



Conservation partners permanently preserve nearly 1,500 contiguous acres in Ashtabula, Trumbull counties

After more than ten years of concerted efforts involving numerous stakeholders, Western Reserve Land Conservancy has permanently preserved 1,477 contiguous acres in Orwell Township in Ashtabula County and Bloomfield Township in Trumbull County.

Referred to collectively as Sugar Island Preserve, the conservation complex includes the historic Grand Valley Ranch and Greg Cahlik Preserve. Sugar Island Preserve is located in a key wetland conservation corridor one mile north of the Ohio Division of Wildlife's 9,000-acre Mosquito Creek Wildlife Area and five miles from the 7,400-acre Grand River Wildlife Area.

"In keeping with the Land Conservancy's goal to create webs of strategically connected natural and agricultural land throughout the region, this project is an impactful acquisition that furthers both natural area conservation and farmland preservation efforts," explained Brett Rodstrom, vice president of eastern field operations for the Land Conservancy.

Sugar Island Preserve is comprised of over 1,100 acres of diverse habitat for fish and wildlife including various successional stages of hardwood forest, wetlands, vernal pools, and old field habitat. The protection of these natural habitats provides shelter, food, and nesting areas for birds, fish, small and large mammals, and other wildlife. At least 20 plant and animal species listed by the State of Ohio as threatened or endangered have been documented on the property including the Northern Harrier, Sandhill Crane, American Bittern and Fireweed.

The protection of these natural habitats also improves water quality and the overall health of regional aquatic systems. Wise management of vegetated and forested buffers along the property's many tributaries will help control run-off, prevent erosion, and mitigate flooding to downstream communities such as the Villages of Roaming Shores and Rock Creek. In addition, a significant aquifer on the property is recharged by expansive wetlands on site. This is critically important as the Village of Orwell supplies its community

See Sugar Island Preserve on page 4

Lucien M. Clemons Park to open in Marblehead

Western Reserve Land Conservancy has officially acquired and transferred ownership of the former Lifeboat Station subdivision to the Village of Marblehead. The land will soon be open as a coastal park that will provide public access for fishing, bird-watching and other passive recreation opportunities. The park will be named after prominent local Coastguardsman Lucien M. Clemons.

“This is a monumental day for the Village of Marblehead,” explained Marblehead Mayor Jacqueline A. Bird. “With the leadership and guidance of Western Reserve Land Conservancy, the acquisition of Lucien M. Clemons Park has made a long awaited dream, a reality. This acquisition gives our administration great pride in knowing a village park with access to the shores of Lake Erie has been secured for our residents, visitors and future generations. The Marblehead community and many visitors to our peninsula have been behind this project from the start and we are ever so thankful for their support and patience.”

The park property, once owned by the Clemons family, is nestled near Clemons Cemetery, not far from Marblehead Lighthouse State Park and the current Coast Guard Station. Lucien M. Clemons Park boasts more than 2-acres of open green space and nearly 3-acres of submerged land creating a serene inlet that will be permanently preserved and utilized as a public park. The park will provide Marblehead residents, vacationers and tourists with non-motorized boat access to Lake Erie, ideal fishing and birding opportunities, as well as a place to relax and enjoy the Lake Erie scenery.

Rich Cochran, president and CEO of the Land Conservancy, said it is “an extraordinary opportunity” to make the site – already platted for a residential subdivision by the former owner – a public asset instead of another private development. More than 85 percent of the Lake Erie shoreline in Ohio is developed or privately owned.

In addition to providing public access to Lake Erie, the new park will complement regional tourism, which is the source of more than 2,800 jobs in Ottawa County. The inlet at the property provides great views of the lake and a rock break wall at the west end protects this cove. The village will work to restore pockets of native vegetation to attract local wildlife and migratory bird populations. Future plans call for public parking and restrooms across East Main Street on land already owned by the village.

Funding for the project was generously provided by donations from individuals in the community; a Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program grant administered by the Ohio Public Works Commission; a Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation



“Lucien M. Clemons Park is a gem on the shores of Lake Erie in the Village of Marblehead.”

- Jacqueline A. Bird
Mayor, Village of Marblehead

Program grant administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Office of Coastal Management; and a Nature Works grant administered by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Office of Real Estate.

Park informational signage will bring to life the history and legacy of Lucien M. Clemons and the Clemons family; the park will forever be a testament to Marblehead’s rich history of maritime rescue operations. Lucien M. Clemons and his brothers, Ai and Hubbard, were awarded the first-ever Gold Lifesaving Medals issued by the United States government for maritime rescue on the Great Lakes after saving two men from a schooner wreck in 1875. In 1876, Lucien was appointed as the first Keeper of the Marblehead Life Saving Station, one of seven original Life Saving Stations on the Great Lakes; he served in that position for more than 2 decades.

Rear Adm. J. E. Ryan, commander of the 9th Coast Guard District explained that Lucien M. Clemons played a prominent role in local and Coast Guard history. She said, “We believe naming the public park in Marblehead, Ohio after Clemons will strengthen the awareness and memory of the Coast Guard’s long, respected history on the Great Lakes.”

First-generation farmer permanently preserves farmland for future generations

First-generation farmer Bob Gale started a 280-acre dairy farm operation in 1980. The Gale Farm quickly transitioned from a dairy operation to an exclusive grain operation in the mid-1980s. Today, Gale owns 3,000 acres of land and cultivates nearly 2,000 acres of corn and beans annually.

In order to preserve the farmland for his grandkids and their future generations, Gale recently voluntarily donated a conservation easement on a 95-acre property located in southern Ashtabula County to Western Reserve Land Conservancy. The voluntary easement restricts the ability to develop the property, thereby conserving natural resources and keeping it permanently available for agricultural production.

The preserved property primarily consists of flat and gently sloping agricultural fields, of which 30 acres are considered prime farmland soils. "This is good farmland and it is economically viable in our area," Gale explained. "Like most farmers, I'd hate to see this land developed."

The remaining portion of the farm consists of mixed hardwood forest, including aspen, hemlock, red maple, beech, and birch. This forested section is deeply dissected by a number of stream-carved ravines boasting nearly 3,000 linear feet of Grand River tributaries.

"It's great to add another conservation-minded farming family to the fold in Ashtabula County," said Alex Czayka, eastern field director for Western Reserve Land Conservancy. "Gale Camp Farm is directly adjacent to the nearly 1,000-acre Cleveland Museum of Natural History's Grand River Terraces and several hundred acres of privately-owned, conserved lands in the Grand River Lowlands. We thank Bob Gale for permanently preserving his land and look forward to working with him on future projects."



Jim Rokakis receives Homer C. Wadsworth Award

In June, the Cleveland Foundation honored Jim Rokakis, Western Reserve Land Conservancy vice president and Thriving Communities director, with its 2016 Homer C. Wadsworth Award. The award is given annually to a local leader who has demonstrated creativity, innovation, risk-taking and good humor in a civic, volunteer, nonprofit or public sector role. Rokakis received the award at the 2016 Cleveland Foundation Annual Meeting presented by KeyBank.

Rokakis' career in public service has spanned 33 years, having served 19 years as a Cleveland City Councilmember and a decade as Cuyahoga County Treasurer before assuming his leadership role at Western Reserve Land Conservancy. He was instrumental in the passage of a state law allowing for the creation of county land banks, of which there are now 40. As director of Thriving Communities Institute, he has helped raise more than \$327 million for blight removal in Ohio's communities and more than \$2.5 billion nationally through Hardest Hit Fund reallocation. Rokakis has become one of the nation's leading experts on the foreclosure crisis and neighborhood revitalization.

"Jim has devoted his professional life to making Greater Cleveland a stronger, more vibrant community," said Ronn Richard, president & CEO of the Cleveland Foundation. "Jim's vision and tenacity have played a key role in the reinvention of dozens of blighted neighborhoods throughout Northeast Ohio and in the redevelopment of downtown Cleveland. His efforts will have a lasting impact on our region for generations to come, a true embodiment of the spirit of Homer Wadsworth."

Homer C. Wadsworth was executive director of the Cleveland Foundation from 1974 to 1983. He was known as a man of creativity, courage, commitment and innovation. Prior to his death in 1994, Wadsworth's friends and family established the Homer C. Wadsworth Award to identify and honor those in the community who best reflect those qualities.

Stella Dilik joins Land Conservancy leadership

Western Reserve Land Conservancy welcomes Stella Dilik as our new Chief Development Officer.



Dilik, who most recently served as Executive Director of Foundation and Systems Philanthropy at The MetroHealth System, will oversee all fundraising and development programs at the Land Conservancy, which is based in Moreland Hills. She will report to President and CEO Rich Cochran.

“We are extremely pleased that Stella is joining our team,” Cochran said. “She is an accomplished professional with an exceptional track record as a fundraiser and leader of teams. Just as important is the fact that Stella is deeply committed to our conservation mission.”

“Western Reserve Land Conservancy’s regional work to conserve and restore essential natural assets that nourish and support healthy communities is critical,” Dilik explained. “I am eager to develop a successful fundraising program that will generate the resources needed to fully support these programs and people, now and forever.”

At The MetroHealth System, Dilik served as a member of the leadership team and managed staff responsible for major gift fundraising, planned giving, corporate and foundation relations, annual fund, digital fundraising, endowments, and special events. Previously, Dilik spearheaded fundraising and community relations efforts as divisional director of development for the Salvation Army of Northeast Ohio. She also served as the development director for Lake Ridge Academy, an independent school in North Ridgeville. Dilik earned her bachelor’s degree in journalism from Miami University.

Sugar Island Preserve continued...

with water wells from a nearby property.

Additionally, the Land Conservancy is engaging in one of the largest wetland restorations in Northeast Ohio on the property. The project will restore more than 200 acres of wetlands and redirect nearly three miles of Snyder Ditch to a flowing wetland complex with expansive floodplain connectivity. Snyder Ditch was originally constructed to drain a large portion of the historic ‘Bloomfield Swamp’ in 1913 for farming purposes. Today, Snyder Ditch flows north from Mosquito Creek Wildlife Area through the Grand Valley Ranch property and into Rock Creek before joining the Grand River just west of the Village of Rock Creek. Returning the ditch and much of the bordering agricultural land to wetland will reduce sediment and nutrient discharge into Lake Roaming Rock in the Village of Roaming Shores.

“Still, agriculture remains an important part of the local community and rural economy in northern Trumbull County,” noted Alex Czayka, eastern field director for the Land Conservancy. “The Land Conservancy was fortunate to find a local, private partner that helped ensure that prime nearby farmland was preserved.” W.I. Miller and Sons voluntarily protected 300 acres of farmland adjacent to the Sugar Island Preserve with a donated agricultural easement held by the Land Conservancy. The easement prevents the prime farmland from being converted to other non-agricultural uses.

The vision for Sugar Island Preserve was made a reality through essential partnerships with Bloomfield Township, Orwell Township, Ashtabula County, Trumbull County, The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Ducks Unlimited, Ohio Department of Natural Resources - Division of Wildlife, Ohio EPA, Ohio Public Works Commission, US Fish & Wildlife Service and W.I. Miller & Sons Farm. Moreover, the Land Conservancy and its partners secured upwards of \$5 million in conservation and restoration funding for the 1,100-acre natural areas portion of the property from the Clean Ohio Fund, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Ohio EPA’s Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program.

“The conservation and restoration of Sugar Island Preserve would never have happened without the help of the local communities and our amazing partners,” Czayka emphasized. “We sincerely thank those that collaborated to make this visionary project a reality.”



Conservation connections in the Upper Cuyahoga River Basin



Landowners Dr. Lydia Furman and Mr. Todd Peter have donated a second conservation easement on property in Newbury Township, Geauga County, permanently preserving a 21-acre parcel adjacent to the 56-acre parcel preserved in 2003. The 21-acre property consists primarily of upland hardwood forests and open water emergent wetlands. A long history of beaver activity in the area has made this an ideal habitat for both nesting and migratory waterfowl and wading birds in addition to an array of amphibian and reptile species that call this property their home.

“We are happy to have worked with Lydia and Todd to carry out their conservation vision and expand a growing conservation corridor in the Upper Cuyahoga River Basin,” shared Brett Rodstrom, vice president of eastern field operations for Western Reserve Land Conservancy. Within a half mile of this project are a number of properties protected by different partners that are now all geographically connected. These include Geauga Park District’s 232-acre Burton Wetland Nature Preserve; the Nature Conservancy’s 396-acre White Pine Bog Forest; the 16,000-acre Akron Watershed Lands; and a number of Land Conservancy easements totaling over 150 acres.

Rodstrom summarized, “A person could now theoretically walk from the southeast corner of Newbury Township to the end of Geauga Park District’s Headwaters Park 12.5 miles away in Huntsburg Township and *never* leave permanently preserved property.”

Ohio Land Bank Conference features nationally renowned speakers

Western Reserve Land Conservancy hosted its sixth annual Ohio Land Bank Conference at the end of October in Cleveland. The conference has become a must-attend event for those in the public and private sectors who are interested in addressing the issue of blight in their communities. Attendees included county land bank professionals, government officials, nonprofit organizations and members of the general public.

“While the roots of the county land bank movement are right here in Cuyahoga County, there are now 40 land banks operating across Ohio to fight blight and repurpose properties,” said Jim Rokakis, vice president of the Land Conservancy and director of the Thriving Communities program. “The progress of many of these land banks is impressive – and the Ohio Land Bank Conference gave them a chance to share their stories.”

The conference featured more than 20 sessions according to Robin Darden Thomas, land bank program director for Thriving Communities. The program also featured two nationally renowned speakers: Mark McArdle and Julian Agyeman.

Mark McArdle, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Financial Stability at the U.S. Department of the Treasury, delivered a keynote address over lunch on Oct. 26. In his role, McArdle leads the Office of Financial Stability (OFS), which oversees the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), including its remaining investment and homeownership preservation programs, and advises the department on housing finance reform matters.

Julian Agyeman, Ph.D. FRSA FRGS, a professor of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning at Tufts University, delivered a keynote address over lunch on Oct. 27. He is the originator of the concept of ‘just sustainabilities,’ the full integration of social justice and sustainability, defined as: the need to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner, whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystems.



Mark McArdle



Julian Agyeman, Ph.D.



Beau Daane plants trees with his Fairmount Santrol colleagues at Dunham Tavern in Cleveland.



Alcoa employees planted 500 new trees in Cleveland with the Land Conservancy this fall; last year, they planted 350 new trees in Highland Hills.

Corporate partners help create healthy communities

As the largest land trust in Ohio, and one of the top ten in the United States, we believe it is our responsibility to create opportunities that actively involve our corporate partners and their employees in our conservation programs. For many years we have coordinated trash cleanups, invasive species removal efforts and other environmental beautification projects with partners, supporters, members and volunteers. Recently we introduced a massive urban reforestation program, Reforest Our City, which has provided increased opportunities to engage in our work. These activities give local companies and their employees the chance to make a difference in the community and play a huge role in protecting and restoring the environment and natural resources of northern Ohio, revitalizing urban centers, increasing tree canopy coverage and creating a healthy place for us all to call home.

In May 2016, Fairmount Santrol employees helped build a new green space at Dunham Tavern in Cleveland by planting large stature trees to create a border around the site. This planting was the initial project in Fairmount Santrol's long-term commitment to the Land Conservancy to create, protect and preserve the natural assets of our region. "Fairmount Santrol is pleased to partner with Western Reserve Land Conservancy to invest in the future of the region's tree canopy," shared Beau Daane, Fairmount Santrol's director of sustainable development. "This helps us achieve our GHG [greenhouse gas] sequestration goals and directly improve neighborhoods in Northeast Ohio."

Fairmount Santrol has long been a company dedicated to doing their part for the environment and sustainability; they truly live by their motto "Do Good, Do Well." To learn more about Fairmount Santrol's commitment to People, Planet and Prosperity, we encourage you to read their most recent Corporate Social Responsibility Report at <http://csr.fairmountsantrol.com/>

Thanks to a partnership of the Alcoa Foundation and American Forests, nearly two dozen Alcoa Cleveland employees planted 350 new trees in October 2015. The trees were planted on the largest remaining wetland property – nearly 10 acres – along Mill Creek, a tributary of the Cuyahoga River, in Highland Hills. The trees enhance wetland habitat and upland forest buffers in one of Ohio's most densely populated counties. "It was a privilege to partner with Western Reserve Land Conservancy in planting the hundreds of trees needed to restore the watershed along Mill Creek," explained Cary Dell, Cleveland coordinator of the Alcoa Foundation. "The Conservancy and Alcoas contributed to our Ten Million Trees planting program that Alcoa set to reach by 2020. Ten million new trees have the capacity to absorb more than 250,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide per year during their lifetime."

This year, Alcoa Cleveland employees planted 500 trees on a 25-acre soon-to-be park in Cleveland. You can learn more about Alcoa's commitment to the environment and sustainability by reading their most recent Sustainability Report at <http://www.alcoa.com/sustainability/en/home.asp>

Whether you are a longtime supporter or just beginning to get to know us, we hope that you will be inspired by the breathtaking natural resources that surround us, and motivated to do your part to protect and create the enduring and prosperous communities that make northern Ohio a truly unique place in our world.

Thank you very much!

Jon Logue
Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations

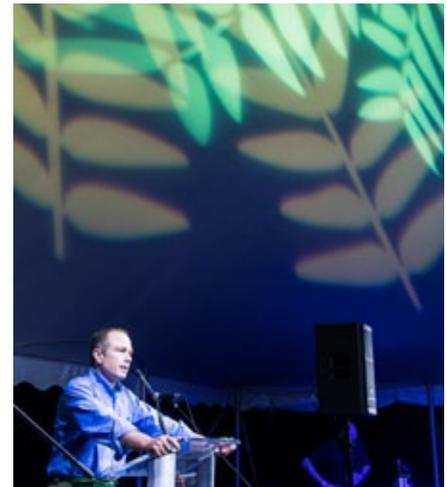
To find out more about our corporate partnerships, contact Jon at jlogue@wrlandconservancy.org or (440) 396-5528.

Guests celebrate at EverGreen EverBlue

EverGreen EverBlue, the popular annual benefit put on by Western Reserve Land Conservancy, welcomed guests “home” to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the merger that created the land conservation and restoration organization.

The event, which took place on Friday, Aug. 19, drew 350 guests to the Land Conservancy’s Conservation Campus. Throughout the evening, guests had the opportunity to explore the state-of-the-art, donated facility which combines the best in historic preservation and sustainable building technology.

The event raised nearly \$200,000 – through ticket sales, corporate support, and generous donations made during the event’s paddle raise – to support the Land Conservancy’s mission of providing the people of our region with essential natural assets through land conservation and restoration. Thanks to all who attended!



Rich Cochran, CEO and President, reflects on the tenth anniversary of the merger.



Guests explore the Conservation Center.



Betsy Juliano, Board Chair, welcomed the crowd.



Over 350 guests attended this year’s event.



Special thanks to our event chairs (L-R): Jeff Holland, Kathy Leavenworth, and Sandy & Claire McMillan



Generous guests pledged their support at the event helping raise nearly \$200,000.

2016 Event Sponsors





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Conservation Calendar



More than 50 people attended the 17th Annual **Grand River Clean Up** in late May and collected trash and debris from the banks of the State Wild and Scenic Grand River. Thanks to all who participated!



No one struck gold at the annual **Firelands Gold Panning** event held on the Vermilion River, but more than 40 people learned about aquatic species and water quality at the event in July.

*We are currently planning our 2017 Event Calendar.
Please visit www.wrlandconservancy.org/events for more information!*

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