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Letter from the President

Welcome to the second edition of *Woods & Waters News*, the newsletter of Woods & Waters Land Trust which will inform you of our work, spotlight the natural history of our region, illustrate restoration needs, and invite you to upcoming events.

The entire board of the land trust is excited to announce the donation of our first conservation easement protecting land in the lower Kentucky River watershed!

Establishing a conservation easement on a piece of land is serious business for both the landowner and the land trust.

The landowner must assess what restrictions he/she would like to see permanently placed on the land and then consult with heirs, attorneys and other professionals. If the landowner would like to apply for federal

tax deductions, an appraisal and more consultation – with tax professionals – is needed.

The process is not quick and easy. Although the land trust assists with several aspects of preparing the conservation easement, some costs must be borne by the landowner. Thus the landowner is in the position of incurring expenses even while donating an easement. These expenses are typically more than recovered by tax breaks.

In addition to tax relief, the greatest reward a landowner enjoys for his/her efforts is the establishment of a legacy.

The legacy of protected land is a gift that grows great – for the landowner's family, whose inheritance taxes stay low and who have the security of knowing that the family land will al-



Wild geranium.
Photo by Deborah White

ways stay intact; for the community, who benefit from the improved water quality, carbon sequestration and other ecosystem services of protected natural lands; and for future generations, who will enjoy and appreciate the hard work, sacrifice, and vision of those who protect their land.

As for the land trust, the deci-

Forests of Our Focus Area

Imagine our landscape without trees. Feel bereft? You should. Trees are as much of the character of our place as the soil under our feet.

The watershed of the lower Kentucky River—the focus area of the Land Trust—is within the Bluegrass Region of the Interior Low Plateau physiographic province (area of similar landform

and underlying geology). E. Lucy Braun, an imminent ecologist of the last century, classified the forests of this area as Western Mesophytic Forest. This forest type is dominated by oak and hickory. White oak, chinkapin oak, Shumard oak, mockernut hickory, shagbark hickory, blue ash, sugar maple, and beech are just a few of the many tree species that occur here.

When settlers first came to this area they saw large tracts of mature oak/hickory forest, rich bottomland forest opposite limestone cliffs, and cane breaks along the Kentucky River. Most of the region—indeed, most of the state—was covered in trees. No one at that time could have imagined a future where professionals would need to use sophisticated computer models to try to find forests that weren't



Forest in Franklin County.
Photo by Heather Housman

“...the decision to accept the donation of a conservation easement is both serious and joyful.”



Butterfly on swamp milkweed along Elkhorn Creek.
Photo by Heather Housman

Letter from the President, cont.

sion to accept the donation of a conservation easement is both serious and joyful. With a mission to protect and connect large forest blocks with the Kentucky River and its tributaries, Woods & Waters Land Trust is delighted to hold the easement of natural lands that fulfill our vision.

On the flipside, holding an easement comes with the fiduciary responsibility to enforce the terms of the easement *in perpetuity*. By accepting an easement, the land trust assumes the liability of enforcing restrictions that subsequent landowners might disregard. Easements do not represent a financial asset because, of course, land trusts cannot (and would not want to) sell or otherwise market the easements. While every effort is made to educate and work

with landowners, especially during a transition to new owners, the possibility of broken trust is real. To that end, the land trust must prepare for the legal costs of litigation to force noncompliant landowners into honoring the terms of the easement. At stake is the integrity of all the trust’s easements.

Having an adequate stewardship/legal defense fund is essential to keeping the protections we hold so dear inviolable. Fundraising for our stewardship fund goes directly towards ensuring that our easements stay secure.

The first easement acquisition that Woods & Waters Land Trust will celebrate this year represents a personal and professional milestone for me.

The 125 acres of forest at the headwaters of the Cedar Creek watershed that will never again be logged or subdivided is Schimmoeller Family land – the woods that brought my family and me to this area, that captured our hearts and set us on the path of land conservation.

Twenty years ago when my dad asked me, “How are we going to protect this land?” I told him that I would research it. Little did I know that the research would result in this, a new land trust with a compelling mission, a terrific board, and the means to help other landowners’ dreams come true.

—Chris Schimmoeller

Forests of Our Focus Area, cont.

fragmented as we do today.

Today, about half of the state is forested. Much of that forest is divided by power lines, roads, development, or agricultural fields. Too much of our woods occur in narrow strips along streams and in small woodlots. Fragmented forests are more susceptible to invasion by exotic species which result in a less diverse and less healthy ecosystem. Fragmented forests also fail to provide the types of habitat—contiguous forest—needed by many of our native plant and animal species.

We are fortunate that the fo-

cus area of the Land Trust includes some of the largest remaining blocks of forested land in Central Kentucky. These large tracts of forest provide habitat for a diverse suite of plants and animals and perform valuable ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration, flood control, water filtration, pollination, pest control and clean air.

Connecting these remaining tracts of intact forest is a primary goal of the Land Trust. Our first easement helps us on our way to achieving this goal. The Schimmoeller Family land is part of a larger forest block that also includes forested land

owned by the state. Holding a conservation easement on private land adjacent to publicly owned forest makes this easement even more valuable, because it is adding to a larger block of intact forest. Our work to protect and connect large forest blocks will help re-establish a resilient landscape that can support the needs of plant, animal and human communities.

—Heather Housman

To view a map of the forest cover in our focus area, visit our web site. www.woodsandwaterstrust.org/focusarea.html

Exploring the Elkhorn

A group of weekend nature-lovers discovered a whole new way of looking at the Elkhorn Creek at a stream workshop co-hosted by WWLT in July.

With one big and two small seines, Ryan Evans, aquatic zoologist at Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission, revealed a diversity in a short stretch of the creek that was astounding. With every dip of a net, different animals like water pennies, tadpole physa (a snail) and rainbow darters surfaced. Water pennies look like mini-coins and are a young

beetle (larvae) that feed on algae. At least 3 damsel flies, including the American rubyspot, flitted over the water.

In total, over a dozen different fish were found—and that was only a small sampling of the total fauna! Some of these, such as small-mouthed bass and creek chub, were familiar. Others, like mimic shiner, bluntnose minnow, and greenside darter, we had never seen.

Evans pointed out that flat rocks, tree roots, flowing water and shorelines are all microhabi-

tats that support different animals. When the banks are cleared these microhabitats disappear and the diversity of fauna declines. Several people braved the brisk current to bring back a haul of mussels including kidney-shell, threeridge, and fatmucket, from the rocky middle of the creek.

Elkhorn Creek is a wonderful resource in the central Bluegrass and part of the watershed of the Kentucky River. The day reminded us how healthy Elkhorn Creek remains despite the changes along its length, and what a wonderful resource we have in our “backyard.”



Ryan Evans holding creek creatures
Photo by Deborah White

Streams Need Trees

What’s better than a rocky stream meandering toward a river downstream? A tree-lined stream with flowering plants covering its banks is the best kind.

The trees along that stream aren’t just pretty landscape. A wooded border has been shown to provide important habitat to support the animals and plants that are part of the stream system. Studies show that birds in particular are sensitive to the removal of woods along streams. The narrower a forested border, the more

likely that vireos, cuckoos and flycatchers will not use the stream. A buffer that is 200-300 feet wide on each side of the stream provides the greatest use for songbirds. A width of at least 60 feet is the minimum needed to provide some habitat for songbirds.

In addition, natural buffers dramatically reduce pollution reaching the stream. Road run-off, household waste and other sources can quickly change the fauna in a stream – reducing food sources and

ultimately animal diversity. In polluted streams bacteria also increases. Plants lining the stream absorb nitrogen and phosphorus from animal or plant waste and fertilizer. The wider the border the cleaner the stream.

Streams are rich systems that provide beauty to the landscape, drinking water, and flood protection.

The best thing you can do for your stream is to let those trees grow!

—Deborah White

“The wider the border, the cleaner the stream.”

Membership Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

land that I own.

I would like to become a member:

\$25 \$50 \$100

\$250 other _____

Make checks payable to:

Woods and Waters Land Trust

Please contact me with information about conservation options for



Kentucky River with varying buffer widths
Photo by Marc Evans

WOODS AND WATERS NEWS

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**Land Extravaganza 2010!
September 18**

The mission of the Woods and Waters Land Trust is to protect the forested lands and riparian areas in the lower Kentucky River watershed and to promote sustainable land use throughout the region for the benefit of present and future generations.



Protecting the Lower Kentucky River watershed.

Land Extravaganza 2010!

Woods and Waters Land Trust is delighted to invite the public to a fundraiser to protect lands in the lower Kentucky River Watershed on Saturday, September 18, 2010.

The Land Extravaganza features a hike, dinner, a silent auction, and music by Samantha and Mark Cunningham. This year we will be celebrating the acquisition of the Trust's first conservation easement permanently protecting land in this watershed!

The Schimmoeller Family Land covers 125 acres at the headwaters of Cedar Creek Watershed. It is 99%



Hikers at last year's event
Photo by Betty Beshoar

forested and shares a 1/2 mile border with Kleber Wildlife Management Area, a 2,500 acre tract of public land managed by the state.

The event takes place rain or shine.

4:30 pm Hike
6pm Appetizers, Drinks, Silent Auction
6:30 pm Dinner
Features Russ Kennedy's barbeque, KSU shrimp, Stone & Ember artisan bread, Cedar Ring Greens salad, Blackberry Heaven potatoes, dessert table

\$30 (in advance) adults
\$8 children under 12

Available at Frankfort Tourism Commission
100 Capital Avenue
Frankfort KY
(502) 875-8687

Special thanks to our event sponsors! Earth Tools, Inc., Inside Out Design, Envision Franklin County, Buffalo Trace Distillery, Farmer's Bank, Andrew Cammack, Prajna Construction, Frankfort/Franklin County Tourism Commission, Jim Beam Distillery, KSU Aquaculture Program, Capital Cellars, Josephine Sculpture Park, Karen Carey