



Western Reserve
Land Conservancy
OUR LAND. OUR LEGACY.

A Western Reserve Land Conservancy newsletter for
Medina and Wayne counties.

LANDLINE



www.wrlandconservancy.org

Spring 2014

Parkland acquisition adds to green corridor

An approximately 600-acre, two-mile-long corridor of preserved land now runs through northern Medina and Medina Township thanks to the efforts of the city, the township, the Medina County Park District, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Western Reserve Land Conservancy and other groups. Now a second – albeit smaller – green corridor is emerging in southeastern Medina.

With the help of the Land Conservancy, the county park district has acquired a 46-acre parcel on the east side of Wadsworth Road (State Route 57) in Montville Township adjacent to the Medina border. The acquisition creates a 177-acre nearly unbroken green corridor through this portion of the city and township. Only one or two privately owned parcels now stand between the county and city parkland.

The acquisition is significant because of its location near the city's 35-acre Jaycee Park, 80-acre Roscoe Ewing Park and 16-acre Sam Masi Park that form the green corridor in southeastern Medina. The parcel lies just outside the city of Medina in Montville Township. Jaycee and Roscoe Ewing are passive parks with trails and picnic areas, while Sam Masi features some active recreation facilities.

The county park district's Wadsworth Road property includes forests, approximately 2,900 linear feet of tributaries to the West Branch



A pond is one of the features on the 46-acre parcel acquired by the Medina County Park District.



of the Rocky River and a pond. The land also provides habitat for a variety of native plants and animals, including Redback salamanders, Red-shouldered hawks and black walnut and elm trees.

The Wadsworth Road property purchase was funded through a Clean Ohio Conservation Fund grant and involved a generous bargain sale from the seller who is very happy that the land on which she and her husband raised their children will be permanently protected. The Land Conservancy helped the county park district secure the

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New Medina field office perched on edge of preserve

The Land Conservancy's Medina field office is now located on a property the organization helped preserve.

Last month, the Medina County Park District agreed to allow the Land Conservancy to relocate its field office to a former golf driving range pro shop at Medina Marsh Preserve on Fenn Road in Medina Township. In 2013, the Land Conservancy helped the park district acquire the 87-acre preserve, which included the former driving

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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.

Parkland continued

Clean Ohio funding for the project and holds a conservation easement on the property.

"We value our partnerships with both the Medina County Park District and the city of Medina, and we were happy to be able to help the park system acquire this key parcel," said Andy McDowell, vice president of western field operations for the Land Conservancy. "Any time we can help create protected corridors of land through conservation easements and parkland acquisitions, we're preserving habitat in which people, animals, and plants will thrive."

According to Thomas K. James, director of Medina County Park District, the forested area on the property was a key factor in the acquisition. "Forested property is a key natural resource worthy of preservation. This property has great scenic value with its wooded areas and ravines. We are grateful for the assistance of the Clean Ohio Fund and the Western Reserve Land Conservancy that made this project possible," James said.



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.



Bill Jordan at the new Medina Marsh Conservation Center on Fenn Road.

Field office continued

range as well as undeveloped natural areas along the West Branch of the Rocky River.

The Land Conservancy needed to find a new home when the Community Design Committee sold the Prospect Street building that formerly housed the Medina field office; the new owner is returning the structure to a private residence. The county park district subsequently offered to let the Land Conservancy use the existing building at Medina Marsh.

The address of the new location is 4266 Fenn Road, Medina, Ohio 44256.

The preserve itself is not yet open to the public but the building – called the Medina Marsh Conservation Center – will serve both the park district and the Land Conservancy. The protected property is known for its remarkable natural resources, including a heron rookery with about a dozen nests and two high-quality wetlands.

“We are extremely grateful to the Medina County Park District and (Director) Tom James for partnering with us on the Medina Marsh project and the opening of a conservation center on the property,” said Keith McClintock, vice president of conservation for the Land Conservancy. “Having a presence on this outstanding property will constantly remind all of us that it is important to preserve these natural wonders while we can.”

Bill Jordan, the Land Conservancy’s Medina associate field director, will be based at the new field office. Other Land Conservancy staff members will work at the office several days a week.

The county park district’s acquisition of Medina Marsh was the latest link in a corridor of conserved land through parts of Medina and Medina Township – one that is two miles long and covers more than 600 acres. The Medina Marsh parcel connects the county park district’s 41-acre Vansco Nature Preserve to Medina’s 308-acre Reagan and Huffman parks, which in turn are adjacent to Lake Medina, a former reservoir that is now a 190-acre county park.

Experts say such natural, unbroken corridors are important to wildlife and plants and contribute to a higher quality of life in a community through outdoor recreation opportunities and higher property values.

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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