

Harford Land Trust News



Volume 24, Issue 1 Spring 2021

President's Message

The year 2021 will be the eighth of my term as President. I am immensely proud of all that the HLT has accomplished over that time, and I am excited of what is to come in the years ahead.

We've grown in stature as an organization, and when we speak, and more importantly act, people take note.

We've expanded our outreach efforts and grown our support base among the county's citizens, business, and communities. We've accelerated the pace of our land projects and forged new partnerships. Most importantly, we've preserved some ecologically and historically irreplaceable properties.

None of these successes are down to me. First and foremost it's the thanks to our exceptional Executive Director, our growing office staff, and corps of volunteers. But it's also thanks to our members, sponsors, and supporters who are like the wind in the sails of our organization, that keeps us moving forward.

Just as I was able to build on the success of the presidents and board members before me, I know that those who come after me will do the same. and the future of our organization is bright.

So as this will be my eighth year as president, I've decided that I will be following on in the tradition of presidential succession first

established by George Washington, and stepping aside after this year. It's my intention in announcing this now to allow for a year of transition and succession planning so that we don't miss a beat as on organization.

To that end, I am pleased to announce that the Board has nominated Turney McKnight to serve as the Vice President and President-designate for next year.

Turney was one of the HLT's earliest board members, and is by some distance the longestserving board member in our history. He is a retired attorney who tends to his beef cattle farm on Harford Creamery Road.

He serves as President of the Sumner T. McKnight Foundation, and is a past Trustee of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Some of his other titles include father, horseman, waterman, bluegrass guitar player, and author.

I have no doubt that the HLT will be in safe hands with Turney at the helm. And of course I'm always around to help and am happy to stay on the board for as long as the other board members wish.

With thanks,

Benjamin Lloyd President

Board o	Directors	5
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Benjamin Lloyd

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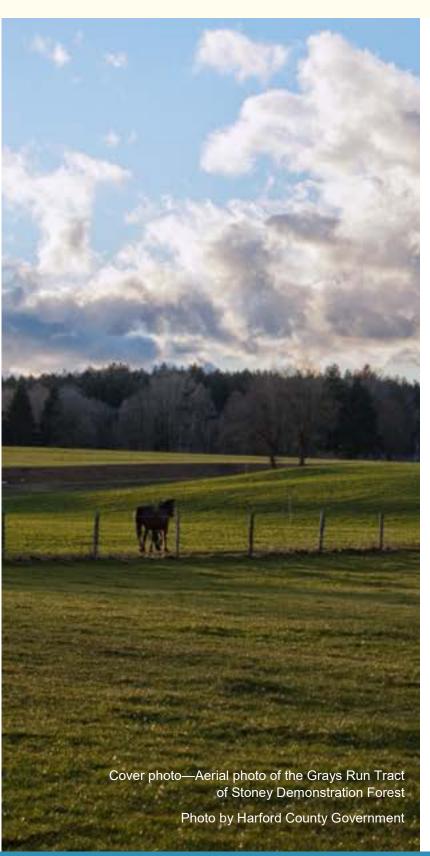
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Sharyn Ashman

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Remembering Our Roots—The Key to the Future

Reflections from Peter Jay



In 1991, a group of concerned citizens came together to protect the treasured and valuable landscapes of Harford County. Three decades later, their legacy lives on through HLT's continued land preservation efforts.

Peter Jay, one of HLT's founders and past presidents, shared his reflections of the organization's origins and early years. In addition to his decades of land conservation work, Peter is a farmer, historian, writer, and waterman. He lives with his family on their preserved farm Windmill Hill north of Churchville.

Although John Hegeman was a neighbor, with a farm on Cool Spring Road near Churchville, in my younger days I didn't know him well. Even after Irna and I hired his son Peter to work as a reporter for The Record in Havre de Grace, where for about 15 years we owned and ran Susquehanna Publishing Company, I saw John only occasionally. In addition to his farm he worked at Bethlehem Steel as an engineer, and I knew from Peter that he was building a boat in his barn. He didn't have much time left to socialize.

But I knew he was a multi-talented and incredibly energetic man with a strong interest in conservation issues, so when he called me one day some 30 years ago and asked if I would have any interest in helping to start a local land trust, I said sure. I knew something about the land trust concept – a way to preserve open lands with minimal government involvement – and agreed to come to a meeting.

The land trust concept at that time was exemplified on a national scale by The Nature Conservancy. At the state level the legislative

Army, conservationists join forces

Protection of farmland from development in Churchville serves interests of both

The center, which tests a variety of armored combat vehicles over terrains simulating battlefield conditions, has had tenuous relationship with surrounding community in recent years, as more and more houses have been built in the Churchville and Darli



BY RACHEL KONOPACKI rkonopacki@thesegis.com With

all renovations complete and 60 additional acres added to the park, the volunteers of Eden Mill Nature Center and Historic Mill Museum in Pylesville have a reason to celebrate.

On Saturday, Eden Mill will host an open house and dedication from 10 a.m. to p.m. with various tours, s, activities and games to o whole

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as well as new windows and doors in the nature center and offices, according to volunteer Frank Marsden. He said that the renovations were paid for by Harford County Parks and Recreation.

The 60 acres that Eden Mill received was purchased as a collaborative effort among Harford Land Trust, Maryland Program Open Space and the Harford County Department

EDITORIALS

To the rescue

The Harford Land Trust's purchase of Kilgore's Rocks two weeks ago is the latest example of its invaluable work to preserve our irreplaceable land treasures.

Kilgore's Falls, said to be the second-highest in the state, and the scenic 25 acres surrounding it near Pylesville have been privately owned for decades. When the owner agreed to sell it to the state's Program Open Space recently, it seemed the natural wonder would be preserved for generations to come.

However, the gap between the state's assessment of its value and the owner's selling price - \$17,500 - put the deal in jeopardy. That's before the trust stepped to guarantee the funds allowing the proval by the State Board settlement or

Scorregish occurrent most to the Land Trush and rights to develop the lare fore it mean the property will use to the public so a park it are correctable to the public so a park it. Cropation Acom (1920) and/trust receives wooded acres along Deer Creek

on arrangement made outlier coved Lydia Clement's 15 acros of Markott County will

15 acres in Monkton

to stay undeveloped

The Harlord Land Trust has reelved a donation of 40 acres of wildlands along northern Deer Creek between the county's Eden Mill Park and the state's Hidden Valley Nature area.

David Miller, the trust's execotive director, called the donation from Barbara Siebess "a great ac-quisition in its own right." According to Miller, the private, not-forprofit land preservation foundation has been looking for donations or conservation rasements in that part of the Deer Creek Valley

so far none have been receptive," Miller said Monday.

Siebens owns about 65 acres along Deer Creek containing

Gertrude Parks leaves legacy Land preservation

County Comment and her late husband built the boste on Yurner Reed in 1968 and hoarded heres there is neveral years. Chesands. 75, still heres there is neveral years Chesands. 75, still reduce but her her here seemed to the conservation of the conservation seemed to the lands.

The July 27 issue of The Argus reported buly 25 passing of Gertrude E. Parks.

sold it to the Trust to pretect her land and generated substantial income for herself and, ultimately after her lifetime, for the benefit of the Evangelical Lutheren w creating a Charitable

jects like Mrs. Parks' land are their own reward for me and for the board of directors. Even better for me, however, was the reward of working with this thoughtfd. practical and determined lady, her godson and paster, Paul Austin, and represents

efforts of State Senator William James of Harford County had already produced the Maryland Environmental Trust. The Senator, to help kick off the new program, had already given an easement on his Old Bay Farm, on the water just outside Havre de Grace, and a few other local landowners had followed his lead. My father was one of them, putting an early MET easement on Windmill Hill Farm.

John Hegeman's thought was that a local land trust could, through closer contacts with landowners, further this obviously desirable trend.

But how to get started? What exactly would be the land trust's role? And who was going to pay for it? The questions were many, and once they were raised, quite daunting. Probably that was why there weren't many local land trusts around in 1990.

John called several people he thought might be interested, and set up a meeting. One of those he called was Dr. Sidney Kreider, a Johns Hopkins physician who had a small farm in Harford County near Churchville. Dr. Kreider and his wife Millie had already been involved with rural real estate as investors, and they had an empty office in their barn. That was where the first discussions of a Harford land trust took place.

All that happened 30 years ago, a little more than half an adult lifetime. I think it's safe to say that those at that first meeting, in 1990, weren't thinking much about 2020. But they might have been thinking about 1960, and how Harford County had changed in the preceding 30 years.

They might have remembered that in 1960 the Harford County schools had not been desegregated. That didn't happen until 1965. They might have recalled that in 1960 raw sewage from the city of Havre de Grace was regularly discharged into the Susquehanna River. They probably would have known that in 1960 every Maryland county, regardless of size, had one state senator. (Baltimore City had six.) Harford's Ione senator in 1960 was Senator James.

By the standards of the future, then, the Harford

County of 1960 was in many ways backward. There were no McDonalds. If you wanted to buy a bottle of bourbon you had to go to a county-owned dispensary. There was no I-95. If you wanted to drive to New York you took Route 40 until you got to the New Jersey Turnpike. Just about all the main highways, including Routes 24, 22, 155, and 1, were lined with farms. There were no malls. The only hospital was in Havre de Grace.

"But how to get started? What exactly would be the land trust's role? And who was going to pay for it? The questions were many, and once they were raised, quite daunting. Probably that was why there weren't many local land trusts around in 1990." **PETER JAY**

But backward or not, Harford County in 1960 had been spectacularly and almost unbelievably beautiful, and by 1990 that rural beauty was, if not gone, much less apparent and constantly threatened. And that is why, in 1990, five people who didn't know each other very well got together in Dr. Kreider's barn office to talk about the county and its future.

In addition to John Hegeman, they were Dr. Kreider, a physician associate of his named Al Owens, David Miller, and me. David Miller was someone I had met before in my capacity as a columnist for the Baltimore Sun; he had been involved as a staff person in several Maryland conservation projects, most recently with the Maryland Environmental Trust. He would become the Harford Land Trust's executive director and, for several years, its only employee.



We agreed at that meeting to take the first baby steps toward creating a new organization, including choosing a name, electing some officers, and registering with the appropriate government offices, most importantly the Internal Revenue Service. We didn't know much, at that time, but we did know that if we were going to ask people to make donations to our new entity, those donations should qualify as charitable deductions.

John said he was willing to tackle the IRS, so we made him president, which seemed appropriate anyway. David Miller was named secretary and I was named vice president. We would need a treasurer too, and I can't recall whether Sid Kreider agreed to fill that slot temporarily or whether we left it vacant. I believe Dorothy Bishop was our first working treasurer, but don't recall just when she came on board.

At that first meeting, we considered various names for the organization, and after rejecting a few other suggestions settled on the rather prosaic "Harford Land Trust." We wanted to make it clear that our focus would be countywide. I think "Deer Creek Land Trust" was proposed, but we rejected it as too local, and also out of concern that it would be confused with the Deer Creek Watershed Association, which was already in existence.

Often, volunteer organizations such as HLT spring up in response to a specific situation typically, the proposed development of a special farm or another tract of open land. At HLT, our concerns were more general.

As noted above, we all knew Harford County was changing rapidly, and we knew that whether we liked that or not, it was going to keep on happening. We were simply looking for ways, not to block that inevitable change, but to preserve some of today's special places for tomorrow. Those of us at that initial meeting may have had some potential projects in mind, but at that first meeting, we put the specifics aside and concentrated on the organizational details.

One issue we did discuss – and here John

Hegeman and I were in complete agreement – related to the new organization's political coloration. John and I had both noted how the Nature Conservancy and its director then, Pat Noonan, had resolutely avoided politics, to the clear benefit of the Conservancy's landpreservation mission. We thought HLT should adopt a similar approach, and not become another "green" organization with a political agenda, constantly appearing before the legislature or the County Council and taking positions on issues that did not relate to land preservation.

We knew that would be a challenge, but felt that if HLT could meet it, its chances of succeeding over time would be significantly improved, and its support in the greater Harford County community would be broadened. Many of HLT's leaders and good friends over the past 30 years shared that view, and I believe the organization has benefited.

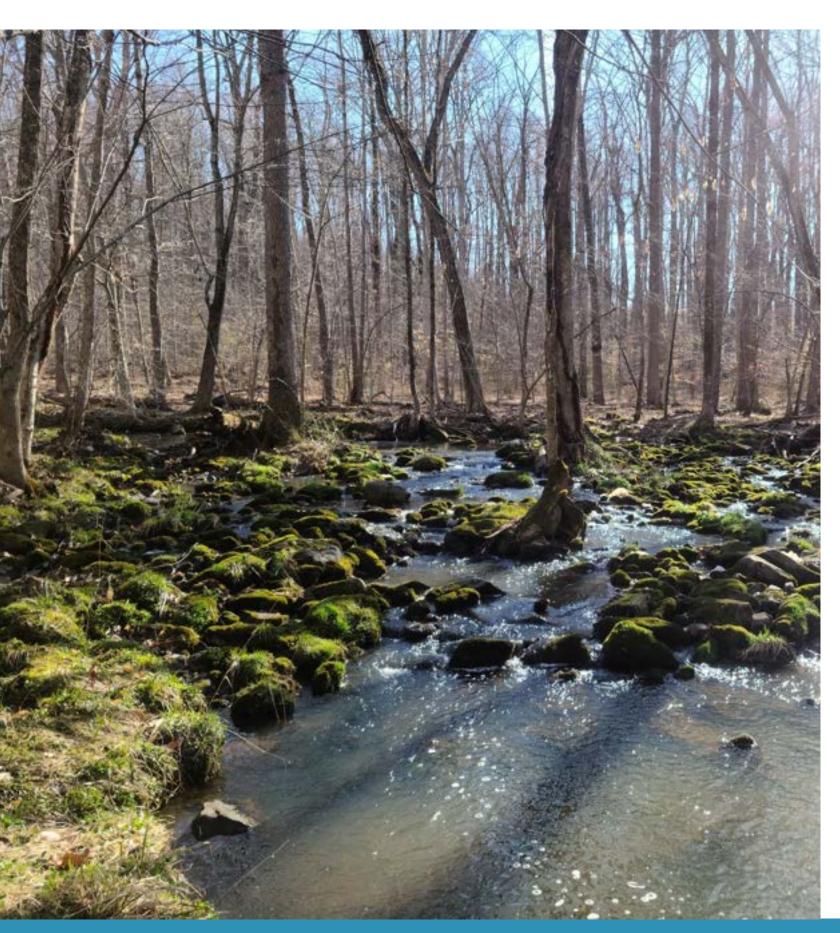
From that first meeting in Sid Kreider's barn, HLT moved ahead steadily, if also perhaps cautiously. Some projects which had seemed out of reach turned out to be doable; others, some of them very attractive, never happened, generally because they needed more money that we could raise, or just didn't work for other reasons. An example of the latter was Garrett Island in the Susquehanna, a fascinating place just off the Havre de Grace waterfront. HLT (encouraged by me, I must admit) was tempted to get involved with the island, but there was one major problem: It is in Cecil County. Eventually, with help from both Harford and Cecil County residents, the new Cecil Land Trust stepped up and helped bring about long -term protection for the island.

HLT's first success was along the Bush River at Forest Greens. That venture not only saved some important land near the Bush River from threatened development and generated great community support, but taught HLT useful lessons and made it some long-term friends. (Harry Webster, who first worked with HLT on Forest Greens, later became the organization's president and one of its most effective leaders.) John

Hegeman, I recall, worked very hard on that project. One reason he found it especially appealing was that it was located in the middle of a suburban community, and demonstrated that the new organization, the Harford Land Trust, had broader and more diverse concerns than its critics and there were some – wanted to concede

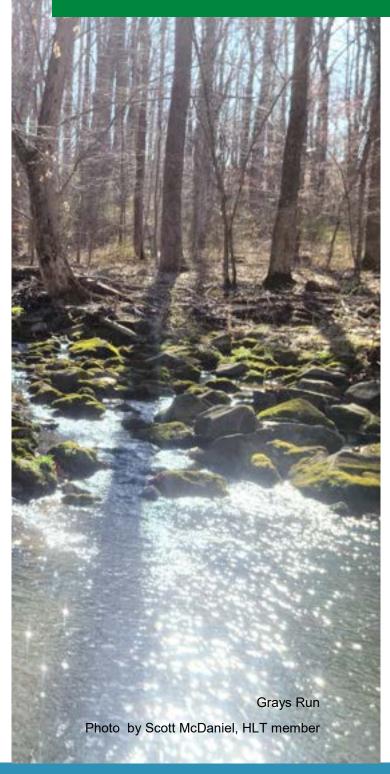
"We all knew Harford County was changing rapidly, and we knew that whether we liked that or not. it was going to keep on happening. We were simply looking for ways, not to block that inevitable change, but to preserve some of today's special places for tomorrow." **PETER JAY**

During John Hegeman's tenure as president of HLT, a variety of Harford County people served on the board and brought a diversity of skills to the job of protecting important Harford County acreage. Some stayed only briefly, others for many years. Thinking back to the early days, I'd like to mention two. One is Turney McKnight, who I think is probably the board member with the longest service, and who has contributed in many different ways over the past three decades. The other is Dr. Lehman Spry, who was HLT's vice president at the time of John Hegeman's death in 1997 and who succeeded John as president. Lehman, a Havre de Grace dentist who had served on the county council, was like John Hegeman both tireless and multi-talented, with great perception about Harford County's past and future. He deserves enormous credit for keeping HLT moving forward after the Hegeman era, and like John, he left us much too soon.



Forest Forever.

Collaboration, persistence, and a little luck, turned this once in a lifetime opportunity into a reality.



The Grays Run Tract is part of the once-extensive timberlands owned by Sydney D. Peverley. According to the Harford County Land Records, the Peverley family acquired much of the land in the 1920s.

Appearing somewhat like an island from above, a section in the middle of the property was quarried for crushed stone from 1958 to 1972. According to a 1985 zoning hearing application, D. M. Stoltzfus and Son operated the quarry and stopped extraction following what they deemed to be prohibitively expensive new Environmental Protection Agency rules. Thereafter to the present day, the area was used for asphalt manufacturing, and remains under separate ownership.

Well after the construction of I-95, Victor Posner purchased the property in the late 1970s to add to his vast real estate holdings for prospective development. Posner, originally from Baltimore, self-reported in 1952 that he was the largest home builder in Maryland. His self-described motto was, "I buy by the mile and sell by the inch." Posner developed more than 1,000 acres in Harford County alone, including Monmouth Meadows, Village of McLean, Greenbrier Hills, and Holly Woods.

During Posner's ownership, the property's zoning was reviewed on several occasions to increase the classification from agricultural to high-density residential.

The Grays Run Tract falls within Harford County's Tier IV Designated Area, meaning that no public water and sewer was planned to extend to the property. This designation limited permissible development on the property to a total of 21 home lots.

Following his death in 2002, the property was managed by Brenda Nestor, Posner's business associate, who also intended to develop the property. Nestor, a Miami resident, wished to take back ownership of the property after the Hollywood One LLC bankruptcy.

Acquisition

The Conservation Fund, a national environmental nonprofit operating under agreement with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, settled on the Grays Run Tract in July 2020. The Conservation Fund and Harford Land Trust began pursuing the property in partnership after its owner, Hollywood One LLC, declared bankruptcy in 2018.

The conservation partners doggedly pursued the property through the Miami-based bankruptcy court proceedings. Numerous large-scale



developers, including Brenda Nestor, the principal of Hollywood One LLC, attempted to purchase the property from the bankruptcy trustee.

The bankruptcy trustee hired the Baltimore office of CBRE, Inc., a global commercial real estate company, to market the property. Materials pitched the property as an "ideal land opportunity for development", including residential, distribution facilities, and industrial warehouses. Harford County was also brazenly described in the marketing materials as a pro-development location with a history of "fast tracking the approvals required" for industrial development.

At multiple points, it appeared that the team's attempts to preserve the property would fail. Two developers were awarded contracts for the property, but both failed to settle. The Conservation Fund ultimately emerged as the successful bidder at \$4.6 million in May 2020.

After taking ownership, The Conservation Fund and Harford Land Trust spent the second half of 2020 resolving on-site issues stemming from the many decades of absentee property management.

The State took ownership of the Grays Run Tract at the end of December 2020, formally joining it with Stoney Demonstration Forest. Funds for the purchase came from Maryland's Program Open Space, the State's park and open space program funded by a 0.5% State property transfer tax.

Natural features

The property's tract name comes from the stream, Grays Run, which winds through the property from north to south for a mile and a half. Grays merges with Cranberry Run and feeds into the Bush River just south of Route 40. There are also numerous unnamed tributaries with associated headwater wetlands on the western side of the property.

There is no evidence that the Grays Run Tract was cleared for agriculture, presumably because of the poor soils and rocky terrain. Prior owners logged the property multiple times during the last century, including a high-grade cutting in the early

2000s during which some of the most valuable timber was removed. The property is crisscrossed by dirt logging roads with occasional landings where the logs were loaded onto trucks. Patches of immature trees are reminders of past timbering.

Nonetheless, the property remains important habitat for forest interior dwelling birds, freshwater aquatic species, and a host of amphibians, reptiles, and small mammals. Local birders expect the Grays Run Tract is likely home to a host of species including ovenbirds, pileated woodpecker, barred owl, and woodcock.

The nearby James Run Tract is known for its plethora of wildflowers including several rare species. Given the similar terrain, there is likely to be abundant wildflowers at the Grays Run Tract as well.

Additionally, anglers report large numbers of yellow perch and largemouth bass in Grays Run downstream from the property.

The forest is highlighted prominently in Harford County's recent Green Infrastructure Plan as a "hub" and an important conservation candidate. The vast forest provides valuable stormwater management, helping to curb nutrient and sediment runoff that would otherwise reach the Bush River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay.

Historical significance

Notably, the property backs up to and buffers the one-acre site of the Bush Forest Chapel, constructed in 1769. According to the Maryland Historical Trust, the Chapel was the oldest Methodist meeting house in Harford County, the second oldest in Maryland, and the third oldest in America.

The church was constructed in the forest on the road from Stepney to Carsins Run. Its name, Bush Chapel, was taken from the nearby town of Bush, which was the county seat of Harford County from 1773 to 1782 and the location of the signing of the historic Bush Declaration.



Stoney Demonstration Forest and future plans

The property will be managed by the Maryland Forest Service as part of the existing Stoney Demonstration State Forest. The 318-acre James Run Tract of Stoney Forest was gifted to the State in 1981. It is not contiguous with the new Grays Run Tract but is located close by on the north side of Nova Scotia Road, west of Tower Road in Creswell.

Throughout the 1980s and mid-1990s the Maryland Forest Service managed the James Run Tract to demonstrate numerous silviculture techniques, including commercial timber production, habitat management, and outdoor recreation. A loop trail, accessible from Nova Scotia Road, leads visitors past numbered markers corresponding to past management practices. The State also allows seasonal hunting on the property permitted through a public lottery system.

As with most large park acquisitions, the State

has not yet developed a master plan for the Grays Run Tract. Recreation opportunities will undoubtedly be available in the future at the new Grays Run Tract, including hiking trails and hunting.

Reflections

When looking at a satellite view of Harford County, Stoney Forest stands out as a conspicuous dark green shape in an otherwise highly fragmented area. In many ways, it is nothing short of a miracle that more than 900 acres on I-95 in central Maryland remained in a natural state. It was not a question of if the property would be developed, but when.

Despite now being over 1,200 acres, Stoney Forest is still dwarfed by all but one other Maryland State Forest. But for Harford County, the acquisition is truly momentous. Except for the lands owned by Exelon along the Susquehanna,

there are no unpreserved private forests of this size in the county.

The Stoney Forest acquisition is also another example of the importance of Program Open Space, Maryland's primary source of funding for conserving open space. Program Open Space also provided the bulk of the funding for Harford County and Harford Land Trust's recent purchase of the 347-acre Belle Vue Farm on Oakington Peninsula.

The Stoney Forest success was the product of a stalwart partnership between public agencies and nonprofits that formed when an unexpected window of opportunity opened. It is widely acknowledged among the parties involved in the transaction that the effort would have likely failed without the unique partnership of visionary public leaders, experienced nonprofit tacticians, and knowledgeable local connections.



A Shared Vision for Conservation in Edgewood

HLT's Welzenbach Farm to be future site of Izaak Walton League's

Conservation and Education Center

On February 25, 2021, Harford Land Trust completed the sale of the 50-acre Welzenbach Farm on Willoughby Beach Road in Edgewood to the Izaak Walton League.

The 48-acre Welzenbach Farm was purchased by HLT in 2015 with funds from Aberdeen Proving Ground. In addition to having some of the last remaining agricultural land in Edgewood, the property is ecologically rich and provides important scenic and green infrastructure benefits to the community.

The property contains a portion of Otter Point Creek on the northern side and is adjacent to both Harford County parkland and nearly 400-acres already owned by the Izaak Walton League, known as the Bosely Conservancy.

The Harford County Chapter of the Izaak Walton League President Mike Horsmon sees this acquisition as key to the chapter's plans to revitalize their community conservation efforts. "The property's location will allow us to manage events in the marsh and expand our conservation and educational community programming and volunteer opportunities," said Horsmon.

The all-volunteer organization was established in 1950 for scientific and educational purposes.

The Izaak Walton League plans to build a small chapter house on the site of the former Welzenbach farmhouse. The house, which was deemed unsafe for habitation, was removed by the HLT in 2018 through a controlled training burn with the Abingdon Fire Company.

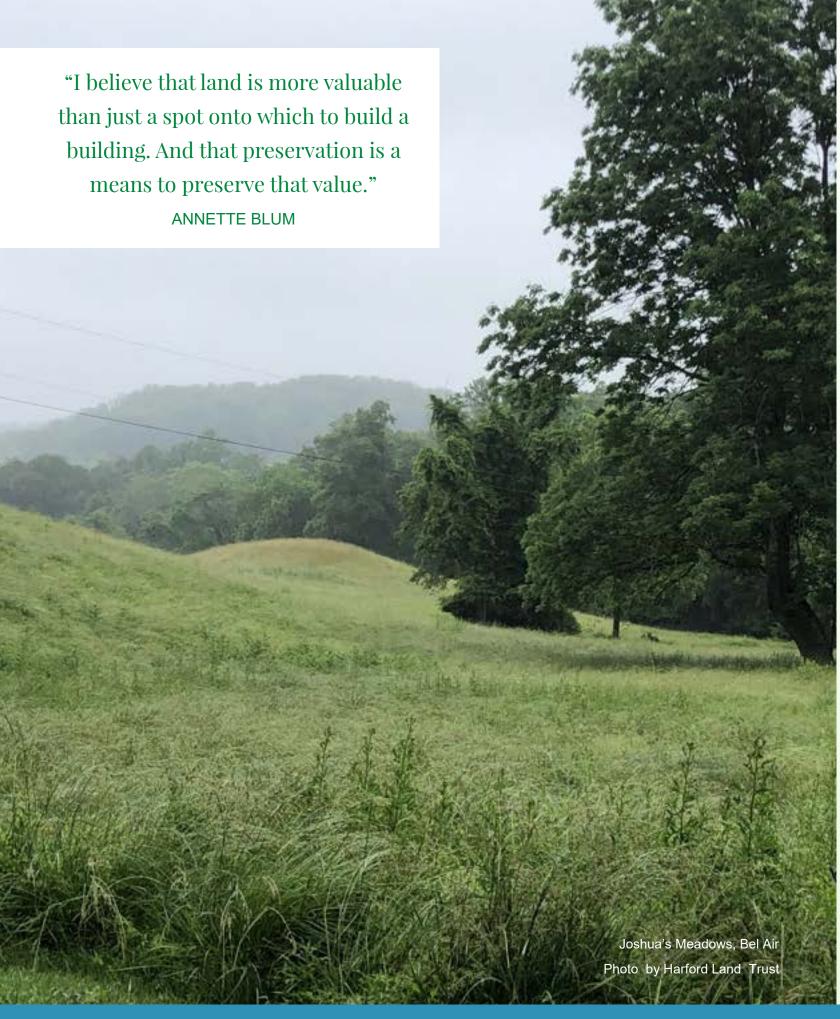


Plans for the new chapter house include a lowprofile modular building that will blend with the landscape. The organization is exploring green roofs, alternative energy sources, and other "green building" features.

Izaak Walton League plans to develop a network of trails and an Otter Point Creek kayak launch among other public amenities. The chapter will also expand its various conservation and education programs which it hosts in close collaboration with the Anita C. Leight Estuary Center and the Otter Point Creek Component of the National Estuarine Research Reserve.

HLT and Maryland Environmental Trust hold a conservation easement on the property, ensuring its permanent protection as open space. HLT also initiated a stream restoration on the property to improve the health of the headwater stream and the Bush River. Numerous trees were planted on the Welzenbach Farm in 2016 as part of Harford County's Arbor Day celebrations.

"This project ticks all of the boxes. It protects important natural resources, entrusts management to a proven partner, and creates a new community asset," said HLT Executive Director Kristin Kirkwood.



A Family's Passion for History and the Land Spans Generations

"I know how much they valued it." Preserving Joshua's Meadows was an obvious choice for Annette Blum.

The historic farmhouse perched on 26.785 rolling acres in Bel Air has been a part of Blum's family for three generations. Blum's grandfather, Brodnax Cameron, Sr., passed the scenic property and crumbling farmhouse every day while commuting from Baltimore to Bel Air on the Ma and Pa train line in the 1930s. "He called it a ruin," Annette remembered, but the daily views of the property stuck with Brodnax and in the early years of the Depression, Blum's grandparents, Brodnax and Julia Cameron, purchased the property for \$5,000 and set about renovating the home for their family.

"My grandparents bought the property and built an addition with a modern kitchen, as well as renovating the rest of the building," Annette recalled. A large farmhouse was originally built on the property in the mid 1700's and footprints of housing for enslaved people, a cider mill, pump house, dairy, and chicken house can also be found on the property.

By the time the property was purchased, the original structures were in disrepair and the land was overgrown. "I grew up knowing how much work my grandparents put into the property," Annette said, "They planted a victory garden, and began to farm. They had sheep and chickens. Later, after a problem with dogs, they got rid of the sheep and boarded cows and had a farmer plant the field."

"One thing that my grandfather did was to apply his ideas of 18th century architecture and

mathematics to the land around the house, as well as inside. He designed the area of the backyard, the former garden, and the terraced area in front to include golden rectangles, a semi-circle flanked by two rectangular sections like a Palladian window, and an "allée" from the front door to the end of the garden. He terraced an area to level off some of the yard but also act as a fence--called a "ha-ha" because it gave the illusion of continuity to land in the distance. I figured all this out years after I inherited it, when having a new fence designed. What gave the house and grounds an orderly simplicity was the mathematical way he situated it in a way that was hidden and not obvious."

"[Land preservation] allows breathing space. It is good for wildlife. It reminds us that land has value for its own sake." ANNETTE BLUM

"I believe that land is more valuable than just a spot onto which to build a building," Annette said, "And that preservation is a means to preserve that value."

Annette has a strong connection to the property having spent much of her childhood exploring the landscape. "There is a conical hill known in the family as "Little Round Top" which is fun to climb and has a great view. As a child I would sleep out on Little Round top with friends in the summer, and lie in sleeping bags looking at stars." Chasing frogs, sledding steep, snowy hills, observing a family of fox, and looking for spring wildflowers are just a few of the experiences on the land Annette seeks to preserve for future generations.

Land preservation "allows breathing space," Annette reflected, "It is good for wildlife. It reminds us that land has value for its own sake."



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UPCOMING HLT EVENTS

May 1-31st



July 24th

Passport to Preservation Registration Open Now Kayak Poker Run Details to Come

A month-long, self-guided outdoor adventure event.

The annual event returns to Flying Point Park.

To learn more, visit our website at: https://www.harfordlandtrust.org/get-involved/events/