



Western Reserve
Land Conservancy
OUR LAND. OUR LEGACY.

A Western Reserve Land Conservancy newsletter for
Erie, Huron and Lorain counties.



LANDLINE

www.wrlandconservancy.org

Spring 2014

Farmland preservation tradition is all in the family

A Huron County couple has continued a family tradition of farmland preservation by permanently preserving 750 acres with conservation easements granted to the nonprofit Western Reserve Land Conservancy.

Bob and Deb Bumb – fifth- and sixth-generation farmers, respectively – have voluntarily protected their agricultural land in western Huron County, southwestern Erie County and eastern Sandusky County in conjunction with the Land Conservancy.

The Bumbs grow corn, soybeans and wheat, using some of the most modern agricultural technology available to produce thousands of bushels for the world's food and ethanol markets. Bob's parents, Robert F. and Ruth Ann Bumb, along with Bob and Deb's three daughters and son-in-laws are all involved in the operation, in one way or another.

"We farm, and we wanted this to always remain farmland," Bob Bumb said. "We see so much land turned into houses and developments. I feel very, very good about preserving our land for the present and for the future. I don't like change, and I think it is pretty special to be where we are. We've got something special here."

The Bumbs now farm about 8,000 acres in Ohio and 340 acres in Indiana. According to Bob Bumb, the family is considering the permanent protection of another 1,500 acres



The Bumbs with the family's new John Deere combine.

if a wind farm planned for the region is not built.

Andy McDowell, vice president of western operations for the Land Conservancy, said, "It is always an honor and a privilege to work with a multi-generation farm family. Bob and Deb's respective families have been farming western Huron County for well over 100 years. Bob and Deb took steps to make sure their land can continue to be farmed beyond the next 100 years."

The Bumbs, who live near Bellevue, granted a total of 11 conservation easements to the Land Conservancy. Some of the protected property has been in the Bumb family for generations, while

see farmland page 2

Another 563 acres of farmland protected in Erie Co.

John Nuhn has permanently preserved the land his family has farmed for generations.

Nuhn worked with the nonprofit Western Reserve Land Conservancy to preserve 563 acres of rich agricultural land with conservation easements. The property, which is currently used for grain production and is part of a larger grain operation, is located in Florence and Vermilion

see acres 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.

Farmland continued

other parcels were acquired more recently. The project marked the Land Conservancy's first protected property in Sandusky County.

In 2010, Deb's parents, Howard and Sharon Smith, preserved 685 acres of family farmland in Huron County with Land Conservancy conservation easements. This farmland includes a 462-acre tract along the West Branch Huron River and a 131-acre parcel in Peru Township. The latter property has been in Howard Smith's family since the 1830s and has been designated a Century Farm by the Ohio Department of Agriculture. The Smith family's farm operations are centered on a third parcel, a 93-acre tract on Dogtown Road in Sherman Township that contains a portion of Slate Run, a tributary to the Huron River.



The Bumbs now farm about 8,000 acres.

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.



The protected Nuhn property is north of the Ohio Turnpike.

Acres continued

townships in eastern Erie County.

The protected land is north of the Ohio Turnpike and near Lorain County Metro Parks-owned property.

Nuhn, who is on the Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors, became interested in conservation easements after talking to other farmers who have preserved their land or are in the process of doing so.

“We wanted to make sure the land stays in agriculture,” Nuhn said. “A lot of people in our region have sold off parts of their farms for houses. We did not want to see that. The biggest thing was keeping it as farmland.”

Nuhn added, “In the northern part of Erie County, we’re close enough to (Lake Erie) that there is quite a bit of pressure in favor of development, so we’re sort of going against the tide. To the south, it is a little easier (to protect farmland).”

Nuhn grows corn, wheat and soybeans on the protected property, some of which is only a half-mile from Lake Erie. He also operates a small excavating company.

“I could not be happier with what John Nuhn preserved in 2013,” said Andy McDowell, vice president of western operations for the Land Conservancy. “It can be challenging to preserve rich farmland in Erie County due to increasing conflicts for how land should be used. Erie County, especially the eastern half, has some very unique soils that need to be protected. I commend John for his forethought.”

The Land Conservancy, which has its Firelands Field Office in Oberlin, has now preserved 16 properties and 1,492 acres in Erie County. The Land Conservancy’s primary preservation tool is the conservation easement, in which a property owner voluntarily surrenders the right to develop his or her land in the future.

“The biggest thing was keeping it as farmland.”

JOHN NUHN

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.



Western Reserve Land Conservancy

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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.

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