What’s in a name?

*Western Reserve Land Conservancy* says so much. When the original colonies were settled, it was not yet clear how far the land expanded to the west and so the boundaries were left open. The land we live on today was originally part of Connecticut. Even when Connecticut was forced to cede some of its western lands in exchange for federal relief of its American Revolution war debt, it held on to over three million acres in Ohio. This land became known as the Connecticut Western Reserve. However, in 1796, Connecticut sold that land to investors who settled the region. The name, Western Reserve, remained to describe our region of northeastern Ohio.

Our name, Western Reserve Land Conservancy, reflects our dedication to serving our entire region. We believe our logo reflects this coming together of people throughout our region to make connections, to work together as one powerful force. This regional conservation approach is critical to creating and maintaining a land that people, animals, and plants can thrive on now and forever.

In the recent past, you have often seen our name abbreviated as WRLC. While this serves an obvious functional purpose, it sometimes loses the power of our name. Throughout this edition and in the future, you will see us refer to ourselves as the Land Conservancy or by our full name, Western Reserve Land Conservancy.

In addition, we are making a change to the name of this publication. You have come to know it as the *Journal*. However, to show our deep and lasting commitment to the theme of this issue, we have decided to rename the publication *Connections*. As you will read in Rich Cochran’s *Reflections* article, the Land Conservancy’s dedication to building bridges and making connections throughout our region will endure. The name of our publication will reflect that goal and the articles you read will tell the story of our progress.

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*DID YOU KNOW*... that our region’s Firelands area has historical connections to Connecticut as well? Land in today’s Huron County and Erie County, as well as portions of Ottawa and Ashland Counties, are known as the Firelands because they came from land that was set aside for residents of the Connecticut towns who lost their homes due to the fires set by British forces during the American Revolutionary War. In 1792, the Connecticut legislature set aside 500,000 acres for the “Sufferers” of the fires. Even today, many of the communities and townships in the Firelands are named after areas in Connecticut.

“Men build too many walls and not enough bridges.”

*SIR ISAAC NEWTON*
but also that our organization has matured and is capable of producing exceptional results over both the short term and the long term.

And while we will continue to measure ourselves in terms of how many acres we protect and how many dollars we raise, we are also looking at new ways to measure our work; ways that relate to how we impact our communities, how we impact the future of our region, and how we build connections and relationships throughout an entire region that create healthy communities. In this regard, we are thinking in relatively unconventional ways about our conservation work. For example, rather than thinking about conservation in a vacuum, we are beginning to think about how conservationists and affordable housing advocates can work together to create a better community, a more just society. We are thinking about how we can positively impact urban areas, suburban areas, exurban areas, and rural areas. We are building relationships with both sportsmen and animal welfare advocates. These new directions are more difficult to measure. An acre is a unit of measure. A dollar is a unit of measure. Relationships with affordable housing proponents cannot be measured by a conventional unit. But the impact of our work will be diminished if we do not at least engage in this broader exercise of thinking about how our program and our mission relates to and complements all the good work being done in this region and all of the people, plants, and animals who live in this region.

I know you will enjoy reading through this Connections issue of stories. Stories of exceptional families who have preserved their land, as well as the story of the Land Conservancy itself. In that regard, I wish to thank our outstanding staff, our unparalleled Board of Trustees, our devoted core of volunteers, our invaluable partners, and all of you, our landowners and our donors. Hopefully we can be the nexus, the coming together point for everyone in this region who loves land. With your help we can and we will. Thank you.
Ecological Bridges

With the growth of Western Reserve Land Conservancy into 14 northeastern and north central counties, we have now effectively created a “bridge” between four distinct bioregions. Are you aware that a person standing in a corn field in Huron County is actually standing on the eastern edge of the Great Plains; and if this same person travels to a sugarbush in Trumbull County, they are now at the western edge of the Allegheny Mountains? Did you know that the forests in Stark County are the northern extent of the Central Hardwood Forest region that begins at the Gulf of Mexico; while the cool, shady ravines of Geauga County represent the southern extent of the Boreal-Hardwood Forests that have their northern beginning in the Canadian north? This reality is more than a convenient allegory for the bridge theme of this journal; it defines the conservation opportunities and challenges that are presented by the great diversity of life that is found in what we all know of as the Western Reserve; a greater diversity in a region our size than almost anywhere else in the country.

In the Western Reserve, we have the opportunity to see tulip poplar and white oak trees growing virtually side by side with northern white cedar and quaking aspen. The former growing as far south as northern Florida, but no further north than Lake Erie; while the latter grow as far north as Hudson Bay, but the southern extent of their range ends within the Western Reserve. A dedicated birder might find the more southern nesting hooded warbler in the same forest as the northern nesting mourning warbler. Overlapping their breeding ranges only in our backyard, the furthest extent of their respective ranges are nearly 2,000 miles apart. There is no need to venture to the prairies of western Nebraska to sight the grassland nesting dickcissel or to the old-growth forests of eastern New York to find a red-shouldered hawk’s nest. There are neither dickcissels in eastern New York nor red-shouldered hawks in western Nebraska, but both are here in the Western Reserve.

By now most have heard about the native brook trout rediscovered twenty years ago in several streams in Geauga County: but did you know that these small, brightly colored fish represent the western edge of the historic range of this species and are the only native brook trout in Ohio? Or that the America badger, the short-legged, foul-tempered member of the weasel family, which can be found as far west as California, goes no further east than mid-way across Ohio? The examples of natural diversity in our region are nearly endless across every phylum and division within the animal and plant kingdoms. We may not be the easiest place in the country to be a sports fan, but nobody, and I mean nobody, tops us in biological diversity.

This privilege brings with it special conservation challenges. Species are always more vulnerable at the edges of their range. Necessary conditions for survival are typically marginal; nearly too cold or too hot, soils too acid or too alkaline. Favorable conditions for parasites, diseases or predators may tip the balance. Life is tough on the fringe. Protection of rare, critical habitats may be the only way to achieve success. Timing may be paramount as well because once a species on the margin of its range is lost it is difficult, if not impossible, to get it reestablished.

The word bridge has many definitions and uses. Perhaps a better understanding of the unique ecological bridges within the Western Reserve will help us better close the gap between the present and the future. Between where we are today and where we must get to in order to protect our legacy of the unique natural diversity found here in the Western Reserve.

“A piece of the sky and a chunk of the earth lie lodged in the heart of every human being.”

Thomas Moore
Summers Family History

Centuries ago, as it is today, the deed to your own property was an important and cherished document. Imagine how important that document would be if it was signed by the President of the United States. And more than that, imagine that deed representing the beginning of a new life in a new land.

That was exactly the case for Anthony Ruff, an ancestor of brothers Leo and Garry Summers. The year was 1812, the new land was Ohio, and the signature on the deed was that of James Madison, the fourth President of the United States.

Incredibly, the Summers’ family still has the original parchment deed to their farm in Pike Township in Stark County. More importantly, Leo and Garry are the sixth generation of their family on the land.

The story of Garry Summer’s Swan family homestead begins with the marriage of Elizabeth Ruff to Theodore Swan. They moved from Pennsylvania to Ohio in 1824 and settled on the farm in Pike Township. Later, Theodore was able to purchase the farm from his father-in-law, Anthony Ruff for $1,280. Elizabeth, Theodore Sr., and seven of their children are buried at the Greenridge School cemetery just a mile from the farm.

Theodore Swan was born on the farm in 1843. He was a veteran of the Civil War and attended several reunions at Gettysburg battlefield. On one of his trips, he brought back red cedar and white pine trees that he planted in the front yard of the farmhouse. The trees are still there: the cedar still living, and the pine long dead and home to many woodpeckers.

Several springs are located behind the farmhouse. They served as the source of drinking water before the addition of indoor plumbing. They were also used to cool milk cans before refrigeration was available. The bank barn, built in 1899, and a springhouse, chicken coop, and “summer kitchen” are still on the homestead.

Helen Swan was the only child of Theodore Ruff Swan. A proud 8th grade graduate of Greenridge School, she eventually married Dwight Oyer. They bought a 130-acre farm in Osnaburg Township, three miles from the Swan homestead. That farm now belongs to Leo Summers.

Helen and Dwight had 3 children. The oldest was Lesta Mae Oyer. She attended “Little Brick”, the one-room schoolhouse that still stands just a few feet off the corner of the farm. She married Theodore Summers in 1943. Garry was born two years later, and Leo two years after that. They had the good fortune of knowing all four of their grandparents. They also were able to grow up on the family farms, often traveling between them on tractors or horseback.

The very strong historical and emotional ties to the land still exist today for Garry and Leo. Both retired, they spend much of their free time on the farms like they did as children. Still best friends, they work closely on farm stewardship projects. They have been actively clearing invasive species from their woodlots and planting more trees. They have more improvement projects scheduled for this year and beyond.

Walking the property with them, it is immediately apparent they have an intimate knowledge of their land. They seemingly know every square inch of the farms, from the spectacular views on the unglaciated hilltops to the valleys in between. They know the trees, the wildflowers, and the creatures that benefit from their stewardship. This is knowledge developed over a lifetime of being on the land, working it with their grandparents, and taking over the stewardship responsibilities themselves.

It is not difficult to understand their desire to see this special property preserved. Their family history is right there. Much of their family has been born here, and has died here. They have very deep roots on this land.

The Land Conservancy has had the privilege of working with Summers’ families to protect some of their land. Recently, the families donated conservation easements covering 214 acres in Osnaburg Township. The Land Conservancy looks forward to the opportunity to work with the families to protect more of their land and heritage.

Garry, Melissa & Leo Summers
New Parkland Acquired Along the Chagrin River

When you visit the former Warner Nurseries property, which straddles U.S. Route 6 in Willoughby Hills, it’s clear why the Chagrin River has been designated a Scenic River by the State of Ohio. The river snakes and bends past floodplains lined with giant sycamores and cliff walls stretching 150 feet high. In the spring, bank swallows return to nest in the cliffs and kingfishers forage along the river. A bald eagle recently nested in the mature beech and maple forest that covers the ridge running along the western boundary of the property. In the autumn, when the birds start migrating south, steelhead trout swim past the property as they travel up the Chagrin River to spawn.

When Dave Noble, the Executive Director of Lake Metroparks, visited the Warner Nurseries property, he was able to look past the rows of tree stock and abandoned greenhouses on the former nursery and see a new opportunity to connect Lake County residents to the Chagrin River. “The fact that the property is adjacent to the Audubon’s Hach-Otis Bird Sanctuary and bordered by the Chagrin River on three sides makes it ideal for steelhead trout fishing and birding,” Mr. Noble explains. “One of the Metroparks’ goals has been to increase fishing access in Lake County, and adding this 77-acre property to our park system will help us reach that goal.”

On December 31, 2007, Lake Metroparks ushered in the new year by purchasing the Warner Nurseries property with the assistance of Western Reserve Land Conservancy and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife. Lake Metroparks plans to restore the property to its natural state and provide hiking trails and fishing access to the public.

The Chagrin is one of only five rivers in the State where the Ohio Department of Natural Resources releases steelhead trout. The shallow, gravel streambeds and deep pools in the stretch of the Chagrin that borders Warner Nurseries make it ideal for steelhead fishing. Anglers have long expressed a need for more access to the river, and acquiring this property will open up almost a mile of prime Chagrin River frontage for fishing.

The Land Conservancy played a central role in this project by purchasing a conservation easement over the entire property from the previous landowner. This permanently protected the property from development and lowered its market value, enabling Lake Metroparks to purchase the property at an affordable price. WRLC used Section 319 Grant funding from the Ohio EPA to purchase this easement, which permanently preserves the riparian habitat along the Chagrin River. Dave Noble is grateful to WRLC, and to the Division of Wildlife, which also contributed funding to the project: “This new public park will be a wonderful asset to the community, and we’re thankful that our partners helped to make it happen.”

Long Lake Bog in Coventry Township, Summit County

During the fall of 2007, WRLC worked with the owner of 50 acres in Coventry Township, just south of Akron, to enter into a long-term agreement to purchase his approximately 50 acres along Long Lake in the Portage Lakes area. The property contains both open and forested land, and includes a tamarack bog. Tamarack, or larch trees (Larix laricina), are deciduous evergreens, meaning they are conifers but they shed their needles in the fall. Over 100 of these rare trees dot the landscape of this beautiful property. Among the host of interesting plants found by the Cleveland Museum of Natural History on the site last year were poison sumac, speckled alder, and lots of sphagnum moss. Abundant habitat for spotted turtle and four-toed salamander habitat covers the property as well. We will be working with a number of partners in Summit County in the coming months to preserve this important, ecologically sensitive property for the benefit of future generations.
1,018-Acre Babcock Family Farm, Lorain County

It was the season of the harvest moon in rural southern Lorain County in 1902. Six men arrived at the Rochester train switch station as dusk was fast approaching, all planning to be rich men by early evening. They ventured south toward the Meach Farm with the intent to rob the three bachelor Meach brothers who, not trusting their fortune with banks, were long rumored to hold enormous amounts of cash, gold, and jewels in their safe. Outside their home, John Meach, who left earlier to discuss the next day’s harvest with hiredthreshers, was the first to encounter the would-be thieves. Bound and gagged, John was kept under guard by two of the men while the remaining four headed for the porch of the dark farmhouse. Hearing the alarm sounded by Bruno, their faithful bulldog, Jarvis Meach approached the door thinking the commotion was caused by John returning with the threshers. Jarvis, more than six feet tall and nearly 300 pounds, was immediately knocked in the head with the butt of a gun, beaten, bound and gagged, and left in the kitchen for dead. Although Loren, the third Meach brother, was bedridden, the intruders bound and gagged him as a precaution. The safecrackers then began to work on obtaining the rumored fortune.

Focused on the nitro to crack the safe, the thieves did not notice Jarvis who, after regaining his wits, was able to remove his pocket knife and cut his hands free. Perhaps the thieves were unaware of the other local lore that the Meach brothers knew their way around firearms, and all were good hunters and crack shots, particularly Jarvis. More importantly, they kept at least one loaded gun in each of the home’s 15 rooms. Within Jarvis’s reach stood Old Bunty, his favorite double barrel shotgun. Deliberately making a noise, Jarvis waited for his captures to investigate. Without any light, the thieves fired upon the only dark figure they could make out. Fortunately for Jarvis it was the old cook stove. The light from the blast of their gun was all Jarvis needed to take down two of the men with Old Bunty, one with each barrel. Jarvis found the next loaded gun and made sure the two other men had their fair share of buckshot before making their escape, only to be captured later, one by the threshers who finally arrived and the other by authorities at the Wellington Depot the next morning. The two thugs standing guard outside fled as soon as the shooting started and were never heard from again.

Jarvis Meach was hailed as a hero and word quickly spread from one end of the state to the other. Lorain County Commissioners presented Jarvis with a new shotgun inscribed with a silver plate to honor his heroic efforts, a prized family heirloom to this day. The story was memo-rialized in books, local newspapers, and a song written in tribute to Jarvis. The story, however, is best told in person by Jarvis Babcock, the great-great-nephew of Jarvis Meach, and his namesake, who still lives on the farm today.

Born and reared in the same farmhouse where the events on the evening of October 14, 1902 unfolded, Jarvis Babcock is always eager to tell the tale to any willing listener. The Meach farmstead is now the nucleus of the 1,018-acre Babcock Farm that is owned by Jarvis and his two sisters, Cathy Leary and Alice Bradley, the fifth generation of family ownership. Jarvis’s son Steven, who manages and operates the farm, is the sixth generation to work and steward the land that previous generations worked tirelessly to piece together; and the Babcock’s intend to keep it that way, forever.

The Babcock siblings had considered permanently preserving their farm for several years, deciding it could be the last opportunity to ensure the family farm is preserved as a working farm. The Babcock family hopes that preserving their farm will encourage other farmers in the area to do the same, helping to ensure a viable agricultural community for many years to come.

The family stated, “All of us as a family feel very privileged to have grown up on the farm. As our mother, Esther, would say, ‘It isn’t what you are given but what you do with it that is important.’ Given the travails experienced by our father, Eugene Babcock, and his father before him in acquiring, enlarging, and maintaining the farm, it is a fitting tribute to them that it remains a farm far into the indefinite future. The last best chance of preserving these 1,000-plus acres as a farm lies with us. We think our ancestors would see this as the correct decision and our descendants will be proud of our foresight.”

The farm dates to 1831 when the Babcock and Meach families became some of the first to settle in Rochester Township. The farm has been in the family for 175 years...
and has received a Century Farm Designation from the Ohio Department of Agriculture. For generations, the family managed it responsibly to ensure it would remain intact with them and productive. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the farm transitioned from a mixed-breed sheep farm to a commercial crop operation, with a small herd of beef cattle today. Approximately 600 acres of the farm are actively cultivated with soybeans, corn, mixed hay, and occasionally wheat and oats. Pasture is maintained for beef cattle, while some is leased to a nearby Jersey and Guernsey dairy farm. The remainder of the farm is forested containing rich, biologically diverse woodlands, numerous wetlands, and three tributaries to the Black River.

Over the years, the farm has enrolled and participated in many USDA conservation programs to prevent soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat. The farm uses current agricultural Best Management Practices and has been 100% no-till since the mid 1990’s. Most recently, the Lorain County Soil and Water Conservation District selected the Babcock’s to receive the “Outstanding Conservation Farmer” award in 2007, an award they also received in 1987. Jarvis, a Rochester Township Trustee, has always been active in the community, even serving as the highly acclaimed pie judge at the Lorain County Fair, a position that Jarvis notes, “is a difficult job but somebody has to do it.”

The preservation of the farm entailed submitting an application to the Ohio Department of Agriculture’s (ODA) Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (AEPP) to purchase an agricultural easement on the 949 acres that the three siblings own together and donating a conservation easement to the Land Conservancy on an adjoining 69 acres that are solely owned by Jarvis. The AEPP process requires a qualified local sponsor, such as a land trust, to submit applications on behalf of the landowner.

With the support of the Lorain County Commissioners and the Rochester and Huntington Townships Trustees, the AEPP application to protect the 949 acres was submitted to the ODA on June 1, 2007. For this funding cycle, 235 applications were submitted in 31 counties across the state. Of those, 20 were selected for funding in the very competitive points-based selection process. The Babcock farm was by far the largest single farm selected and represents a major milestone for farmland preservation in Northern Ohio.

The Babcock Farm represents the first farm in Lorain County to be funded through the AEPP program and the second largest farm in the history of the AEPP program to be selected. Preservation of the Babcock farm creates a 1,000+ acre block of protected farmland that will be used as an anchor for other conservation projects in the area and represents the single largest land protection project in the history of the Land Conservancy.

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Coastal Nature Preserve Created in Bratenahl

Cleveland’s urban lakefront may seem like an unlikely place for Neotropical songbirds to congregate. Yet Cleveland is an extremely important stopover site for thousands of birds that make the long trek across Lake Erie during their annual migration between Canada and South and Central America. Cleveland is located at the epicenter of Lake Erie’s West Central Flyway, the well traveled route that migratory birds follow between north central Ohio and Erieau, Ontario. Unfortunately, only a few remnants of high quality coastal bird habitat remain in the Cleveland area. Dike 14 near the Cleveland Lakefront State Park is one well known example, and just east of Dike 14 on Lakeshore Boulevard is another small green oasis in Cleveland’s urbanized landscape.

The Dale-Ross property in the Village of Bratenahl is an 11-acre forested parcel surrounding both sides of Dugway Creek, a Lake Erie tributary that runs through Forest Hills Park in Cleveland Heights, through East Cleveland and Cleveland, and enters the Lake in Bratenahl. Dugway Creek is one of the few rivers or streams in the area that still supports natural estuarine habitat. Estuaries are places where streams meet and mix with Lake Erie, and where water levels are affected by the Lake’s tides. These transitional areas where land meets water, and streams meet the Lake, provide unique habitat for many plant and animal species. They provide spawning and nursery areas for Lake Erie fish, and attract mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and birds.

The property’s natural resource value has been well documented by Dr. James Bissell and Larry Rosche of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. As Mr. Rosche pointed out after visiting the property, “most properties continued on page 10
that are set aside for preserves along the shoreline of Lake Erie are merely mowed lawns with large trees. The woodlands associated with Dugway Creek are quite different… they offer excellent feeding and nesting opportunities for a variety of migrant and resident birds.” Mr. Rosche found nesting sites of several migratory species, including the wood thrush, a species on the Audubon Society’s Watch List that has become a symbol of the decline of Neotropical songbirds in eastern North American forests. Local birders have also observed over 100 bird species on the property, including rare species like the bald eagle, great egret, sharp-shinned hawk, redhead duck, and the saw whet owl.

The Village of Bratenahl purchased the Dale-Ross property in August of 2007. With the help of the Land Conservancy, the Village obtained a Federal Coastal & Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) grant and matched it with Village funds and private donations. “The residents of Bratenahl have showed a tremendous amount of support for the project, and for green space preservation in general,” explains Bob Gudbranson, who played a central role in the project as a Land Conservancy Trustee and long-time resident of the Village. In 2005, an overwhelming majority of Bratenahl residents passed a ballot measure that authorized Council to utilize Village funds to purchase and preserve undeveloped land in the Village, including the Dale-Ross property. “Village residents made a clear statement that conservation is a priority,” said Mayor John Licastro. “Thankfully, we were able to partner with Western Reserve Land Conservancy to meet our local goals and protect one of the few remaining natural areas along the lakeshore.”

Brown Property in Greenfield Township, Huron County

Carl and Susi Brown are landowners extremely committed to conservation. They own and maintain a beautiful 116-acre nature preserve just north of Willard in Huron County where they live with their four dogs. Their property is rich with vernal pools, upland and floodplain forest, wildlife ponds, and prairie. About 3,750 linear feet of a large tributary of the West Branch of the Huron River flows through their property. After years of thoughtful consideration, the Browns preserved their land in December 2007 with the support of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. The family donated a conservation easement on the beautiful land they have owned and nurtured since the 1970’s.

The history of the Brown’s land tells an interesting story. The land was farmed until the early 1950’s. There was an old one-room schoolhouse on the property. Today, the only reminder of the farm site and the schoolhouse is the concrete platform where milk cans were set out by the road for pickup. In the mid-1990’s, the former agricultural fields were restored to prairie in cooperation with Pheasants Forever. The fields are maintained with periodic burnings to keep them relatively clear and now butterfly weed, purple coneflower, big bluestem, and other native prairie plants bloom throughout the seasons. The entire property has been restored to a natural area.

Carl and Susi have a passion for birds and other wildlife. Looking out their dining room window, the variety of birds enjoying their nine bird feeders is extraordinary. The Cleveland Museum of Natural History conducted a breeding bird survey in the summer of 2007 and found 57 bird species, including uncommon birds such as scarlet tanager, yellow-billed cuckoo, American redstart, eastern meadowlark, wood thrush, willow flycatcher, and the cerulean warbler, listed as State of Ohio Species of Concern and considered for Federal protection under the Endangered Species Act. It is also listed on Audubon’s Watch List as a Species of Global Concern.

Vernal pools are scattered in the valley along the river and are home to a rich amphibian population, including salamanders and green frogs. Plants and trees of particular interest on the property include green dragon, ebony spleenwort, bloodroot, blue cohosh, baneberry, paw paw, and chestnut oak.

Carl and Susi Brown commented, “We are so pleased that we now have a conservation easement on this property that has given us so much pleasure over the years. We constantly see the native animals of the season from our windows and trails. Many thanks to the Land Conservancy for helping us make this possible!” We are very grateful to Carl and Susi for their foresight and vision to preserve their beautiful property.
Silver Creek Farm located in Troy and Hiram Townships, has produced an abundance of fresh, healthy, local food over the past 20 years that has ended up on the kitchen tables of many people throughout northeastern Ohio. From spring lamb to raspberries, blueberries and tomatoes, Ted and Molly Bartlett grew and produced food which was distributed through their Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) clients, restaurants, and local markets such as Mustard Seed, Food Co-op, and Heinens. Silver Creek Farm became a model for producing locally grown and certified organic food as well as creating a network of local farms and consumers. Over the years, the farm hosted numerous festivals and gatherings with the intent of better educating the community about how food is produced.

As the Bartletts began thinking about their retirement and the future of their farm, they turned to Western Reserve Land Conservancy to discuss how to meet their retirement goals and how to best ensure that farming could continue after their tenure. Ted was a board member with the former Headwaters Landtrust for many years and knew that preserving Silver Creek Farm was a high priority. They decided to sell their property to the Land Conservancy and rely on our ability to find a special buyer who was interested in continuing a farming tradition.

On a clear blue day in September, the Grimm family walked Silver Creek Farm for the first time. Scott Grimm recalls this first introduction to Silver Creek as an energizing experience. “It was immediately apparent that this ground was ripe for renewal; a place that could once again become a thriving community asset that nourishes our bodies and minds; a sustainable farm that is grounded in respect, balance, and healthy living. What a rare and special place.”

By purchasing Silver Creek from the Land Conservancy as conservation buyers, the Grimm family helped preserve an important organic farm in Northeast Ohio. Scott is in the process of re-establishing a Community Supported Agriculture business, as well as developing plans to expand into other niche markets. We are looking forward to tasting the results of his hard work!
Buttler Property
in Brighten Township, Lorain County

Dan and Judy Buttler donated a conservation easement to Western Reserve Land Conservancy in December, forever protecting their biologically diverse 87-acre property just north of Wellington in Lorain County. Over the course of years, Dan and Judy planted untold thousands of trees, switch grass, and other prairie plants all for the benefit of wildlife. The wooded areas are rich with upland and floodplain forest, vernal pools, and a lush herbaceous plant community that includes uncommon medicinal plants, several different species of trillium and an extensive patch of marsh marigold. Two uncommon trees, the American chestnut and butternut, are found on the property. A tributary of the Black River flows through their land. There are two large wildlife ponds; trumpeter swans are raised in one of the ponds to be released into the wild. Dan and Judy are truly extraordinary stewards of the land; their conscientious legacy of stewardship and preservation will continue for years to come. Thank you to Dan and Judy for so generously preserving this remarkable property.

Belew Property
in Auburn Township, Geauga County

When Bill and Dee Belew purchased their 67-acre farm in Auburn Township from Lewis and Helen Messenger in 1992, the property had been in the Messenger family for about 160 years. The Messengers were like grandparents to the Belew’s children, Bill and Kellie, who helped with farm chores. After the purchase, the two families remained close friends and the Belews committed to find a way to preserve the cherished family farm, which they did by granting a conservation easement to the Land Conservancy in November 2007. The Belews produce maple syrup, make hay, board horses, and raise Belgian draft horses. Kellie is pursuing agricultural-related entertainment activities in the coming year that will provide opportunities for the community to enjoy the family farm.

Doermann Property
in Medina Township, Medina County

The 12-acre Doermann property in Medina Township includes a beautiful stretch of the North Branch of the Rocky River. Hemlock trees cling to the towering cliffs above the river, providing a naturally cool spot in the summer and beautiful ice formations in the winter. This pristine area and the mature woods on the property provide habitat for a wide variety of nesting birds and other wildlife.

Mary and Perry have enjoyed the quiet beauty of this property for more than 20 years. It has also attracted the attention of others who have inquired about purchasing part of the property for their own homes. Property in this part of Medina County commands a significant value, and many landowners would seriously consider offers to sell.

The Doermans chose a different path, deciding instead to keep the property intact and preserve it forever with a donated conservation easement. The easement was signed just before the new year. After signing, the customary champagne toast was offered. Mary and Perry decided to enjoy the champagne later. Their adult son and daughter were coming home for the holidays. Perry acknowledged that their children nudged them toward this important decision to preserve their land, and they wished to share the toast and the occasion with the entire family.

Western Reserve Land Conservancy toasts the entire Doermann family for their generous gift.
This spectacular steep walled, cool water ravine flows into the Chagrin River from the Doody property. The old growth trees along the scenic ravine are adjacent to over 100 acres of preserved property in Hunting Valley. In late 2007, Rick and Tamara Doody donated an easement on their beautiful 28-acre estate in Hunting Valley. We are grateful for this extraordinarily generous gift!

**Forthofer Property**

in Huntington Township, Lorain County

Larry and Marsha Forthofer are both veterinarians and they both love animals and nature. In 2007 they donated a conservation easement on their 142-acre property just south of the Village of Wellington. They have managed their property over the years to produce many diverse wildlife habitats. Approximately 75 acres are wooded with upland and lowland forest; 60 acres are enrolled in the Federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) with several field areas planted and managed with switch grass and other warm-season grasses for upland game birds. Two ponds and three Black River tributaries are located on the property. The land has many different plant species including Jack-in-the-pulpit, wild ginger, and several uncommon medicinal plants. What makes their property uniquely special is that it helps to form a protected corridor of over 1,800 acres collectively with the Lorain County Metro Parks Wellington Reservation, Fendley State Park, and the Wellington State Wildlife Area. We are extremely grateful to Larry and Marsha for preserving this very important corridor property for generations to come.

**Grimm Property**

in Newbury Township, Geauga County

The Grimm family and their friends have been hunting in Newbury duck marshes for decades. To make sure future generations have that same opportunity, they granted a conservation easement to Western Reserve Land Conservancy and Cleveland Museum of Natural History to preserve their 77-acre property. Their marsh contains a very rare glacial fen community that contains at least two rare plant species: winged sedge (*Carex alata*) and autumn willow (*Salix serissima*), which are listed as Potentially Threatened in Ohio.

**Kalman Property**

in Chatham Township, Medina County

Laura and Don Kalman enjoy the simple pleasures their 34-acre hobby farm in western Medina County provides to them. They have donkeys that they enjoy riding on the trails through the property, and their adopted wild mustang has a permanent home on the farm. They are beekeepers, and have sold honey and free-range eggs. Future plans include producing maple syrup and acquiring a team of oxen to work on the farm.

For the Kalmans, the decision to preserve their land was an easy one. The trees they have planted and nurtured, the wildlife habitat they have maintained, and the wildflowers they enjoy each spring needed to be preserved so
LAND PROTECTION SUMMARIES continued from page 13

others could enjoy them as they have. As excellent stewards of the land, they accepted this responsibility without hesitation.

The documents for their donated conservation easement were scheduled to be signed on December 26th. They arrived on time, smiling as always. Anticipating the question of whether they had a nice holiday, Don was quick to offer “this is our gift to each other.” And while that is no doubt the case, it is also an invaluable gift to future generations.

MOLLY LUCE PRESERVE
in Ravenna Township, Portage County

In December 2007, Western Reserve Land Conservancy turned over the 64-acre Molly Luce Preserve to the Portage Park District (PPD), completing a larger land protection project that included the park district acquiring Snowy White Egret and Gray Birch Bog properties in December 2006. The property was originally acquired in 1997 from the Battaglia family through a cooperative effort with Portage Land Association for Conservation and Education (PLACE) and The Nature Conservancy. The Battaglia family purchased the property in 1960 with plans of mining the property’s peat moss reserves for a horticultural business. Having never been mined, the unique glacial wetland and bog systems which compose about 60% of the property and contain some of Ohio’s rarest plant species have been preserved. The additional preservation of these 64 acres expands Portage Park District’s already preserved Towner’s Woods, a 175-acre park that includes one of the best cross-country skiing trails in Northeast Ohio and is adjacent to the Portage Hike and Bike Trail.

MAYER PRESERVE
in Chester Township, Geauga County

After securing the final $730,000 of Federal funding with the assistance of Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, 133 acres of forest, wetlands, and streams in Chesterland, Geauga County, have been transferred to the Geauga County Board of Commissioners and protected with a Western Reserve Land Conservancy conservation easement. The creation of this nature preserve along the Chagrin River is the culmination of over 10 years of work by the Land Conservancy and our partners, which included the Ohio EPA, Ohio DNR, Geauga Park District, Geauga County Commissioners, and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration.

MONCHEIN PROPERTY
in Grafton Township, Lorain County

Robert and Minta Monchien donated a conservation easement on their 156-acre property in central Lorain County. The land is predominantly farmland. The agricultural land, that is primarily cultivated with soybeans and corn, contains prime agricultural soils and is leased to a
nearby farmer. The remaining wooded area contains rich, mature forests. Salt Creek, a tributary to the East Branch of the Black River flows through the property and is known for its unique salt deposits and Native American artifacts. Two other unnamed tributaries flow through the property. Plants of particular interest include a beautiful stand of great lobelia as well as foamflower, white snakeroot, purple milkwort, and several different kinds of ferns. Many thanks to the Monchein family for their desire to see their property permanently preserved for future generations.

**Rynearson Property**
in Streetsboro, Portage County

Working with Western Reserve Land Conservancy, Dick and Tammy Rynearson of Ravenna Road in Streetsboro have permanently protected their 21 acres. Their forested property is an important part of the Tinker’s Creek watershed and includes 1,800 feet of scenic road frontage. Rain that falls on their land flows through the natural vegetation and into wetlands that eventually drain into Tinker’s Creek, the largest tributary of the Cuyahoga river. By ensuring that their land is never developed, the Rynearsons are protecting the water quality of northeastern Ohio streams and rivers. The Rynearsons’ protected acreage complements other area preserves including The Nature Conservancy’s Herrick Fenn and Portage Park District’s Streetsboro Preserve. The Streetsboro Preserve was protected through a partnership between a private landowner, Western Reserve Land Conservancy, and Portage Parks in 2006. The Rynearsons noted that, “After being stewards of this property for 35 years, we are happy to be able to protect it forever. We encourage our neighbors to consider working with Western Reserve Land Conservancy to protect their land as well.”

Eddie Dengg oversees the Land Conservancy’s Portage County operations. He said, “Helping the Rynearsons preserve their natural landscape has been very inspiring to me personally, since I grew up in Streetsboro. Forward-thinking, unselfish people who protect their land for future generations are real heroes in my book.”

Marion Olson, President of Western Reserve Land Conservancy’s Tinker’s Creek Chapter, added, “Private landowners like the Rynearsons are key to protecting vibrant forests, green fields and clean water. the Land Conservancy exists to help landowners leave this legacy.”

**Sheldon Property**
in Ripley Township, Huron County

Dean and Carol Sheldon of Ripley Township in south central Huron County wanted to ensure that their 30-acre tree farm would be permanently protected from development. Dean and Carol bought the former agricultural land in 1981 and worked over the years to plant many trees and acres of grassland for birds and other wildlife. A tributary of the Vermilion River flows through their property. The Sheldon’s also maintain a variety of wildlife ponds. Dean is active in several local and national environmental organizations. As a founding member of the Ohio Bluebird Society, he maintains over 70 bluebird boxes on and off of his property.

Birders and other naturalists in Ohio are very familiar with the Sheldon family history of conservation. Dean Sheldon continues in the footsteps of his father, Dr. Dean E. Sheldon, who preserved the 54-acre Sheldon’s Folly. In the 1970’s the area became part of the 465-acre Sheldon’s Marsh State Nature Preserve, managed by the ODNR Division of Natural Areas and Preserves (DNAP). Dean Sheldon recently provided these thoughts stating their reasons for preserving their land:

“I had managed the Folly for almost 25 years. Once it was acquired by DNAP, I had to move on. We looked for property throughout Erie and Huron counties, settling on 30 acres of worn out farmland in Ripley Township, Huron County. We have managed and restored the property for open space land use and conservation practices over the past 26 years. As a family, we are secure in the knowledge that we have helped to preserve and protect significant open space areas here and on Lake Erie. We have achieved long-standing goals in the field of land use conservation. Western Reserve Land Conservancy helped us to accomplish this. We are grateful for its intervention on our behalf.”

Many thanks to Dean and Carol Sheldon for continuing their family’s legacy of land preservation.
Helen Wheeler wanted to preserve what remains of the historic Wheeler family farm, which dates back to Helen’s great-great-grandfather. Conserving the property fulfills a dream of her mother; Julia Haskins Wheeler. The farm had been in Helen’s family for over 150 years, through her mother Julia’s lineage. This December, Helen realized her mother’s dream and donated a conservation easement on her 26-acres just south of Wakeman. The Wheeler property is located less than 250 feet from the Vermilion River and a small tributary borders the property. This border area has mature trees of hickory and a variety of maples and oaks. Helen commented, “Planting trees and preserving the family farm in a more natural state was a real dream of my mother, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to fulfill it”. Over 10,000 trees were recently planted on the former agricultural fields ensuring Helen’s and her mother Julia’s legacy for future generations to enjoy.

Wilmot Property in Broadview Heights, Cuyahoga County

For the last century and a half, the 78-acre Wilmot farm in Broadview Heights has been in David Wilmot’s family, and is a well loved scenic resource in the area. The farm includes forested areas and open fields visible from Broadview and Boston Roads in Cuyahoga County. David lives in the historic farmhouse on the property, while his parents, Carter and Genevieve, live in a house they built on the property.

The Wilmots raise sheep, grow hay, and manage the timber on their property. They are the recipients of a Forest Stewardship award from the US Forest Service and ODNR Forestry Division for their forest management practices. A newly planted grove of hardwoods recently planted on former pastureland will someday be a forest on the preserved property.

Carter and Genevieve started the preservation of the family farm several years ago by donating conservation easements protecting 56 acres of their 78-acre farm, including a mature forest stand just east of the East Branch of the Rocky River. In December 2007, David finished what his parents started by donating the final conservation easement to ensure that his family’s long legacy in the area will remain intact, and that their land will remain available for farming or wildlife habitat.

“A clear stream, a long horizon, a forest wilderness and open sky—these are man’s most ancient possessions. In a modern society, they are his most priceless.”

Lyndon B. Johnson
FEDERAL TAX LAW UPDATE

by Ed Meyers

A federal law that significantly increased the tax benefits for landowners who grant conservation easements expired December 31, 2007. Congress adopted it in 2006 to apply to conservation easements granted during 2006 and 2007.

That now expired law provided that:

1. Grantors of conservation easements could take a charitable deduction of up to 50% of their adjusted gross income (AGI) in the year of the gift. The previous limit was 30%.

2. Qualified farmers (individuals or corporations earning more than 50% of their gross income from farming) could deduct up to 100% of their AGI. The previous law contained no such distinction between a farmer and a non-farmer.

3. To the extent the appraised value of the conservation easement gift exceeded the 50% (or 100%) AGI limit in the year the gift was made, the grantor could carry forward the unused balance for up to 15 years subject to the same 50% (or 100%) limitation. The previous law allowed only a five-year carry forward.

The land trust community, led by its umbrella group the Land Trust Alliance (LTA), lobbied hard for the permanent extension of the two-year law and included statistical evidence, provided by the Land Conservancy and many other land trusts around the country, that demonstrated a significant increase in conservation easement donations during that two-year period.

The Farm Bill passed by the Senate in December 2007 includes a permanent extension of the new tax incentive. The House Farm Bill does not include a similar provision. The House Senate conference committee will hopefully produce a Farm Bill that includes the permanent extension.

A stand-alone House Bill, H.R. 1576, which would make the tax incentive permanent, is also under consideration.

LTA and the land trust community are working to ensure that the extension of the incentive contained in Section 12203 of the Senate’s Farm Bill, which is identical to H.R. 1576, is included in the final Farm Bill.

For now, the 30% AGI, five-year carry forward rules will apply, but it is possible that any conservation easements granted in 2008 will be retroactively subject to the 50% (or 100%) AGI, 15-year carryover rules if the enhanced tax incentive is restored.

It is essential that landowners consult with their own legal and financial advisors to determine how the above-described tax laws affect their individual situation.

Please call us at (440) 729-9621 if you would like to learn more.

PROTECTED PROPERTIES BY COUNTY THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2007

<table>
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<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th># Protected Properties</th>
<th># Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1348</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geauga</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>5950</td>
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<td>Huron</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Number of WRLC-Owned Properties ...... 14
Total Number of Assisted/Transfer Projects ...... 6
Total Number of Conservation Easements ...... 205

29-acre Greenridge
This is a rare opportunity to purchase a secluded country estate. The winding driveway leads you to the house that is set among majestic pines, rhododendron, azaleas, and dogwood trees. Griswold Creek meanders along the southern boundary, through a mature forest ecosystem. There is a charming three-stall barn, a workshop, and an in-ground pool surrounded by an old English garden. The 5,800 sq. ft. home, (7 Br, 4.2 BA), was designed by Bascom Little in 1941. Price: $1,550,000

RUSSELL: Country Estate
Inspired by her love of an imperiled backyard wetland, Sandra McMannis began her conservation avocation more than 17 years ago. And boy has she been busy, very busy!

As one would expect, Sandra’s work with land preservation started at home, in Hudson, Ohio. After resolving a dispute over wetland development, Sandra joined the fledgling Hudson Land Conservancy and worked to develop growth control ordinances in Hudson. These ordinances helped pace the speed of development in Hudson, preserved some environmentally sensitive areas, and laid the foundation for similar programs in communities across the country. Later, as Sandra served on, and chaired, the Hudson Park Board, 400 acres of park land was successfully preserved for future generations – a major victory which motivated her to move on to new challenges.

She currently acts as Vice Chair of Western Reserve Land Conservancy. She has contributed as a member of the Revenue Diversification Committee, the Development Committee, and most recently, the Strategic Planning Committee.

Sandra recounts that she became an attorney because she was convinced that she could save the world. Her idealistic approach to law shifted as she discovered that she, in fact, had a real entrepreneurial streak. She got involved in an importing and exporting business, and then developed an export sales program for her husband’s company – Mickey Thompson Performance Tires. It was exciting to handle the deals herself, straight and fast, holding on to more of the profit and getting to travel all over the world in the process. Her trips to far-away places opened her eyes to the fact that, compared with the U.S., other countries often have much more sophisticated ideas concerning nature and the aesthetic value of their land. This has affected how she envisions her role at home. The business has since been sold, opening up even more time and resources to become involved in volunteer work. Sandra finds this extremely emotionally gratifying, as well as being an opportunity to meet terrific people.

Watching her pursue a personal vision for saving our little corner of the earth inspires us to ask the question, “How do we raise and nurture more like her?” Apparently, her childhood was spent camping and sailing around the Great Lakes, exploring the woods with her cousins, and braving the icy cold waters of Lake Superior. Now, still drawn to water and nature as an adult, she summers up on Catawba Island and winters in Key West. And, of course, she’s involved in conservation activities in both of her homes away from home. Sandra says that her love of nature is tied closely to her love for surprises. Nature is full of unscheduled events, things we do not expect to see. When a wild animal walks through your backyard, they never tell you that they are coming. Venturing into the woods, you never know what you will find. Sandra McMannis intends to save those surprises for those who are yet to come along. And for that, we are thankful.

Volunteer Highlight

by Christa Markusic and Jean Gokorsch

Ways to Give to WRLC

There are many ways that you can contribute to the financial success of Western Reserve Land Conservancy. Please contact Leah Whidden or Jean Gokorsch for more information at 440-729-9621.

Outright Gifts

- Cash
- Gift of support: a financial contribution on someone else’s behalf
- Memorial gift: a financial contribution in memory of a friend or relative
- Matching gift: an additional financial contribution from your employer
- Online donation
- Automatic monthly giving program
- Securities
- Real estate

Planned Gifts

- Life income plans
- Charitable gift annuity
- Charitable remainder trust
- Charitable lead annuity or unitrust

Deferred Gifts

- Testamentary gifts
- Retirement plan benefits
- Life insurance
Since the inception of Western Reserve Land Conservancy, several field offices have opened throughout our service area in order to help us achieve our land protection goals better.

Currently, in addition to our Headquarters Office located in Geauga County in Chesterland, we have a Firelands Field Office in Oberlin, a Medina Field Office in Medina Township, a Summit Field Office located in Akron and an Eastern Field Office located in Trumbull County.

Andy McDowell heads up our Firelands Office with assistance from Kate Pilacky. Andy has been a field director for the Land Conservancy since 2006 and has been instrumental in several projects in Lorain, Erie, and Huron counties.

Bill Jordan heads up our Medina Office, which also serves Ashland and Wayne counties. Bill worked for Medina Summit Land Conservancy before the merger and is now employed by Western Reserve Land Conservancy.

Our Summit Field Office, which serves Summit, Portage, and Stark counties, is run by Eddie Dengg. Eddie worked for the former Chagrin River Land Conservancy in the late 1990s. Eddie then left to pursue other interests, returning to work as the Summit field director for the Land Conservancy in 2007.

Scott Hill is the Land Conservancy’s eastern field director and will work out of our Trumbull Office, once he has finished remodeling the space. This office will serve Ashtabula, Trumbull, and Mahoning counties. Scott served on the Board of Trustees for Chagrin River Land Conservancy and then Western Reserve Land Conservancy before resigning to become our eastern field director.

Special thanks to Betsy Juliano and Allen Ederer for providing the office space that makes these important local connections possible.
Spring is truly the season of changes. As nature tries to put so much activity into one season, it would seem that spring is the peacekeeper between the drastic differences of winter and summer. Eager for the changes, outdoor enthusiasts also flock to their favorite locations to enjoy the tailings of winter, the harbingers of summer, and the energy that spring seemingly puts forth. Below are some favorite spring endeavors and locales from WRLC staff from across the Western Reserve.

Western Region
by Andy McDowell, Firelands Field Director

The western shoreline of Lake Erie is always a popular spring birding destination. Each year, avian enthusiasts gather at some of the better-known locations such as Magee Marsh State Wildlife Area, Crane Creek State Park, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, and Sheldon’s Marsh and Old Woman Creek State Nature Preserves. Nationally known as one of the best spring birding locations in the country, the boardwalk at Magee Marsh State Wildlife Area, adjacent to Crane Creek State Park, is a great location for amateur birders to ‘tag along’ with seasoned veteran birders. Arrive on a weekend morning in early May through Mother’s Day weekend for an unforgettable birding experience along the boardwalk or up on the observation tower adjacent to the Sportsmen’s Migratory Bird Center. The sheer numbers and variety of migrating song and shore birds is nothing short of spectacular.

Off the beaten path are lesser known good birding locations that also combine excellent wildflower viewing. Erie Metroparks Edison Woods Preserve in southeastern Erie County offers over 1,300 acres of wet woodlands, marsh meadows, sandstone cliffs and hillside painted with trillium. A half-mile boardwalk also weaves its way through the woods, one of the largest intact forests in Northern Ohio. A little further south into Huron County is the Augusta-Anne Olsen State Nature Preserve, just north of the Village of Wakeman. Containing an inspiring floodplain forest along the Vermilion River, Augusta-Anne offers an unbelievable display of Virginia bluebells and trillium and a variety of woodland birds including scarlet tanagers and various wood warblers. Sportsmen visiting Augusta-Anne in the spring can also add to their repertoire some steelhead fishing along a stretch of the Vermilion River where there is still plenty of elbow room. In early spring, the Willard Marsh State Wildlife Area in southwest Huron County offers good waterfowl viewing and is often an overlooked location for sportsmen looking to harvest a spring turkey during the spring turkey season.

Central Region
by Eddie Dengg, Field Director, Central Region

A good hike is the key to fully enjoying the springtime sights, sounds, and smells. You can’t get the full benefit from your car or from your yard. As you exercise and explore nature on some of northeastern Ohio’s best trails, your body and soul will thank you. The centerpiece of the Western Reserve’s green infrastructure, Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP), is an ideal place to walk, get your blood pumping and throw off winter’s white mantle of lethargy. The Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, or any of the dozens of other trails in the park, will invigorate you with springtime freshness and the thrill of new beginnings. On the Boston Run Trail, located near Happy Days Lodge on Route 303 just east of Peninsula, the spring wildflowers are spectacular. From violets and bloodroot to marsh marigolds and spring beauties, this 3.5 mile trail is a wonderful, albeit moderately challenging, place to enjoy the spring.

While the CVNP is the centerpiece, our region is blessed with a number of lesser-known gems. In Wayne County, the old growth forest at Johnson Woods State Nature Preserve is a 500-year-old stand of oak trees with a sensitively placed boardwalk trail built from recycled material. This preserve, operated by the ODNR Division of Natural Areas and Preserves, boasts over 65 species of spring wildflowers. The dazzling array, punctuated by three foot diameter logs and standing trees, is an amazing sight to behold.

The Portage Park District’s Towner’s Woods is another favorite spot for springtime hikes. The 2,000 year-old Hopewell Indian mound situated above Lake Pippen is a gorgeous place to stand and contemplate the coming season while soaking in the new life, opening buds, and unfurling leaves all around. From this park, the Portage Hike and Bike Trail is easily accessible as well. The Portage Parks have done a fabulous job of creating this trail which will eventually connect Ravenna and Kent to the Metro Parks Serving Summit County Bike and Hike Trail. When these connections are complete, residents of Portage County will have a direct trail connection to the CVNP trail systems, as well as to the Cleveland Metroparks. Seeing these connections in trails, as well as in parks and preserved areas, is one of the benefits of living in the Western Reserve at this moment in history. Things are looking better than ever this spring along our trails. No matter which of these, or the hundreds of other trails in northeastern Ohio you choose, get outside this spring and renew your connection to the land and your spirit.
When I was a boy the day would come every spring, usually in April, when the sun would shine on my face and whatever was planned for the rest of the day got canceled. An ancient primitive need to run through the woods took over and as soon as I could escape the educational schedule, I would run through Modroo’s sugar bush, down the hemlock ridge and along the Chagrin River. The woods were coming alive with the promise of new life as wildflowers began to blossom, and suckers would swim upstream from Whitesburg Park and up the small tributaries of the Chagrin to spawn. The ritual of the run became so sacred for me that one day I would bury my boyhood dog on that hemlock ridge and take my future wife on that long run along the Chagrin. (To this day, my wife is the only person who I ever shared this with).

I now live along the Grand River in Ashtabula County and 30 years later that day still comes every spring when I know that I must postpone my scheduled events and answer the call to search out the secrets of the forest along its muffled paths. Thanks to the conservation efforts of sportsmen, spring has a new and exhilarating experience to offer those who are willing to get up in the wee hours of the morning: the call of the wild turkey. The alarm clock does not need to ring from April through May; my daughters now knock on the bedroom door and inform me that it is time to go listen for turkeys. Slipping through the forests and river bottoms along the Grand River in the pre-dawn darkness with one or both of my daughters, I can’t help but think about my walks along the Chagrin as a boy. My youngest daughter will tug on my arm and whisper that she is afraid of the dark and the memory is lost in the dark mist along the Grand.

The barred owls will belt out their classic “Who cooks for you” call as the first fingers of light begin peeking along the eastern horizon and the woods begin to wake. The cardinal will call when it is still almost completely dark and then the redwing blackbird will add its voice to the chorus. The light of the new day comes quickly now and the honking of Canada geese can be heard as they lift off the marsh and circle around their nesting area. The geese are very vocal and the woods echo with their calls when the spring chorus seems to pause for a few seconds as if waiting for the main event, and then it happens. The wild turkey from his roost in the old black walnut tree that hangs over the Grand River lets loose with a thunderous gobble and reminds all the creatures in the forest just who is in charge in the spring woods.

My youngest daughter squeezes my finger and points through the woods at what looks like a large, black beach ball slowly walking along the path. The gobbler struts through his territory and collects the hens and subordinate males as the sunlight breaks through the trees, and she whispers that she isn’t scared anymore.

As we walk back to the house for a cup of hot chocolate and breakfast, I think ahead of the day when I will walk through the forest with my grandchildren and share these same experiences, and I can’t help but be thankful. These are the very moments that we live for and without natural habitat, they are lost forever. This is the connection between the land and the people, the shared experience and the memories, that will be recalled from the rocking chair and passed down for generations to come.

A springtime afternoon in the woods

Eastern Region
by Scott Hill, Eastern Field Director

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Trillium bloom in a floodplain forest

“I don’t know what the future may hold, but I know who holds the future.”
RALPH ABERNATHY
The fourth annual fund raiser, hosted on Friday, September 7th at an elegant French country estate in Hunting Valley, netted $400,000. More than 700 guests with a passion for conservation (and conversation) milled about the beautiful home and gardens of Victoria and Owen Colligan, sipping cocktails accompanied by pommes frites topped with caviar and brie cheese dripping in fresh berries and macadamia nuts. Dinner was served under an expansive tent that protected party-goers from a brief thunderstorm. As has become the custom, Rich Cochran, presided over Paddles for Preservation, the live auction to save land.

Thank you to Victoria and Owen Colligan for hosting the evening and our event co-chairs, Andrea Hill and Alice Ake. We are especially grateful to our Presenting Sponsors Kinetico Water Systems and National City and for the corporate support we received from our sponsors.
Throughout the year, Western Reserve Land Conservancy offers a number of events and outreach programs across our region. They include family festivals, nature hikes and preserved property tours, educational programs, and river clean ups. This collection of photos highlights just a few of our recent events. For more information on the Land Conservancy’s events, please contact our headquarters at 440-729-9621.

**Upcoming Events**

Below are some of the events we are offering throughout the region in 2008. Join us in exploring our region’s diverse beauty and resources! Please check our website regularly for event descriptions, updates, and additions. www.wrlc.cc

**MARCH**

8th .... Triple Tap .......................................................... 4:00 pm
Patterson Fruit Farm, Chesterland
WRLC Tribs Committee, Gina Pausch

**APRIL**

19th ...... Boy Scout Camp Hike .....................................10:00 am
13782 Gore Orphanage Road
Firelands Field Office, Kate Pilacky

**MAY**

3rd ...... Adam’s Run Clean Up .....................................9:00 am
Summit Field Office, Eddie Dengg

17th ...... Spring Wildflower Hike ..................................10:00 am
Lorain County Metroparks,
Vermilion River Reservation
Firelands Field Office, Kate Pilacky

TBD ...... Chagrin River Headwaters Nature Hike
Chagrin River Headwaters, Portage Park District
Mantua Township
Summit Field Office, Eddie Dengg

TBD ...... Nature Hike in the Streetsboro Preserve
Portage Park District, Streetsboro
Summit Field Office, Eddie Dengg

**JUNE**

14th ...... Unique Coastline Bird and Nature Walk .....10:00 am
Sheldon Marsh State Nature Preserve, Huron
Firelands Field Office, Kate Pilacky

TBD ...... River Clean Up for Young Professionals
Location TBD
WRLC Tribs Committee, Gina Pausch

**JULY**

20th ...... Kids in the Creek ...........................................10:00 am
West Geauga Commons,
Russell Township
WRLC Tribs Committee, Gina Pausch

**AUGUST**

2nd ...... Canoe Trip in Old Woman Creek Estuary....10:00 am
Old Woman Creek Estuary, Huron
Firelands Field Office, Kate Pilacky

Please RSVP to the appropriate field office:

**WRLC Tribs (WRLC Headquarters)**
Gina ........................ gpausch@wrlc.cc .............. (440) 729-9621

**Firelands Field Office**
Kate.......................... kpilacky@wrlc.cc .............. (440) 774-4226

**Summit Field Office**
Eddie ..................... edengg@wrlc.cc .............. (330) 836-2271
Thank You

to the following people on behalf of Western Reserve Land Conservancy and our chapters.

Sandy Barbic, Summit County Soil and Water Conservation District
Mary Becker
Sigrid Bergfeld
Jim Bissell
Betty Blair
Peg and Rob Bobel
Al Bonnis
Buehlers Food Markets
Mark Buschor, Buschor Brokerage Co. Inc.
Gail Butler
Catharina Meints Caldwell
Dorothy Carney
Coleman Professional Services
Jan Cooper
Roger and Fran Cooper
Margaret Cummins
Bill DeCicco
David DiTullio
EnSafe
Kevin Bingham
Sam Barone
Mickey Rainey
Dr. and Mrs. Ibrahim Eren; Lorain County Tropical Greenhouse and Museum Association
Bob Fletcher
Sally Gardner
Geigs Orchard
Mary Garvin
Jim Gerspacher
Great Lake Brewing Co.
Laurel Gress
Rick Hawksley
Brenda Hembury
Jeff Holland
Lenore Hutchinson
Sarah Jane and Roger Ingraham
Andrea Irland, National Park Service, Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance
Congresswomen Marcy Kaptur
Charlotte Carson
John Katko
Sue and George Klein
Simon Kornblith
Fae Krokey
Elaine and Bill Lamb
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A monarch butterfly in Geauga County

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Phone: 440-729-9621
Fax: 440-729-9631
e-mail: info@wrlc.cc
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