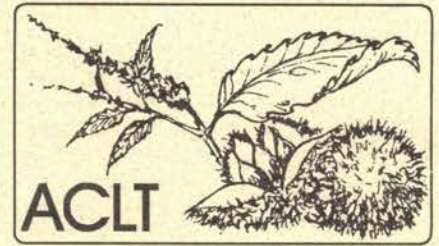


American Chestnut Land Trust, Inc.
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NEWSLETTER

Volume 10 - Number 1

Editors: Ellen and David Farr

Winter 1996

ACLT Annual Report for 1995

The snow deposited by the Blizzard of '96 caused us to cancel the first skeet shoot at Double Oak Farm, but the ACLT trails were ready for cross-country skiers. It also provided me with the opportunity to reflect on what had been achieved in 1995. From my perspective as president, one of the most satisfying accomplishments has been the involvement of so many people. Whether it was the production of the Parkers Creek video, the Earth Day clean-up, Family Day at Double Oak Farm, the Holly Arboretum work project on Warrior's Rest or the events at the annual meeting, members and neighbors showed up to work and to enjoy themselves in the natural beauty that abounds in Calvert County.

Major steps were taken in 1995 toward preserving the Parkers Creek watershed. On the south of the watershed the state acquired Warrior's Rest at the creek's entrance to the Bay, after extended and complex negotiations with the heirs of Dr. Page Jett by representatives of The Nature Conservancy and Maryland's Department of Natural Resources, ACLT board members, and Administrator, Peg Niland. Similarly, ACLT brought together The Nature Conservancy, the state, and the heirs of Dorothy Ward for the purchase of the 116-acre Ward property in the north watershed adjacent to Double Oak Farm. Negotiations proceeded between the state and Dr. Thomas Turner and Mrs. Virginia Somervell for the purchase of conservation easements on their 900-plus acres in the north watershed, further evidence of the leveraging of the conservation advantages gained from ACLT's purchase of Double Oak Farm. We agreed to manage both Warrior's Rest and the Ward property, and have been fortunate to have a family (The Hamiltons) now living in the main house on Warrior's Rest to provide the necessary oversight and hands-on management.

Steady progress was made in 1995 on trail maintenance, the Chesley/Hance Cemetery and boundary marking. Under board member Leslie Starr's initiative, a new trail guide was produced with new names and markings to facilitate hiking and cross-country skiing. The hunting-for-work program was expanded to Double Oak Farm and contacts were made with the hunt clubs

operating on the north side of Parkers Creek. We met our initial debt payments on Double Oak Farm, the first crop (soybeans) was harvested and many improvements were made on that property under the supervision of the board and Peg Niland, who doubles as our resident manager. Finally, we initiated the effort to redesign our forest management plans.

Board of Directors

Ralph H. Dwan, Jr., President
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Caroline E. Van Mason, Secretary
Paul L. Berry, Treasurer
David Farr
Carl Fleischhauer
Florence W. Ford
Edward Greene
Mimi Lacouture
Ewing Miller
Julie Nisonger
Robert Pfeiffer
Leslie Starr
John Mark Switzer
Alan Wilson

—Ralph Dwan, President

Thank you!

In our last newsletter, we listed a few items that we needed to set up a volunteer work station in the office. We are very pleased that the response resulted in not one, but *two* IBM computers. Thanks to Mimi Lacouture and Jack Andrews, we now have a work station for our treasurer and membership volunteers, and have set up a "mini office" at Double Oak Farm—which got a good workout during the snow storms and by the Chespx students. *Remember us when you upgrade your office equipment.*

Volunteer for Free!

Many advocacy groups, such as The Nature Conservancy, are now offering work vacations where, for varying sums of money, someone can spend a week engaged in such activities as pulling weeds or counting insects. Now, you, at absolutely no cost and no need to travel long distances, can participate in projects such as these right here in Calvert County! Whether your interest is flower gardening or construction, tractor driving or letter writing, we have something for you to do. Call the ACLT office to be connected with a volunteer or committee to channel your interest.

—Leslie Starr

ACLT Committees

On March 2, 32 members of ACLT's four principal committees met for a planning and brainstorming session at Double Oak Farm. Each committee set its goals and strategies for 1996. President Ralph Dwan opened the day long event by challenging everyone to strive for programs and activities that would involve more of our members, better serve the general public, and promote sound management of our lands and business operations.

The Land Management Committee

The Land Management Committee met on March 2 as part of ACLT Committee Day. The turnout was high and it was gratifying to see several new faces among the familiar ones. Time was limited, but the committee was able to touch on both items of the agenda, which were the structure of the committee and plans and goals of the various subcommittees.

Mark Switzer recently resigned as chairman of the Land Management Committee after several years of dedication and hard work, for which he is greatly appreciated. We all hope that he will continue to be involved with land management as his time permits. The committee will recommend to board of Directors that Leslie Starr and John Lewis share the position as co-chairmen of this committee, which they are willing to do.

A discussion was held as to how the committee is to be structured, whether by geographical areas such as the different ACLT properties and Warrior's Rest, which ACLT is managing, or by subcommittees, not all of which would apply to all areas. The latter option seems to fit our circumstances better, as subcommittees consist mainly of people with an interest in something which is not necessarily limited to any particular property.

The first subcommittee under discussion was the trails committee since we are entering the mowing and maintenance season. John Hollowell volunteered to continue as tractor maintenance supervisor and partial mower. Others have volunteered and if each tractor-certified person mowed twice a year the trails would remain in excellent shape. A mowing cycle will be established for field edges and fields not being farmed. Other trail projects include stream crossings, one of which is being undertaken by high school students under the auspices of Chespax, and a possible ravine crossing on the Laurel Loop bypassing the Pfeiffer driveway.

Art Cochran succeeded Carl Fleischhauer as chair of the cultural resources subcommittee and will continue with projects such as the Wallace homesite. Dick Simpkins is still chair of the hunting subcommittee and is already working on next year's program. For want of other volunteers, Leslie Starr remains in charge of the chestnut arboretum but would like help with planning and correspondence. Other land management subcommittees in-

clude graveyard beautification and reactivation, security, boundaries, forestry, and nature and wildlife.

In addition to ongoing trail and cultural restoration projects on the original Gravatt parcels, the Land Management Committee wants to develop a stronger ACLT presence at the Kenwood Tract, our southernmost property. Ted Post has been valiantly in charge of land management there for years and we have decided to have a Kenwood Tract work day on June 1. We will work on trails and boundaries and do anything else we can to make this area more attractive to its neighbors.

Outreach/Member Services

This well-attended and enthusiastic group critiqued the activities of last year, planned ways to involve more of our members, and set goals to define a public relations policy and involve our membership with the activities of other similar groups such as Battle Creek Nature Center. The three areas of membership involvement that the group plans to focus on are educational, social and land maintenance. A list of activities already scheduled are on another page for you to keep for handy reference.

—Alan Wilson

Land Acquisition

And Preservation Committee

The Land Acquisition and Preservation Committee (LAPC) met to discuss committee goals for 1996 and to develop some specific strategies to achieve them. We settled on five goals for this year. The first is to update the ACLT five year plan. Last updated in 1991, the plan expressed the ACLT's areas of emphasis during the next five years, outlines some clear objectives and identifies the groups or individuals responsible for overseeing progress. The second major goal is to develop a Master Plan for Land Management. We now have five separate forestry management plans for each of the five properties we have purchased and recorded into the county's Agricultural Preservation Program. In addition, Bob Pfeiffer's committee is developing a plan for Warrior's Rest, which the ACLT is managing for the State. Our intention, which incorporates the strong direction provided by our membership through the survey last September and at the Annual Meeting is to develop one integrated plan for all properties under our ownership, management and influence. Our over-arching purpose will be to create an integrated plan for total ecosystem (watershed) management. Our third goal is to improve the coordination between the ACLT, County, State and other interested land trusts and organizations to insure that we have a shared vision and understanding of our management purposes for the watershed. The fourth goal is to identify LAPC leadership and membership for the next several years.

And finally, there was considerable discussion that as we, the State and others complete our purchases, and as the ACLT becomes responsible for greater amounts of land, that we need to adjust our focus more towards land management. Our final goal, therefore, is to consider how the ACLT should adjust its focus over the next several years to devote more energy to land management. Specifically, we need to incorporate this thought into the update of our five-year plan, and to consider funding sources to support land management activities.

—Gary Loew

Warrior's Rest Update

The Warrior's Rest Management Committee has been meeting throughout the winter in this the first year of what we anticipate will be a long-term relationship with the Department of Natural Resources and the private landowners throughout the Parkers Creek watershed. Recognizing that the property was purchased with funds dedicated to protecting endangered species and wildlife habitat, the committee has been developing the required use documents for groups or individuals interested in conducting research for educational activities, developing reforestation plans for several fields and identifying specific projects that can be addressed with a limited budget.

This past fall we held the first of many work days. The group worked to recover the holly arboretum which was suffering from years of neglect. One of the most outstanding private plantings in the nation, this arboretum could serve as a "library" for horticulturists throughout the region. With the recovery efforts well on the way, the next work day is scheduled for March 23 at 9:00, with a rain date of March 30.

The reforestation efforts are designed to close the tree canopy to provide habitat for forest interior dwelling birds. At present there are several large fields that, while they have not seen aggressive agricultural use, they were mowed to maintain the openings. In an effort to "jump start" the succession of trees with the abandonment of a field, we will make application of the county's Critical Area reforestation program for fall at which time specific areas will be targeted to receive young nursery raised saplings. All work will be performed by professionals as directed by Critical Area regulations.

We would certainly welcome participation from anyone interested in this project. If you would like to join the committee, receive further information on our efforts or know of an educational or research group that might be interested in gaining access to the Parkers Creek watershed, please contact the office at 586-1570.

—Robert Pfeiffer

Treasurer's Report

submitted by David Farr

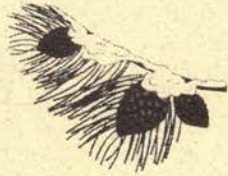
ACLT Expenses 1995	
Administration/Fundraising	
Accounting	1,800.00
Bank Charges	330.58
Equipment Repair	187.75
Fund Raising	50.00
Insurance	4,884.00
Misc.	326.53
Occupancy	2,213.00
Postage/Shipping	485.79
Salary/Benefits	8,389.03
Supplies	1,407.69
Telephone	2,037.41
Administration/Fundraising subtotal	22,111.78
Land Acquisition/Preservation	
Appraisals/Surveys	1,452.50
Committee Materials	14.40
Land Purchase	38,750.00
Legal	600.00
Michael House Occupancy	4,420.00
Presentation Materials	4,358.50
Salary/Benefits	20,817.52
Taxes	1,084.94
Warrior's Rest	979.13
Land Acquisition/Preservation subtotal	72,476.99
Land Management	
Equipment O & M	115.68
Forestry Management	3,797.09
Salary/Benefits	4,163.62
Land Management subtotal	8,076.39

Outreach/Member Service	
Dues	1,480.00
Meetings/Training	1,719.14
Outreach	884.72
Postage/Supplies	1,113.85
Printing/Publication	1,470.29
Salary/Benefits	8,268.58
Subscriptions	96.00
Outreach/Member Service subtotal	15,032.58
Total	117,697.74

ACLT Income 1995	
Contributions	36,396.03
Grants/Restricted	21,500.00
Grants/Unrestricted	3,800.00
Interest Earned	2,998.08
Membership Dues	13,605.00
Merchandise Sales	160.00
Misc.	5,076.25
Michael Prop	10,950.00
TDRs	2,500.00
Total	96,985.36
Assets in Checking/Savings Accounts	62,652.19

Notes from the Land ...

When asked to give a personal reflection on their experiences as tenant caretakers on Warrior's Rest and Double Oak Farm, Leigh Hamilton and Peg Niland shared a glimpse of two special places they each call "home."



Winter's End

The mice are in my oven mitt,
while the fox is in the barn.
The deer are grazing in the field,
all the birds will soon be warned ...

As the hawk flies keenly overhead
watching all that's on the ground.
Eagles soar, owls roost,
aware of every sound.

The Old Squaw chatter in the mist
on many foggy days,
We see the tugboats, ships and barges
up and down the Bay.

An opossum came one afternoon—
hung by his rat-like tail.
He borrowed some birdseed, suet and such,
then wandered on his way.

Fond of us he must have been,
'cause back again he came.
Up onto the patio
asking to come in.

Witch Hazel blooms unusual,
bright yellow in the sun.
Warm weekends are to tease us,
a taste of Spring to come.

Magnolia buds are ever swelling,
Crab apples leafless, ready and waiting.
Many lovely Hollies,
still desperately need saving.

All is well at Warrior's Rest,
peaceful, quiet, not distressed.
A sampling of the World's beauty,
surely at it's best.

Leigh Hamilton

Life at Double Oak Farm

Rambunctious raccoons, devastating deer, heartless hunters, terrifying trespassers, preposterous poachers, hellacious heat, slinking snakes, ever-falling evergreens, torn tractor tires, monstrous mosquitos, tenacious ticks, repugnant repairs, gargantuan grasses and a blinding blizzard—ramblings of an unpleasant experience? Not for a moment! Merely a few exciting challenges in the pursuit of an adventure well worth the effort.

It's been nearly 18 months since I moved into the hunting lodge at Double Oak Farm—our most northern and isolated property. The purpose of my tenancy was to provide security, reinstate its use as a "farm," carve out a few trails, make or oversee improvements to the lodge, begin its transformation to a conference center, and open the property and facilities to our members and the general public. All I wanted was to end my 50 minute commute from my home in Annapolis and spend more time outdoors—the match was perfect.

Never could I have imagined what joy would come from my new-found lifestyle. The ticks, poachers, heat and snow have become a welcomed contest graced by the beauty of nature, the silence of the woods that speaks so loudly to the soul, physical demands that make you feel truly alive, and the strengthening of friendships and the development of new camaraderies.

Just as I thought my daughters were grown, their holiday breaks from college have given me one more chance to see their wide-eyed wonder as the magic of nature unfolds before them. None of us will ever forget "Rudolph" jumping over the car hood on Christmas Eve! It came as quite a surprise to my youngest, Diana, to learn that turkeys really can fly and don't look at all like Mr. Purdue's. While she and I have clambered for table tops, her older sister Beth squeals with delight when she discovers a snake or squirrel has moved in with us. "Farming" our one-acre disaster of a garden may have seemed great to its recipients at our Family Day picnic, but a lesson in hard work and reality (other than a few remaining jars of tomatoes and bags of zucchini) proved to be a humbling experience.

When I see the bubbling streams headed for Parkers Creek, the owl who escorts me in and out of the lane, the emergence of soybeans, and the eagles soar; hear and spring frogs and the return of the robin; or feel the welcomed relief of rain on my face, I know the ACLT and I have made a very wise bond with nature, the land and the future. As the original architects of ACLT said: "Undeveloped land is not so much an inheritance from previous generations as a loan from future ones entrusted to us for safekeeping."

—Peg Niland

What's Happening

- | | | |
|----------|-----------------------------|---|
| March 23 | 9:00 am
1:00 pm | Board Meeting - Double Oak Farm
Warrior's Rest Arboretum Cleanup |
| April 6 | 2:00 pm | Explore the trails at Double Oak Farm - Go "off trail" to find new routes for future trails. |
| April 20 | 9:00 am
12:30
1:30 pm | EARTH DAY '96
Picnic at Double Oak Farm
Ward Property Cleanup |
| April 21 | 9:00 am | Spring Nature Walk - After the rigors of Earthday, treat yourself to a gentle spring ramble on ACLT trails. Join ACLT naturalists for spring flowers - the most delicate of any season and migrating birds from Central American heading here and points north. Meet at ACLT Parking Lot. |
| May 5 | 9:00 am | Nature Hike and Migratory Bird Watch - This walk features migrating neotropical birds in their colorful mating plumage. Meet at ACLT Parking Lot. |
| May 11 | | Migratory Bird Count - Your help is need! - You don't have to be a bird expert - This is the national annual migratory census and we need "counters" from here to Kenwood Beach. Call Sue Hamilton, area coordinator, at 535-1494 for more information. |
| May 11 | 1:00 pm | Tree ID with John Zyla, naturalist from Battle Creek Nature Center. This popular event will help you learn how to identify different species of trees. Meet at ACLT Parking Lot. |
| June 1 | 9:00 am | Volunteer Trail Maintenance Day at Kenwood Beach property - Roll up your sleeves for a real trail blazing event! Call the ACLT office for more details. |
| June 22 | Noon-4:00 | FAMILY DAY PICNIC |

Around the county. . .

- | | | |
|----------|----------|---|
| March 26 | 7:00 pm | Calvert County Comprehensive Plan special presentation to the farm community. This is an ideal opportunity for ACLT members to hear specifics about the proposed plan. Calvert Pines. |
| April 20 | 10-5:00 | Annmarie Garden's "Gardenfest" with an ACLT presentation by Elaine Dunkle at 3:00 pm. |
| and 21 | 11-4:00 | ACLT presentation by Mimi Lacouture and Allan Wilson at 3:00. |
| April 27 | 10:30 am | Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust Annual Meeting- Battle Creek Nature Center. Call Ewing Miller, 410-586-9418 for reservations. |

Earth Day 1996

Western Shores, Governors Run, Kenwood Beach,
Scientists Cliffs, Parkers Creek
and the Southern Maryland Hunt Club II

Plans are underway for the fifth annual *six*-community clean up and picnic. After the 9 am to 12 noon cleanup, we will gather at Double Oak Farm for a picnic. We're adding a new community this year, the "hunting community," and we will have a *second clean up* after lunch of the former Ward property which adjoins Double Oak Farm. Members of the Southern Maryland Hunt Club II have volunteered to help us remove the "dump" from the property recently purchased by The Nature Conservancy and now under our management. We hope many of our long-time volunteers will stay to assist our neighbors with this effort.

ACLT Hayride & Greens Gathering

ACLT held its first annual Hayride and Greens Gathering Day at Double Oak Farm on December 9. We were spared the rains of early morning and the bonfire and hot cider kept everyone warm and in good spirits.

Double Oak was decorated for the occasion with holly and evergreens. The trees and shrubs around the house were draped with white lights. It felt like we were in a winter wonderland.

Wilson Freeland provided the tractor and flatbed and took ACLT members and guests through the fields of Double Oak Farm and up and down Double Oak Road. John Prouty of the Calvert Farmland Trust provided the hay for the occasion. It's nice to have such good friends.

As we gathered around the bonfire, we feasted on chili, hot pretzels, bagels and roasted Chestnuts (just as in the song). The greens were plentiful and everyone went home with natural decorations for their fireplace mantels and staircases.

As always we hope more of our ACLT members will join us next year for this event. We had a great time and would like to share the fun with more of you.

Connections

Last year, the ACLT and the Plum Point Environmental Lane Trust (PPELT) received a \$1,500 grant for the Conservation Fund's American Greenways Program to study the feasibility of a five and one half mile greenway connection between ACLT's Double Oak Farm south of Dares Beach Road and the Neeld Farm north of Plum Point Road. The Neeld Farm, to be called "the Bay Tract," is in the final stage of contract negotiations for purchase by PPELT for preservation and public access.

Fortunately, the two trusts received a call from Linda Sjaardema of the Chespx program advising us that this year's Maryland Envirothon project was to be on the subject of greenways and requesting our assistance. The Envirothon is a statewide competition involving high school students, working with career professionals in the resource conservation field, to design a problem solving project and work to solve it. Peg Niland and I were elated to find out we had thirty willing volunteers to help us with our greenway study and eagerly accepted the challenge!

A training session was hosted by ACLT on February 28, 1996 at Double Oak Farm. Randi Vogt and Sherrod Sturrock of the County's Open Space Committee were on hand to educate the students about the County's overall open space plans. Steve Stadelman from the DNR Forest Service, Jeff Tewell of the Collinson, Oliff and Associates, Inc. engineering firm, and Pam Bush of the Maryland Environmental Trust as well as ACLT volunteers Leslie Starr, Lynn Redmon, and Mimi Lacouture and PPELT volunteer Gay Ludington were on hand to provide technical assistance on such topics as natural resource

inventories, reading topographical maps, practical trail building considerations and public opinion survey techniques. Five teams of students have been organized and will work on four projects, including: designing a trail from Plum Point Road through the Bay Tract, conducting public opinion surveys in neighborhoods near the proposed greenway route and constructing a stream crossing on ACLT property. The five teams will compete at the county level on April 25th and then proceed to the statewide Envirothon. Whether we conclude that a greenway connection is or is not feasible, Peg and I have concluded that this will be a win-win project for the students and the land trusts.

—Karen Edgecombe

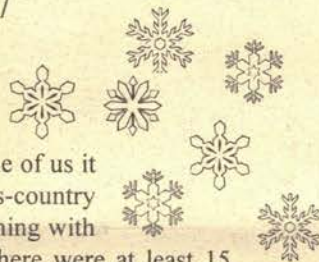
Winter Dreams

[Editor's Note: Skiers bundled up against the weather may only be recognizable from the color of their clothing. "Purple Woman" offers her observations and notes contributed by fellow skiers in person and through the sign-up sheet in the ACLT parking lot.]

While most Marylanders had had their fill of winter weather early in January, for some of us it was a dream come true: Cross-country skiing on the ACLT trails. Beginning with the first blizzard on January 7 there were at least 15 days in the next six weeks when conditions were favorable for this wonderful winter sport. The ACLT trails are perfect for skiers of all levels of ability, as the terrain ranges from flat fields to steep hills with gentle slopes in between. For this volunteer, who picks up sticks from the trails in the heat of August with an eye to the remote possibility of cross-country skiing, this winter was gratifying both in the amount of snowfall and in the numbers of skiers (at least 15) who used the trails.

After a night of snow and gale force winds it sleeted all day Sunday, January 7. This skier braved the beach at Scientists' Cliffs but could only go south due to the whipping winds and stinging sleet. It wasn't as windy on the ACLT Gravatt tract and some other skiers had already been out, but for most of the first couple of days skiing consisted of "breaking trail", making tracks in the deep snow. Breaking trail is arduous, but it's always more fun the second time around when you can glide faster and actually get up some speed.

More people were out skiing on Monday, January 8, a day of moderate snow, and a couple of good downhill runs were established, notably the Bloodroot trail down to Gravatt Stream Crossing. The steep downhill on Gravatt Lane, also sometimes know as Garbage Dump Hill, had ski tracks on it but for this writer this hill was the scene of this winter's most memorable wipe-out. (Falls are routine



when cross-country skiing and are usually painless, especially with the amount of snow we had. Peter Vogt conducted a study of marks left by fallen skiers in an attempt to determine who had been where.) Late Monday the weather cleared up for awhile and the snow was beautiful in the slanted afternoon light.

On Tuesday, January 9, the predicted flurries turned into another whole day of snow. Several skiers came out to enjoy the main trails on the Gravatt Tract and the possibility of converting the Wallace house into a warming hut was discussed. Favorite destinations for skiers were the benches installed last fall by John Lewis on Gravatt Lane and the Ghost Hill extension of Bloodroot Trail. A trek across the East tract revealed no signs of humans but other beings were present: a squirrel carcass serving as some raptor's lunch was draped across a fallen log, although the diner had momentarily vanished.

By Wednesday afternoon, January 10th temperatures had warmed up enough to cause snow to stick to skis, not conducive to gliding, but the action resumed on the weekend after more sleet and snow on Friday the 12th. Saturday's snow was a little too crusty to slide in but by Sunday conditions were prime. At least ten people visited the trails, including first-time skier Art Cochran who had just finished making skis in his basement.

In mid-January it became warm and rainy and it seemed that things had returned to normal weatherwise, but on Friday February 2nd the snow started again and so did the skiing. The full moon on February 4th lured one winter sports fanatic to the trails on what may have been the coldest night of the year. Lows were in the single digits. The combination of snow and moonlight was breathtaking, as was the arctic air. This same weekend the bay had frozen enough for Peter and Jason Vogt to ski up the beach to Parker's Creek, alternating between ice and snow-covered sand.

This snow, too, melted, but two weeks later on Friday, February 16th another significant snow occurred. A few skiers were on the ACLT trails, but by now the novelty had worn off and some equipment had worn out: a former ACLT board member experienced boot delamination and had to hobble home ignominiously. The snow was stickier and didn't last as long.

Some parts of Maryland got enough snow on March 8th for cross-country skiing, but apparently the season in Southern Maryland ended in mid-February. Maybe we'll have better luck next year!

—Purple Woman



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