

Landscapes



News from the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle

Summer 2007

Additional Shepherdstown Battlefield, Other Easements Closed in 2006

In 2006, the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle capped its third straight year of dynamic growth with two conservation easements protecting 59 acres of the Shepherdstown Battlefield. Those two brought the total for 2006 to five easements protecting 473 acres and the grand total over the life of the Land Trust to 20 easements covering 1800 acres (see graph p.2).

Two of the non-battlefield 2006 easements protected land bordering Rattlesnake Run, which was identified by the Land Trust in the 1990s as a priority area and was featured in one of the 2005 easements. The final easement of 2006 covered 106 acres in the southern part of Jefferson County. Likely easements for 2007 include a large one conserving civil war related property in the southern part of Jefferson County as well as several protecting development-threatened land in Berkeley County.

Shepherdstown Battlefield Easements

Miriam Ellis created a conservation easement on her 37-acre farm, and Lew Pamplin and Dianna Mills, on their adjacent 22 acres. The land extends south from the ridge on the southern bank of the Potomac River, about one mile east of Shepherdstown. Fighting occurred on September 19-20, 1862, as Confederate forces fought to stop pursuit by Union forces after the bloody battle of Antietam, just across the Potomac in Maryland.

The National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program and the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board funded the easements, with the assistance of the Civil War Preservation Trust and the Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association.



Easement donors Lew Pamplin and Dianna Mills (right side) and Miriam Ellis with the then Jefferson County Commissioner and Farmland Protection Board member Jane Tabb (far left) overlooking Miriam Ellis's farm following closing of the conservation easements.

A 2005 easement, from Ed and Helen Moore included another 25 acres in the Shepherdstown Battlefield area, and 2004 easements from Sam and Edwina Donley and Shannon and Rene' Donley protected 183 acres on the route from Harpers Ferry to Packhorse Ford.

Stine Easement

The 232-acre easement from Oscar and Janet Stine on their historic farm on Flowing Springs Road in Jefferson County is the Land Trust's largest. Funded in part by the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board and the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the easement protects a key portion of Rattlesnake Run and rolling farmland used for raising beef cattle.

Renaud Easement

Rattlesnake Run also runs through the 76-acre conservation easement that Linda Renaud created on her historic farm off Trough Road, funded by the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board and the NRCS. (An easement on 102 acres closed in early 2007 adjoins the Renaud property and protects an additional portion of Rattlesnake Run.)

Lorber Easement

Tony and Jan Lorber placed their scenic 106 acre farm on Earl Road under easement, funded by the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board.

Landscapes

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of the Eastern Panhandle

Your Partner in Rural Conservation

Our mission is to encourage people to preserve open space and rural landscapes in West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle. We use private, voluntary initiative and education to:

- Preserve the scenic beauty and historic character that have long made our region attractive to people;
- Promote a healthy, balanced local economy by preserving productive farmland and encouraging appropriate development;
- Encourage wise stewardship of the region's natural resources.

We are a private, non-profit, tax-exempt charitable organization incorporated in West Virginia in 1995. Our board is composed of men and women from a variety of backgrounds from Morgan, Berkeley, and Jefferson counties.

We meet monthly at the Martinsburg law firm of Hammer, Ferretti & Schiavoni, and we thank them for opening their office to us.

Board Members

Ron Gunderson, D.D.S.
Barbara Humes
Edward Moore
Grant Smith
Bonnie Stubblefield
Peter Vila

Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle

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LTEP News

The Land Trust in Action

Working to preserve the Eastern Panhandle

New Board Members

Ron Gunderson, D.D.S. graduated from the University of Maryland, Baltimore College of Dental Surgery in 1971. Following graduation, he served in the United States Army Dental Corps where he obtained advanced training as a Prosthodontist and achieved Board Certification in 1979. During his Army career, he served in many clinical teaching and administrative positions, retiring in 1988 with the rank of Colonel.

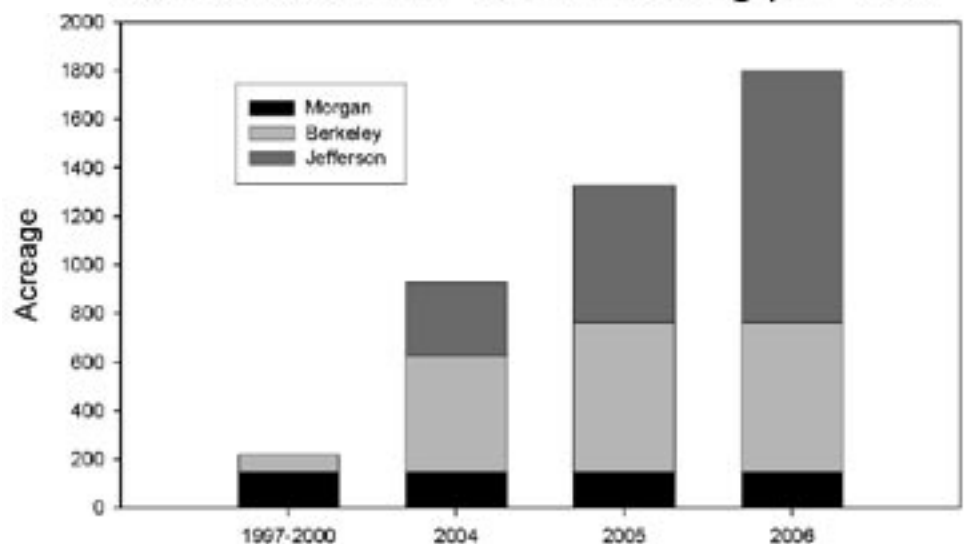
Dr. Gunderson began teaching at the University of Maryland Dental School in 1988 in the Department of Restorative Dentistry, serving the Department and the Dental School in a variety of capacities, including a period as Interim Chair. He was the Director of Pre-Clinical Fixed Prosthodontics for many years. In addition he taught theory and techniques in the area of dental occlusion and fixed prosthodontics and served as a student academic advisor and as a faculty advisor to student organizations. While on the faculty, he and a co-educator invented and patented a dental laboratory device. They co-founded a company, Articulation Innovations LLC, to develop and market the device.

He retired from dental education in 2003 and moved to Hedgesville, West Virginia with his wife, Cindy. Dr. Gunderson commits himself to spending time with family, developing his company, serving his community in various volunteer positions, and working to improve his record as a golfer and fly-fisherman.

Barbara Humes is a native of Martinsburg and graduated from Shepherd College (now Shepherd University). She has a Masters Degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Maryland and has had a career as an educator in the Prince George's County, Maryland, school system and with Montgomery College, Maryland, and has consulted on numerous information management projects. Barbara is currently a program officer with the US Department of Education in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Barbara currently resides in Harpers Ferry and has participated in the following areas of community service: Harpers Ferry Planning Commission, Municipal Liaison to the Jefferson County Planning Commission, Member, Jefferson County Youth Board, Harpers Ferry Comprehensive Land Use Plan Committee, Elk Run Source Water Protection Committee, Member, League of Women Voters, and Member, Berkeley County Historical Society.

Cumulative LTEP Land Holding per Year



Reflections on Conservation

The following article is partially excerpted from Exchange, The National Journal of Land Conservation Vol. 26(1) Winter 2007

Pace of Land Conservation Increases

During 2006 the Land Trust Alliance conducted a National Land Trust Census. The number of land trusts Nationwide as well as the number of acres conserved have increased impressively between 2000 and 2005. The number of state and local land trusts across the country increased 32% from 1263 in 2000 to 1667 in 2005. The number of acres conserved has more than doubled between 2000 and 2005 from 2,514,566 to 6,245,969 acres. The number of land trusts is growing at the fastest rates in states that have large percentages of their land developed and where the amount of natural areas near where people live is declining rapidly. Regionally, the Mid Atlantic was third in the growth of land trusts at 41% behind the Pacific at 51% and the Southeast at 42%. The greatest percent of change in acres protected was in the Southwest with 148% (793,005 acres in 2000 and 1,969,534 acres in 2005), followed by the Southeast with a 140% increase (397,247 acres in 2000 and 952,365 acres in 2005). Large population increases are occurring in the Southeast and Southwest and are believed to be contributing to an interest in conservation.

In the Eastern Panhandle, a similar trend of population growth and an increase in the rate of development has occurred since 2000. Also, a significant increase in the acreage and number of easements has occurred in the Eastern Panhandle since 2000. The bar graph (pg. 2) shows the easements by county, beginning in 1997 with a large increase in 2004. In 2000, the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle (LTEP) held 3 conservation easements protecting 220 acres and by 2005 the number of easements either held or co-held had increased by 12 protecting 1107 acres, a 500% increase. Easements added in 2006 now bring the total number of easements to 20 and 1800 acres protected. The LTEP works in partnership with other organizations, such as the county Farmland Protection Boards, and often co-holds the easements. Conservation easements hopefully will continue to increase in the future. They are important to the Eastern Panhandle helping to protect our drinking water, agricultural land, wildlife habitat, scenic landscapes and natural areas.

In Memorium Mark A. Benedict 1952-2006

We are blessed in our community with many talented people who freely share their knowledge, expertise, and energies. Dr. Mark A. Benedict was one of these talented people who served on the Board of the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle (LTEP) for 6 years. As a scientist, Mark shared his knowledge of ecology, natural resource management, and environmental planning. His experience in Florida in founding a Land Preservation Trust and an Ecosystem Watershed Trust was valuable to the Board. His professional work focused on advancing land and water conservation nationally, and on designing and developing statewide and regional greenway systems. As coauthor on the book "Green Infrastructure", his vision and techniques for conserving landscapes is widely used and shared. Planning networks of green areas is especially important in areas where growth and rapid development are changing the landscape. Mark's concepts have and will continue to benefit the Eastern Panhandle and have been used in Jefferson County's recent Green Assessment.

Mark had passion for conservation of our natural resources, recreational use of our land, and education to appreciate the value of our landscape. His contributions to the LTEP included leadership of the annual easement monitoring program, which allowed those of us who joined him to share in his knowledge. Starting this year, Boy Scouts from Troop 32 that Mark and his son Skylar enjoyed together will join the LTEP monitoring team to review one of the easements as part of a merit badge. The LTEP received many monetary gifts in his memory and the Mark A. Benedict Memorial Fund has been established to support the work of the Land Trust such as equipment to support the monitoring program. Mark will be missed by us all, and he will be remembered for his legacy of conserving the landscapes around him wherever he lived and worked, especially in our community.



Legislature Mandates Study of Land Conservation Funding

In its regular session the West Virginia Legislature adopted a resolution (HCR 48) requesting the Joint Committee on Government and Finance to study "potential funding mechanisms and sustainable sources of revenue to protect and conserve West Virginia's most important unique, natural and rural lands to ensure the quality of life and economic well being of present and future West Virginians." The Land Trust participates in the Coalition of West Virginia Land Trusts, which will assist with the study.

New Federal Tax Benefits for Easement Donors

Congress boosted tax benefits available for donors of conservation easements – particularly farmers -- after August 2006. Previously, a donor could only deduct the value of the donation up to 30 per cent of his or her income, over a maximum of six years; now, the deduction can be up to 50 per cent of income, over 15 years. And a farmer can deduct up to 100 per cent of income.

The new benefit expires at the end of 2007. While land conservation proponents are seeking support for legislation that has been introduced to extend the benefit, individuals considering donating easements should ensure that they are closed by December 31, 2007, to be certain of obtaining the increased deduction. Since negotiation of an easement, preparation of the deed and title search all take time, the process needs to begin immediately to ensure a closing before the end of the year.

Additional information about the tax benefits is available on the Land Trust website, www.landtrustepwv.org, and on the website of the Land Trust Alliance, www.lta.org.

<h2>Support Your Community Conservation Partner!</h2> <p>I would like to support the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle.</p> <p>NAME _____</p> <p>ADDRESS _____</p> <p>CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____</p> <p>PHONE _____</p> <p>FAX/ EMAIL _____</p>	<p>Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> \$500 <input type="radio"/> \$100 <input type="radio"/> \$75 <input type="radio"/> \$50</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Other \$ _____</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Please contact me to discuss protecting my land through the Land Trust.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Please contact me to discuss volunteer opportunities.</p> <p>Mail to: Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle P.O. Box 2240, Martinsburg, WV 25402</p> <p>Visit our Website for more information: www.landtrustepwv.org</p>
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