



Western Reserve
Land Conservancy
OUR LAND. OUR LEGACY.

A Western Reserve Land Conservancy newsletter for
Cuyahoga, Geauga and Lake counties.

LANDLINE



www.wrlandconservancy.org

Spring 2014

Land protection project may help effort to reintroduce native brook trout

A partnership between the Land Conservancy and Cleveland Metroparks that added 30 acres to the South Chagrin Reservation in Solon may also prompt reintroduction of native brook trout in a stream there.

The Sulphur Springs Headwaters property, located off Hawthorn Parkway, was part of a larger tract that could have been developed for more than three dozen new homes under the existing zoning. The Land Conservancy and the park district worked together to acquire the parcel and permanently protect more than a mile of headwater streams feeding the South Branch of Sulphur Springs, a coldwater tributary to the Chagrin River that may be suitable for native brook trout.

Chagrin River Watershed Partners, in conjunction with Cleveland Metroparks and the Emerald Necklace Chapter of Trout Unlimited, is assessing the possibility of reintroducing a native strain of Ohio brook trout to Sulphur Springs.

Sulphur Springs Headwaters stands at the highest point of elevation in eastern Cuyahoga County and has tremendous environmental value: 3.6 acres of high-quality wetlands, a mature deciduous forest and habitat for diverse



Ohio's native brook trout are reproducing in some local streams.



Researchers monitor trout populations.

plant and animal populations, many of which are threatened or endangered. The property is adjacent to about 3,800 acres of protected parkland and includes a section of the Buckeye Trail.

In 1972, Dr. Andrew White of John Carroll University found two reproducing populations of native brook trout in the headwaters of the Chagrin River in Geauga County. At the time, it was believed that all of Ohio's native brook trout – fish that can survive

[see brook trout page 2](#)

New field office will serve eastern region

The Land Conservancy will soon open a new field office in Chardon.

The office, located at 102 East Park Street in the historic Chardon Square, will provide a more central location for the organization's land-protection work in Geauga, Lake, Ashtabula, Trumbull, Mahoning and other eastern Ohio counties, according to Brett Rodstrom, vice president of eastern operations for the Land Conservancy. The Chardon location replaces our former Painesville office.

[see field office page 3](#)

Land Conservancy applauds governor's Clean Ohio plan



This Land Conservancy-protected property in Trumbull and Ashtabula counties is an important stopover site for migrating waterfowl, including ducks, geese and swans.

The Land Conservancy is applauding Gov. John Kasich's plan to allocate \$100 million for Clean Ohio Fund conservation programs in his proposed capital budget bill for 2015-2016. The state legislature approved the bill.

The funding will become available starting July 1.

"This is a huge step forward for conservation in Ohio and a genuine recognition of the importance of preserving our state's tremendous natural resources," said Rich Cochran, the Land Conservancy's president and CEO. "We applaud the governor for his support of one of the most valuable and impactful programs we have seen. Clean Ohio will continue to create healthier, more vibrant communities across our state."

This marked the first time Clean Ohio funding has been included in the Kasich budget proposal. Clean Ohio, which was approved and renewed by voters, is a pool of state bond dollars that matches local funds for qualifying projects. In his testimony before the House Finance Committee, Timothy S. Keen, director of the Ohio Office

of Budget and Management, announced that \$75 million in Clean Ohio funds is proposed for open space, \$12.5 million for trails and \$12.5 million for the Agricultural Easement Purchase Program. The Clean Ohio program has helped the Land Conservancy and its partners preserve thousands of acres of parkland and natural areas, create trails and protect some of the state's richest farmland.

Brook trout continued

in only the coldest and cleanest water – had died off due to pollution and development. Subsequent DNA testing confirmed that these fish were the remnants of the original brook trout that lived in Ohio's streams and rivers after the glaciers retreated some 10,000 years ago.

State and local researchers wondered if there could be even more.

No additional populations were found when the state surveyed streams in the Chagrin, Grand and Rocky River watersheds. But the study found more than a dozen suitable sites for reintroduction of brook trout – very small, spring-fed streams that are completely forested. From 1996 to 2004, native brook trout – raised first in a private hatchery at University School and then at a state-operated one in Castalia – were reintroduced to those creeks.

Today, a handful of those streams still have reproducing populations of native brook trout, according to state monitoring reports. In nearly each case, the properties containing the streams have been protected by parks, conservation easements or both.

Funding for the Sulphur Springs Headwaters project was secured through the state's Clean Ohio Fund, the Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program and local donations secured by the Land Conservancy and matched, dollar for dollar, by Cleveland Metroparks.

What is a conservation easement?

The Land Conservancy has preserved a lot of land – nearly 40,000 acres – but owns relatively little property. So how do we protect land without owning it?

We use the conservation easement, a voluntary agreement that allows a landowner to limit the type or amount of development on his or her property while retaining private ownership of the land. The easement is signed by the landowner, who is the easement donor, and the Land Conservancy, which is the party receiving the easement. The Land Conservancy accepts the easement with understanding that it must enforce the terms of the easement in perpetuity. After the easement is signed, it is recorded with the county and applies to all future owners of the land.



Brett Rodstrom, vice president of eastern operations for the Land Conservancy, in front of the new Chardon office.

Field office continued

Once the office is up and running – renovations are still being completed – Rodstrom, Alex Czayka, the Land Conservancy’s eastern associate field director, and Director of Government Relations Joy Mulinex will be based in Chardon. Other staff members will work there from time to time.

“We feel this is a great location not only for our land-preservation work but for all the people we work with, including farmers, other landowners and our conservation partners,” Rodstrom said.

Rodstrom said the Land Conservancy is exploring the possibility of creating a special gallery in the front of the Chardon office using barn siding but has not yet determined how the project would be funded. The gallery would celebrate all of the land-protection work done in the region. Rodstrom said supporters with ideas about funding this project can contact him at brodstrom@wrlandconservancy.org or (440) 867-6659.

The Land Conservancy has permanently preserved a significant amount of acreage in the region to be served by the Chardon office. In Geauga County, the organization has preserved 108 properties totaling 7,555 acres followed by Trumbull County (49 properties and 7,319 acres), Ashtabula County (56 properties and 6,032 acres), Lake County (25 properties and 1,209 acres) and Mahoning County (four properties and 121 acres).

The Land Conservancy is headquartered in Moreland Hills and has additional field offices in Cleveland, Akron, Medina, Oberlin and Orrville.

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BRETT RODSTROM

Congress weighing extension conservation tax incentive

The tax benefits of protecting your farm or family land with a voluntary conservation agreement may become even stronger if Congress approves an enhanced federal incentive it is now considering.

In April, the Senate Finance Committee voted to extend the tax incentive for landowner-led conservation efforts for 2014 and 2015. The conservation provision, first enacted by Congress in 2006 and extended several times since, expired at the end of 2013, and extending it has been a priority for the Land Trust



Alliance, the national organization to which the Land Conservancy belongs.

According to LTA, donations of conservation easements had increased to one million acres a year under the provision, which enables farmers, ranchers, forestland owners and other modest-income landowners to receive a meaningful tax benefit for their very valuable donations.

The enhanced tax incentive legislation, which has been supported by a broad coalition of agricultural, sportsmen, forestry and conservation organizations, needs approval from the Senate and House.

The enhanced incentive helps landowners of modest means choose conservation by:

- Raising the maximum deduction a donor can take for donating a conservation easement from 30 percent of his or her adjusted gross income (AGI) in any year to 50 percent;
- Allowing qualified farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100 percent of their AGI; and
- Increasing the number of years over which a donor can take deductions from six to 16.

Without the enhanced easement incentive, an agricultural landowner earning \$50,000 a year who donated a conservation easement worth \$1 million could take a total of no more than \$90,000 in tax deductions. Under the enhanced incentive, that landowner can take as much as \$800,000 in tax deductions – still less than the full value of his or her donation, but a significant increase.



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Land Conservancy captures Dominion award

Western Reserve Land Conservancy was honored to receive a special Dominion East Ohio Community Impact Award from the Dominion Foundation and Inside Business Magazine. The Land Conservancy received the Environmental Impact Award for its work with Lake Metroparks to preserve Lake Erie Bluffs.

The Land Conservancy was one of 12 winning community organizations and received a \$10,000 grant to continue its work.

Lake Erie Bluffs, located in Perry Township, is an approximately 600-acre preserve with nearly two miles of undeveloped coastline. Several rare birds of have been spotted on this site, most notably a family of Merlins – the first Ohio nesting record of this state-listed raptor since the 1830s. Other rare bird species found on the property include the Alder Flycatcher, the Blue-winged Warbler and the White-eyed Vireo.

A panel of community judges chose the winners from among 90 entries, submitted by organizations throughout Northeast Ohio. The award recognizes cities or organizations that have made an impact in the community. The Dominion Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Dominion Resources Inc., Dominion East Ohio's parent company, funds the Community Impact grants.

The Dominion Foundation is dedicated to the economic, physical and social health of the communities that Dominion companies serve. Since 1996, Dominion East Ohio has distributed more than \$1.1 million in Community Impact Awards to organizations throughout its service area.

Our mission

From the countryside to the city, we provide our region with natural places that nourish and support vibrant and prosperous communities by identifying, preserving, restoring and maintaining essential assets like clean water, working farms, wildlife areas, and parks.

Help us by donating

Western Reserve Land Conservancy is a nonprofit organization that depends on supporters like you to preserve our natural resources and farmland and to revitalize our urban neighborhoods. Please consider making a donation to support our work. You can use the envelope included in this newsletter.

Contact Us

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