

Now that we have the initial chores of corporate organization behind us, our next efforts will be directed towards: (1) fund raising, (2) negotiation of the land purchase, (3) development of a land management plan and (4) application for designation as an Agricultural Preservation District. The first two meetings of the Board of Directors following the new year were devoted principally to organization of fund raising efforts and the land purchase. We have since begun personal contacts of potential contributors, established a negotiating committee and initiated an independent appraisal of the property.

If any of our members would like to be involved in any of these efforts or to contribute suggestions we welcome your participation or thoughts at any time.

Some contributors have inquired about plans for specific future uses of the land such as a potential location for a sewage treatment plant, an environmental education center or an arboretum. At this time there are no restrictions on our planning other than those in our charter which specify that the land must be used, ". . . for the benefit of the general public and for charitable, educational, recreational, conservation, scientific and historical purposes." Those comments that have been received will be furnished to the land planning committee. Those of you with ideas are welcome to participate, to send them to the ACLT or to communicate them to any member of the board.

Contributions to the Escrow Account

Many of the ACLT supporters who have pledged, and some who have already contributed, have indicated that they prefer to make their contribution to the ACLT Escrow Account. The monies in this account are held in "escrow" by the escrow agent (the Calvert Bank and Trust Co.) and may only be used for purchase of the land. These contributions will be returned to the contributors by the agent if the ACLT fails to obtain 501(c)(3), non-profit, status or is unable, for any reason, to purchase the property. These contributions do become charitable contributions at the time they are released to the ACLT to purchase the property. If you wish to contribute to the Escrow Account we will send you a copy of the Escrow Agreement, a contributor's Escrow Statement and a bank (W-9) form. You should return the statement and the bank form with your contribution. If you have any questions about contributions you may call Ralph Dwan, President, at (202) 547-2700 (day) or (202) 546-7668 (evening) or Gary Loew, Treasurer at (202) 272-0299 (day) or (301) 257-3833 (evening). If you wish the forms, or other material please write or call.

Tax Benefits

Some persons have elected to contribute stock or other assets to the ACLT in order to realize the tax benefits of these contributions. [The contribution is valued at current market price, but the contributor does not declare the capital gains incurred since purchase of the asset. Note that the new tax law reduces the savings from this form of contribution in 1987.] We are able to receive such contributions and welcome them as well as cash contributions.

Volunteers

As is true of any organization managed by volunteers there is plenty of opportunity to help. Now is an excellent time to join our efforts: the resources we create and the plans we make during the next year will establish the direction of the ACLT for years in the future. We need a newsletter editor, assistance with fund raising and a land planning committee. Please let us know if you would like to participate.

All About The Land - Part I

We have devoted most of our space in this first newsletter to business and fund raising concerns. Let us now turn our thoughts to the land we are trying to preserve.

We call this property "undeveloped", and indeed there are no permanent structures to be found. But in fact nature has already "developed" the property with thousands of plants and animals. Compared to areas of similar size on the Atlantic Coastal Plain these 450 acres are remarkably diverse in topography, soils and vegetation. The plant diversity is due largely to variations in underlying geology, water table, direction of slope and past farming and timbering. We can imagine the land as a rolling tapestry into which man and nature have together woven a complex design. This magic carpet changes with the seasons and years and is packed with stories to be told, experiences to be lived and questions to be asked.

In succeeding issues of the ACLT newsletter we will share our present knowledge of the fascinating natural features of the land and its inhabitants. Likely topics include botany, ornithology, zoology, mycology, ecology, geology and other "ologies; plus cultural topics like land use, history, forestry, agriculture, outdoor recreation and crafts and hobbies. In the botanic area we already have an inventory of vascular plants, prepared in 1986 by Dr. Steven Hill. Highlights from his report will be presented in a later newsletter.

We envisage close cooperation with the nearby Battle Creek Nature Education Society (BCNES) and encourage ACLT members to read "The Peeper" as the best source on Calvert County nature lore. Some field trips held in conjunction with courses offered at the Battle Creek Nature Center will take place on the larger ACLT property which includes a much more extensive upland forest than does the Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Nature Sanctuary.

Once the land is acquired the ACLT will want to prepare accurate maps of topography, trails, soil and vegetation types and land-use categories (wildlife preserve, forestry, arboretum, etc.). To the extent feasible this and other information will be integrated into a computerized data base for easy accessibility and response to member interest. If this sounds like the ACLT's only purpose is a data center for local nature facts, relax!. Providing you with a chance to enjoy the peace of the forest away from civilization may be an even more important purpose.

Also on the land trust wish list is an annotated collection of photos or slides depicting natural features on the property (plants, animals, people, snowstorms, sunsets, you name it.) The slide collection would be available for ACLT or BCNES programs or member use. Anybody who already has such slides or prints is urged to sort through and have some annotated duplicates made for the collection. If you don't know what flower or fungus you photographed we will locate someone who does.

Finally, a year or two down the trail we see the need for a natural history pamphlet describing the property for reference and teaching purposes. This pamphlet would include a trail map, a condensed wildlife inventory, a reference list for further reading, a list of charter members willing to be acknowledged and a history of the ACLT which might prove valuable to other groups interested in emulating our venture.

The above projects are interesting, inexpensive, valuable and fun but they do take time and effort. If you think you might find such work rewarding, can suggest other ACLT projects, would like a guided walking tour or would like to contribute an article, contact any board member or write to the ACLT.

The next installment of this series will focus on the shape of the land, the topography, and its geology--how and when our landscape was shaped. This article will form a foundation for later installments on the creatures which have colonized this land surface.

Since 1940
Calvert

Independent



Public Land Trust Formed

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Citizen Initiative Here Is First in State

by **Sande Kimball**
Staff Writer

In an attempt to preserve rapidly disappearing undeveloped land in the Washington D.C. environs, a Calvert County citizen conservation group has formed a public land trust to purchase a 440-acre parcel near Scientists' Cliffs Road. The property, which includes the largest known living American Chestnut in the state, will be used for scientific study and natural resources education programs.

One million dollars is the goal set by the American Chestnut Land Trust (ACLT) to acquire the land that contains the watersheds of Parker's Creek, Governor's Run and Battle Creek.

Thus far in the campaign about 900 letters soliciting support have been mailed and more are planned. ACLT Secretary Dr. Edward Hacskaylo, a plant physiologist, said

this is the first such citizen conservation initiative in Maryland. There are about 450 land trusts in the United States and most of these are in California and the Northeast.

Since 1985 an ad hoc environmental preservation committee has been looking at the possibility of acquiring the land which was owned in part by Mrs. Annie R. Gravatt and Mrs. Margaret Miles. Gravatt died in May and since that time the committee has been actively surveying funding methods and in the interest of nearby residents in purchasing the land for a preservation.

According to information from the ACLT, the executor of the estate has agreed to look at an offer from the citizens' group but stipulated a serious offer must be made by February 1987.

Hacskaylo said that although people in the Scientists' Cliffs area had taken the initiative, the trust is made

up of many others with an interest in land preservation.

There are three parcels in the package—290 acres and 50 acres located northwest of Scientists' Cliffs' Road and a 100-acre parcel southeast of the road. A botanical survey documents this area with 345 species of plants, several rare and on the endangered species list. The environs is also haven for a large variety of birds and wildlife.

Committee members have spoken with county and state officials as well as with representatives of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Maryland Environmental Trust and the Nature Conservancy, which owns and leases the Battle Creek Cypress Swamp to the county. The Bay Foundation and Nature Conservancy have indicated a willingness to assist with financing.

About 70 supporters have pledged amounts ranging from \$2,500 to

\$15,000 each. The non-profit ACLT has made application to the Internal Revenue Service to be approved as a tax-exempt organization. Donations deductible upon this approval.

The \$1 million goal was based on undeveloped, but developable land in Calvert County selling at \$2,500 an acre.

Once the land is acquired, operation funds will be gathered through contributions, annual membership dues and sale of timber.

The ACLT claims preservation of this land would not only provide security to the residents living in the area but would be an economic enhancement increasing the value of property adjacent to it, similar to park land.

Other officers and directors of the

ACLT are Ralph H. Dwan Jr., president; Peter Vogt, vice president; Gary A. Loew, treasurer; Frank R. Caldwell Jr., Austin F. Canfield Jr., Elaine V. Cochran, Donald C. Dahmann;

Oliver S. Flint Jr.; John R. Jones, Don Kollmorgen, Daniel Priest, Norman E. Prince, Joseph Steller Jr., John Mark Switzer and Caroline E. Van Mason.

Persons interested in making contributions or desiring additional information should direct inquiries to American Chestnut Land Trust Inc., P.O. Box 204, Port Republic, Md. 20676.