure. The Calvert Garden Club is an active organization in the county, responsible for landscaping a number of schools and museums as well as contributing to the recent improvements at the courthouse grounds in Prince Frederick.

During the course of the project, with the assistance of local historians Ailene Hutchins, Margaret Prouty, and others, the club developed a history of the cemetery and uncovered some facts about those who are buried there. This history will be outlined in the brochure along with a transcription of the tombstones' epitaphs. The brochure is being designed by club member Barbara Grosvenor.

In brief, the land was once part of Garys Chance, an estate patented in 1666. By the nineteenth century, the Hance family was prominent in the neighborhood. The Hances moved to Battle Creek before 1850 but Hance burials continued in our cemetery until the late 1860s. Through marriage, the Hances were closely allied with the Chesleys, at least four of whom are also buried in the cemetery.

Other members of the Hance family lived at Warrior's Rest, the former Jett property at the mouth of Parkers Creek now owned by the State of Maryland and managed by the ACLT.

Before these details were known, ACLT maps and documents referred to the graveyard as the *Chesley-Hance Cemetery*. The Garden Club has asked, now that the history is better known, that the longer occupation of the Hances be acknowledged by naming the site the *Hance-Chesley Cemetery*.

The Garden Club's brochure concludes with this warm invitation: *Visitors walking the ACLT nature trails are encouraged to rest a moment at this tranquil spot, read the names inscribed upon the stones, and remember those who lived here many years ago.*

—Carl Fleischhauer

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American Chestnut Land Trust, Inc.
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**ANNUAL MEETING
OCTOBER 26**

Dr. & Mrs. David F. Farr
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