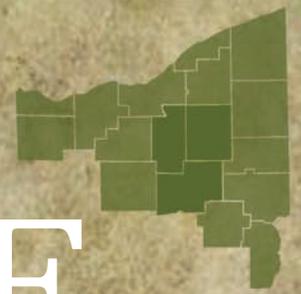




Western Reserve  
Land Conservancy  
OUR LAND. OUR LEGACY.

A Western Reserve Land Conservancy newsletter for  
Portage, Stark and Summit counties.

# LANDLINE



www.wrlandconservancy.org

Spring 2014

## Land Conservancy, Museum partner to protect rare Summit County bog

Western Reserve Land Conservancy and the Cleveland Museum of Natural History are preserving a rare tamarack bog in Summit County, one that is home to 11 rare plant and animal species.

The 58-acre Long Lake Bog, located in Coventry Township, has been permanently preserved through a partnership between the nonprofit Land Conservancy and the Museum. The Land Conservancy helped the Museum purchase the land with the help of Clean Ohio and Ohio Environmental Protection Agency funding and will hold a conservation easement on the property.

The Museum will own and manage the bog, which is adjacent to Portage Lakes State Park and Portage Lake Wetland, a state nature preserve about eight miles southwest of downtown Akron.

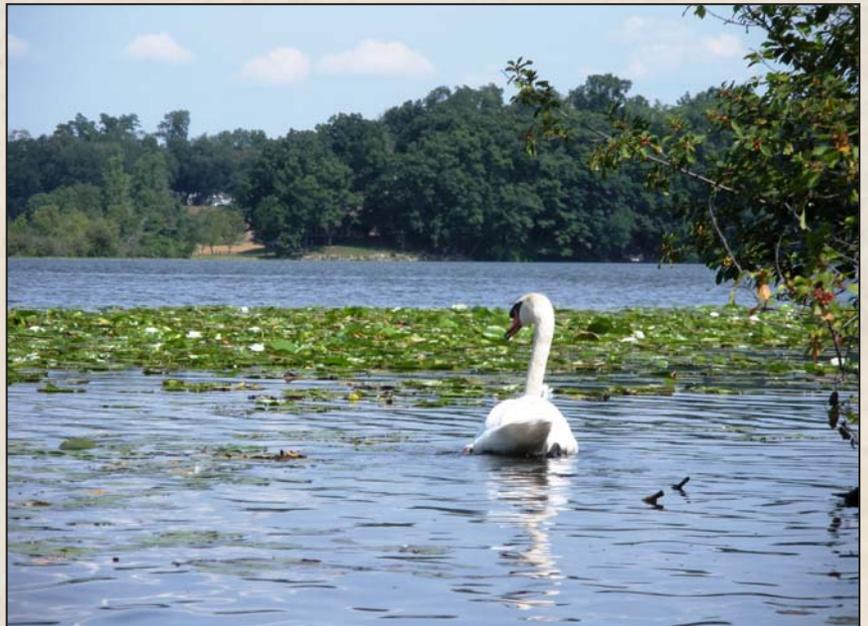
"We are thrilled to be able to play a role in the preservation of this amazing property along with the Cleveland Museum of Natural History," said Keith McClintock, vice president of conservation for the Land Conservancy. "Development has dramatically reduced Ohio's wetlands, and preserving a property like Long Lake Bog protects rare habitat and improves water quality."

McClintock noted that Long Lake Bog is in the watershed of the Tuscarawas River, a state-designated impaired body of water. The state has established a level of pollutants for the river – called the Total Maximum Daily Load, or TMDL – that it can receive and still safely meet water quality standards.

The protected property is identified in the Summit County Trail and Greenways Plan.

James Bissell, director of conservation for the Museum's Center for Conservation & Biodiversity, said, "Long Lake Bog has four rare plants not present within the museum's other glacial fen preserves.

see bog page 2



Long Lake Bog is a natural treasure in Summit County.

## Efforts to preserve former camp get boost from agreement, open house



An open house drew hundreds to Crowell Hilaka in Richfield.

A group of community leaders, conservationists, outdoor recreation advocates and historians is looking at ways to preserve Crowell Hilaka, the 336-acre former Girl Scout camp in Richfield Township.

The property is known for its extraordinary natural resources and historic landmarks.

A fall open house sparked new interest in preserving the property and prompted an increase in philanthropic pledges to the Friends of Crowell Hilaka, a group trying to

see camp 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.

## Bog continued

No true bogs, the common bogs across Canada and Alaska, are present in Ohio. The museum's Fern Lake Bog and Singer Lake Bog have recently been placed into a relatively new natural community type - poor fen. Poor fens and rich fens such as Long Lake Bog are ranked as globally rare within North America." The museum has inventoried all glacial lakes within Portage Lakes State Parks during the last 25 years. One of the rare plants found by museum staff adjacent to Long Lake Bog in 1959, bullhead lily, is only known from only one other site in Ohio - Magee Marsh on Lake Erie.

The Long Lake Bog wetlands are in the highest quality category established by the state and include the tamarack forest along with surrounding Alder shrub fen, greater bur-reed meadows and fen sedge meadow habitats. The property is home to several species that are listed as rare, endangered or threatened, including the globally rare bog bluegrass and state-threatened bog birch.



## 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.



Visitors check out the historic Kirby's Mill.

## Camp continued

save the former camp. In addition, the owner of the property, the Girl Scouts of North East Ohio, has entered into a contingent purchase agreement with the nonprofit Land Conservancy, which has convened a coalition of community advocates in its continuing search for a purchaser aligned with its preservation mission.

In addition to the Friends group, the Land Conservancy and GSNEO, others involved in the informal talks have included representatives from Richfield Township, the Village of Richfield, Summit County Council, the Richfield Historical Society and the Buckeye Trail Association, as well as township and village residents.

"There are no guarantees, but we have assembled a very forward-thinking group of people who are committed to exploring all the possibilities for preserving this extraordinary property," said Joe Leslie, the Land Conservancy's director of acquisitions. "We hope we can produce a positive result."

Leslie said the Land Conservancy now has until November to finalize the acquisition.

The property is the former estate of inventor James B. Kirby, who sold the land to the Cleveland Girl Scouts in 1937. For more than 70 years, thousands of girls camped at Crowell Hilaka, and the historic Kirby's Mill became the iconic symbol of the Cleveland Girl Scout Council, which was later folded into the 18-county GSNEO. Crowell Hilaka was one of several camps put up for sale in 2012.

The Friends organization – originally made up of Girl Scout alumni familiar with the camp but now a diverse group that includes historians, civic boosters, outdoor enthusiasts, advertising executives, artists and others – has been instrumental in the effort to preserve Crowell Hilaka. In an effort to strengthen its message, the group recently unveiled a new tag line, "Preserve Ohio's Hidden Treasure," and a new logo, a streamline silhouette of Kirby's Mill.

## 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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