

Landscapes



News from the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle

Spring 2005

Many New Easements

2004 was a year of real progress in land conservation for The Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle. Along with its partners, the Berkeley and Jefferson County Farmland Protection Boards, and several federal agencies, the Land Trust was instrumental in providing funds to augment the purchase of easements on farmland and historically significant open spaces throughout the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. As we finalize the numbers, it's with great pleasure that we announce that the Land Trust helped place 708 acres in easement in Berkeley and Jefferson counties in 2004.

Berkeley County

In Berkeley County, four properties totaling 405 acres were protected by easements this past year due to the voluntary efforts of the board members of Land Trust and its partners. Utilizing a combination of Federal funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and local funding from the Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board, 210 acres on two properties with an appraised easement value of \$284,000 were protected in perpetuity. Both of these properties are located in the scenic rural area of Back Creek Valley.

Additionally, the Land Trust secured two donated easements in Berkeley County in 2004. A donation of 84 acres of farmland with forest and

ponds was preserved by its generous landowners. Located in a pristine setting adjacent to the Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management Area the property has long been a productive farm. A second easement donation was placed on a 117 acre historic property in the Bunker Hill area. This property has buildings dating back to the 1700's and was originally owned by Charles Morgan, one of Morgan Morgan's sons. This significant property also contains beautiful fields and forests, as well as Torrytown Run.

These land acquisitions will help enable Berkeley County to remain one of the most scenic and beautiful counties in West Virginia.

Jefferson County

In Jefferson County, 303 acres were placed in easement in 2004. Two historically significant properties along Engle Molers and Bakerton Roads outside of Shepherdstown qualified for funding under the American Battlefield Protection Program. Because of their proximity to the scene where General Robert E. Lee's army advanced to and retreated from the Battle of Antietam, the American



117 acres along Torrytown Run in Bunker Hill is now under perpetual protection

Battlefield Protection Program, operating under the National Park Service, awarded these property owners 50% of the appraised value of the easements on their land. In addition to the Civil War Preservation Trust monies, these two Jefferson County properties were also awarded funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and from the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board for the preservation of prime farmland, along with another 120-acre farm nearby.

These three easements not only reveal that farming is alive and well in Jefferson County, but also that it is likely to remain so due to the efforts of the farmers themselves to preserve their land for farming operations.

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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

Mark Benedict
Roger Dailey
Grant Smith
Bonnie Stubblefield
Peter Vila

**Land Trust of the
Eastern Panhandle**
P.O. Box 2240
Martinsburg, WV 25402
304-262-1800
www.landtrustepwv.org

LTEP News

The Land Trust in Action

Working to preserve the Eastern Panhandle

Farmland Protection Boards and WV State Authority

The state of West Virginia continues to make strides in the infrastructure necessary to support future land conservation throughout the state. To date, twelve counties have formed Farmland Protection Boards and eight of these counties have initiated a real estate transfer tax to fund their county program. State-wide receipts from this transfer tax are expected to be almost \$4 million over the next fiscal year, with the majority of these revenues raised by the Eastern Panhandle counties. Federal matching funds of \$1.6 million are also expected to be awarded.

Governor Wise also made the initial appointments to the West Virginia State Authority and these are in process of being confirmed by the West Virginia Senate. The State Authority is enabled under the WV Code to accept conservation easements on farmland anywhere in the state. The State Authority has had an initial meeting, but has not yet developed its program.

We are Now on the Web!

The Land Trust is on the Internet at **www.landtrustepwv.org**.

The new web site will contain information regarding the operation and mission of the Land Trust as well as provide ways for interested landowners to research options for preserving their land. Information is available for viewing and downloading. In addition, you may

communicate directly with the Land Trust in requesting further information, having your name added to the mail list, or having someone contact you regarding conservation options.

Conservation easements are thoroughly discussed, including:

- Why donate an easement?
- How long does a conservation easement last?
- Who owns the land?
- What is the worth of an easement?
- How do I donate an easement?
- What are the Tax Benefits of an Easement?

The Voluntary Farmland Protection Act, passed by the WV Legislature in 2000, is summarized. Historical Land Trust newsletters are available for downloading. A summary of a few of the Land Trust's easements are also provided. We are excited to be able to provide another tool for landowners to be able to obtain the information they need regarding their conservation options.

Visit us at our new site!



Land Trust Unveils New Logo

The Land Trust is proud to present its new logo depicting the mountains, streams and forests of the Eastern Panhandle. The vision of the Land Trust is to promote the protection of our open space, farmland, and our natural and cultural heritage. Our mission is accomplished by providing information to the public to heighten awareness of the value of land conservation and to promote public policies that encourage and enable land conservation. The Land Trust accepts conservation easements on properties in Berkeley, Jefferson and Morgan Counties. The Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) organization that was formed in 1994. As of December 31, 2004, the Land Trust holds or co-holds ten easements covering 928 acres and has \$44,042 in assets. We sincerely thank all of our supporters who have been instrumental in our success.



The Future of Land Conservation

Since its inception in 1995 the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle has helped to preserve a total of 928 acres in the tri-county area. The Land Trust is proud to be a partner with both local and federal agencies in preserving farms, unique vistas, and wooded areas. Of particular importance to property owners is the security represented by having a private, not-for-profit organization like the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle as an easement co-holder. Such organizations provide an additional layer of protection against any future actions by governmental agencies which might seek to undo or challenge a conservation easement.

Our ability to facilitate communications between participants, to find willing property owners, and provide contract services to local boards has been an important contribution to the successful preservation of valuable land in 2004 and this work will continue in 2005. Already the Land Trust has several properties on the brink of easement execution and several more coming down the pike. We are confident that with your help, 2005 will

be a banner year for the continued conservation of one of our most precious asset – land.



83 acres of the Olin Houston Trust adjacent to the Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management area is under permanent protection



The Land Trust co-signed this 75 acre property along Back Creek along with the Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board

Volunteers Needed for Scenic Outdoor Work

As reported in the article in this issue, the Land Trust in 2004 dramatically increased the number of easements it holds or co-holds. We will need help in conducting the annual monitoring visits of these easements. Such visits involve a 1-2 hour tour of the property, usually on foot, to insure that no changes have occurred that contravene the terms of the easement. We try to schedule the work during good weather and to pair a volunteer with an experienced board member. This is an opportunity to see some of the wonderful farms and forests of the Eastern Panhandle. If you are interested, please call board member Grant Smith, 304-876-2583.

Jefferson County Residents: Please Help us to Stay in Touch after the 911 Address Conversion

Jefferson County is undergoing an address conversion from rural routes to street addresses to make it easier for emergency service providers to find the homes of county residents. You should already have your new address. We cannot get it from the Post Office, and if your address has been changed for over a year, the Post Office will not forward mail sent to your old address. Please help us stay in touch -- if your address has changed, fill in this form and mail it to us. Many thanks.

Name _____

Previous Address _____

New Address _____

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P.O. Box 2240
Martinsburg, WV 25402
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