

American Chestnut Land Trust, Inc.
Post Office Box 204
Port Republic, MD 20676



NEWSLETTER

Volume 3 - Number 3

Editors: Ellen and David Farr

Summer 1993

Advance Notice of Annual Meeting Saturday, October 30

This year, ACLT's seventh Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, October 30, at Christ Church on Broomes Road in Port Republic. Coffee and registration at 9:30 a.m. will be followed by the business meeting at 10 a.m. A catered picnic lunch will be served at noon. Board members again will offer guided tours of your choice of trails in the afternoon. We are pleased that The Honorable Louis L. Goldstein, Comptroller of the State of Maryland, neighbor and good friend of ACLT will be with us as principal speaker. Please mark your calendars today to save the date. Reservation forms for the meeting and luncheon will be sent out with the Fall Newsletter at the end of September. Weather and fall colors have been glorious for the past six years. If you can volunteer to help with the set up and clean up of tables and chairs, registration or flower arrangements on the 30th, please call the office at (410)586-1570. We look forward to a good turnout again this year.

Settlement on Wallace Tract at Hand

We have just received word that the Circuit Court has approved ACLT's purchase of 49 acres of woodland in the Estate of Cephas Wallace on the west side of Scientists' Cliffs Road at the north end of our property. These woods lie behind the residential properties along the roadside. Our negotiations with the Wallace family that began four years ago have now come to fruition. Since Cephas Wallace died without a will some years ago, a number of heirs holding varying degrees of ownership interest in the property have emerged. Until the estate was put under the jurisdiction of the Circuit Court, there was no one person who had the authority to act in their collective best interests. Only after a trustee was appointed by the Court could we begin to move toward settlement. The Wallace property is in two parcels, 18 and 31 acres respectively, separated by a 41+-acre forested tract owned by ACLT member, Joseph Showalter. With the cooperation of the Showalters and the Trustee, all 90 contiguous acres of this forest land has been placed in the County Agricultural Preservation Program. Now, with forestry management plans in effect, ACLT will receive transferable devel-

opment rights to help offset the costs and protect the new lands as open space in perpetuity. ACLT's nearly adjacent protected holdings between Western Shores and Parkers Creek now totals 647 acres. (We started in 1987 with 439 acres.) In the same geographical area, there are close to 450 additional acres in private ownership that have been protected as open space in a variety of ways.

Call a Friend and Do a Good Turn for Bay Country

ACLT's members care about the health of the Chesapeake and its watersheds and the wise preservation of woods and cropland. If each member will call just one friend or associate, tell them about our goals, and bring them along as new members, we will reach an important goal in 1993—doubling our membership.

Watch for a letter within the next few days telling you more about how you can do this or call the ACLT office at (410) 586-1570 for brochures.

Along the Trails

Among our most ardent bird watchers are Joe Turner and Leslie Starr who regularly report their sightings on the Gate Registration sign-in sheets. In early May, they were to sight white-eyed, red-eyed and yellow throated vireos, the hooded, parula, pine, black and white warblers as well as catbirds, towhees and the ovenbird. In late May, they were to see a blue gray gnat catcher in the bittersweet, a pair of summer tanagers near the arboretum and field and chipping sparrows along the field and lane. On an early June foray, a young barred owl was spotted in a hollow tree. In a single day in mid-July, the Turners were to sight 33 species of birds and, in the arboretum, four pileated woodpeckers in one dead tree! These same sheets in the sign-in box are a wealth of information of things to look for—when and where you might find the lady slippers and showy orchis that line the streams in Spring or when the blackber-

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ries and blueberries are ripe for picking in the Summer. Some may even be willing to share with you their knowledge of when and where morels might be found.

Merrill Wilcox and son, Everett, of Gainesville, Florida, returned again this year to nurture and care for the evergreen trees they planted in the clear-cut area near the arboretum. Their unusual trees, planted among the loblollies, can most easily be identified by their bamboo stakes.

We still need more volunteers to help keep the chestnut arboretum under control. We do want to continue our cooperative effort with the American Chestnut Foundation to help develop a blight resistant strain of this magnificent tree and reintroduce it to the eastern forests. Please call Sandy Roberts, (410)586-1791, or the office, 586-1570, if you can put in some time at your convenience to maintain your own small section of the grove. This spring's volunteer clean-up effort really paid off, but fallen tubes need to be reset and dead trees have to be replaced on an on-going basis.



The Cabin Garden

Joanne Hildebrand's green thumb is in evidence in and around the Land Trust Cabin. White Sweet Alyssum now edges the walkway, marigolds have been added for color while the perennial Brown-eyed Susans contributed by the Roger Fusons are showy replacements for Spring bulbs. Joanne donated herbs and an English rose. The hardy organe tree was a gift from Pete Atkinson (Joe Atkinson's son), a horticulturalist for St. Elizabeth's. Joe Mihursky's dad provided welcome help with the task of cutting back the bamboo encroaching into the border. Some unusual flowers and grasses have been added for interest and to encourage birds to the garden. If you would like to make contributions of plant material to the cabin borders or have an hour or two to help with weeding or watering, please call the office, 586-1570, so we may let Joanne know. We'll have no objections whatever if you pull up a few unwanted weeds or crab grass as you chance by. Thanks to all who have taken an interest.

Land Management Committee

The ACLT Land Management Committee held its 1993 spring meeting on Saturday, May 8, a beautiful spring day. Thirteen committee members were present at the start of the meeting at 8:30 a.m. in the ACLT parking lot, although several had dropped out by its conclusion many hours later in the ACLT office. Chairman Mark Switzer did an adroit job of steering the meeting, at which almost all of the thirty-two items on the agenda were covered.

Several matters were discussed and quickly resolved, such as approval to grade the hump in the parking lot drive and have the power lines and poles removed. A more lively discussion ensued over a proposal to remove all of the trees from the entrance drive and field perimeters in order to promote better agricultural practice. This was opposed by some for reasons of aesthetics and habitat preservation. It was noted that the drive was inadequate for the passage of fire equipment as required by the forest management plan. A compromise eventually evolved: to prune the land trees to permit the passage of fire trucks on the inside and tractors on the outside, and to ultimately replace them with more traditional cedar trees.

At this point the meeting became ambulatory and visited sites which were slated for discussion. Land in the chestnut arboretum has been cleared but large debris (logs, etc.) must be removed so that mowing can be done around the trees. The old barn on the white trail will be allowed to continue to sink gracefully into the ground. Drainage adjustments will be made on the trail near the old barn and house to prevent further erosion and to facilitate passage. Restoration of the house was admired and will continue by painting the roof in order to preserve it. The bamboo grove at the old Scientists' Cliffs dump provoked another debate, with suggestions ranging from all-out chemical warfare to eradicate it to cultivation of bamboo shoots as a farmers' market offering. It was agreed that the bamboo must be contained, and some method of eradicating it will probably be pursued. Another subject of some concern was the stream crossing at "White Pine Ford" or "Grand Central" where the red, yellow, and blue trails converge and which was once considered for a culvert. Mark proposed putting down "reno mats" which will lie in the stream bed and permit a vehicle to cross. These mats are soon covered with vegetation and become unobtrusive. A foot bridge will remain over the stream.

Because it was getting warm and late, the meeting moved to the ACLT office where participants revived enough from ginger ale and air conditioning to discuss the final items on the agenda: the old tobacco barn near Scientists' Cliffs Gate C and the graveyard. It was agreed that a modest area around the barn will be cleared (after nesting season) to permit air flow so that tobacco can be dried there this year. Continued research into the issue of graveyard restoration was approved, as well as minor improvements to its access road and a go-ahead for a local garden club to begin restoration and beautification of the existing area. The meeting concluded with some sense of accomplishment and the realization of much work to be done. Many thanks to Mark Switzer and all participants.

—Leslie Starr

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What the Membership List Means

When you are thinking of asking your friends, neighbors, or business associates to join with you in ACLT's efforts to preserve some of the still undeveloped farm and forest land in the Parkers Creek, Govers Run and Battle Creek watersheds of Calvert County, you may find the membership list inserted in this newsletter helpful. Charter (lifetime) Members were essentially ACLT founders who made contributions of \$2500 or more up to the date of settlement in October of 1987. Sustaining Members, also lifetime members, have contributed \$2500 or more since that date. (When the accumulated total of contributions of a regular member reaches \$2500, that member automatically becomes a Sustaining Member.) Memberships of Regular Members are subject to renewal annually with the level of giving ranging from a minimum of \$25 for a basic individual or family membership to as much as \$1000 from our Benefactors.

On this list we have included the names of all Regular Members who first joined or renewed their membership during calendar year 1992 or have renewed their memberships in the last 12 months. Some of those who are listed are subject to renewal now. If you are a Regular Member you will find your last renewal date in the upper right hand corner of your newsletter mailing label. If the date is prior to July 31, 1992, your renewal is now past due.

Many of our Charter and Sustaining members continue to contribute generously to enable ACLT to extend its preservation program beyond the confines of the original Gravatt Properties. Our original investment was in 436 acres of farm and forest land. Today ACLT owns 640 acres, or one square mile. In addition, there are now 420+ nearly contiguous acres of woodlands that have been preserved under private ownership. With your help in recruiting new members, this will continue to grow.

We hope your membership in ACLT continues to be a source of pride.

ACLT to Spread Land Conservation Message to Local Landowners

Late in 1992 the ACLT was awarded a grant of \$8600 by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to build up a database about the Parkers Creek area and to visit local farmers and other owners of undeveloped land, apprising them of the many kinds of opportunities to preserve their land privately. These opportunities include deeding conservation easements simultaneously

to the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) and ACLT (as was done by Dr. and Mrs. George Switzer) or placing their land in an Agricultural Preservation District and selling off Development Rights (as was done by the Wilson Freeland family in the northern part of the Parkers Creek watershed and by Ron and Nelia Talley off Wash Hance Road, near the current ACLT).

While the ACLT and other organizations will seek to purchase key tracts of remaining open land in the Parkers Creek area, it is unlikely that funds will materialize to purchase all the land that needs to be protected. The ACLT's vision for the Parkers Creek area comprises a core park/nature preserve surrounded by a green belt of protected land, variously devoted to farming, forestry, and wildlife protection. This green belt would include a number of privately owned parcels like the Talleys' and the Freelands'. (Privately preserved land is **not** open to the public.) We further envision greenways radiating outward from the Parkers Creek natural area, connecting it to others such as Battle Creek, Flag Ponds and Plum Point.

There are not many places in the world where, as in Calvert County, a landowner can reap cash benefits from his/her farmland or forest land, receive the value of crops and carefully harvested timber, and still retain the land! While the money earned from TDR sales may not be the same as one might get by selling the land for development, \$2500 per acre is still a lot of money. The land can still be sold separately, but in many cases it will be kept in the family and passed on from generation to generation.

When one or another ACLT Board member and Peg Niland visit with landowners, there will be no "hard sell." We will simply share information, explain the ACLT vision for the Parkers Creek area, review the various options for private land conservation, and encourage the owner to consider the benefits of conservation. While land is not really preserved until TDRs are sold or easements donated, we would hope to persuade the owners at least to put the land in the Calvert County Agricultural Preservation Program. This first step is simply a commitment not to develop the land in the next five years. This takes the pressure off for a while and may encourage neighboring owners to do likewise. At the very least, ACLT will learn which way the landowner is leaning as regards his long-term intentions.

—Peter Vogt

Slides and Photos Needed

Along with our final project report to the World Wildlife Fund, we have been asked to submit some photographic slides that are representative of some of ACLT's recent projects and programs and the environment in which they have been undertaken—seedling trees and chestnut trees being planted, the clean-up day rally, the nursery school walk, or memorable things you have seen in the woods and fields or on a canoe trip up Parkers Creek. Any of these may well be appropriate and help tell our story. We can duplicate your slides or make slides from your prints so your originals can be returned to you. Please bring them to the Land Trust Cabin or mail them to P.O. Box 204, Port Republic, MD 20676. Call (410)586-1570 if you have any questions.

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