

WESTMORELAND
LAND TRUST
ANNUAL REPORT 2023





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Front cover photo of Great Blue Heron courtesy of Judi Carvell



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October 28, 2024

Dear Friend of the Westmoreland Land Trust,

In December 2007 the Westmoreland County Commissioners had the vision to establish the Westmoreland Land Trust (WLT) to conserve special lands in Westmoreland County. The Land Trust continues this vision by conserving land that strengthens the environmental and economic vitality of Westmoreland County with visionary projects like the Schwarz Art and Nature Park and the St. Xavier Nature Preserve.

Once again 2023 was a significant year at the WLT as highlighted in the enclosed 2023 Annual Report! Achievements included completing rehabilitation of "Bellbrook", the Civil War-era guesthouse at the St. Xavier Nature Preserve, and moving WLT'S offices into Bellbrook and the Schwarz farmhouse. WLT previously worked out of loft space that had been generously donated by the Westmoreland Conservation District at the J. Roy Houston Conservation Center. It was our good fortune to have use of additional facilities as our need for additional office space grew.

During 2023 we also opened the Schwarz property for visitors; undertook extensive conservation plantings at the St. Xavier Nature Preserve; and significantly expanded our nature programming in Westmoreland County public schools and libraries. A highlight of the year was the September 9th, 2023 Open House at St. Xavier, when more than 350 visitors joined us to visit St. Xavier and celebrate its conservation. The Open House was also a way to recognize the work of our partners, our volunteers and our supporters. It provided the opportunity to thank the Sisters of Mercy for their remarkable commitment to conservation of the St. Xavier Nature Preserve, to thank all who support our work, and to recognize the induction of three individuals into WLT's Hall of Honor.

New Hall of Honor inductees Karen Jurkovic, John Lohr, and Loree Speedy were board members who contributed extraordinary effort to advance our work. We are profoundly grateful to them, and to so many of you who have contributed in one way or another to our work since our first days in 2007/2008.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill".

Bill Mihalco
Chair

The Westmoreland Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Contributions to the trust are tax-deductible under the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code to the extent of the law.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission

To conserve and steward land in Westmoreland County of special ecological, cultural or recreational value, for public benefit.

Vision

Throughout Westmoreland County open space and recreational land abounds, water resources are protected, and wildlife flourishes. Westmoreland County is known to families, businesses, and visitors for its high quality of life.

Values

The Westmoreland Land Trust values:

- **Conservation** of diverse real property that is:
 - in, or in close proximity to, Westmoreland County, and
 - culturally, historically, ecologically, recreationally, or scenically valuable.
- **Restoration, protection, and maintenance** of conserved property as appropriate for its best long-term stewardship.
- **Partnership** with public or private entities where beneficial to encourage collective effort.
- **Research and planning** in support of conservation efforts.
- **Promotion** and education of conservation opportunities and benefits.
- **Conformance** with the Land Trust Alliance Land Trust Standards and Practices.

As we assemble this report, we are reminded of our gratitude to all who share a commitment to Westmoreland County, and to conservation of its special lands.

WLT Highlights of 2023

- Engaging Karen Rose Cercone as a part-time Operations Assistant
- Hosting AmeriCorps Service Members Sarah Poklembo and Dominic Demangone
- Completing extensive conservation plantings at the St. Xavier Nature Preserve
- Completing rehabilitation of the house “Bellbrook” at the St. Xavier Nature Preserve
- Completing planning Phased Development of the Carl A. Schwarz Memorial Art and Nature Park
- Continuing to improve the Otto and Magdalene Ackermann Nature Preserve
- Managing and learning from the Twin Lakes Meadow
- Developing the 2023 Westmoreland Ramble
- Offering Environmental Education in Westmoreland County public schools and libraries
- Securing grants to support projects and operations
- Continuing to build WLT’s community of stakeholders and supporters
- Evaluating and selectively advancing conservation projects
- Securing invaluable assistance from volunteers throughout the year

Land Conservation

Land conservation work during 2023 focused on the St. Xavier Nature Preserve, the Otto and Magdalene Ackermann Nature Preserve, the Schwarz farm, and the Twin Lakes Meadow.

St. Xavier Nature Preserve

Background

On August 26, 2022, WLT acquired a 248-acre property in Unity Township from the Sisters of Mercy, for conservation as a nature preserve open to the public. The land includes the site of the former St. Xavier Academy and Convent. WLT's purchase of the property was made possible by a grant of \$1,100,000 from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources as well as generous financial support from the Sisters of Mercy.

The land has special significance for the Sisters of Mercy, for the former St. Xavier Academy and Convent were established by the first seven Sisters who came to the United States from

Mowing of St. Xavier meadow in 2023



Inset - Sam Stoner & John Lohr discuss mowing plans; Bottom - John Lohr explains care of tree tubes to Latrobe High School students

Carlow, Ireland in

1843. The Sisters of Mercy hold a strong commitment to the environment, and in 1993 adopted Principles Governing Stewardship of St. Xavier's. These principles guided WLT's plans for conservation of this land.

Conservation Work

Conservation work at St. Xavier started soon after the property's acquisition. In 2022 just over 80 acres of land were enrolled in the United States Department of Agriculture Conservation Reserve Enhancement Planting (CREP) program, which provided funding to support establishment and maintenance of conservation plantings. In fall 2022, 2380 trees and 612 shrubs were planted by Friendship Farms of Mount Pleasant to strengthen stream buffers. Conservation work continued throughout 2023, with late summer planting by Friendship Farms of over 90 acres of meadows of native grasses and wildflowers. WLT purchased seed from Ernst Seed in Meadville and Lone Maple Farms in New Alexandria, and engaged local farmer Sam Stoner for mowing, Lone Maple Farms for field preparation, and Friendship Farms for sowing (drilling) the native grass and wildflower seed. These extensive plantings were supported by a generous grant from the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation.

Principles Governing Stewardship of St. Xavier's Adopted January, 1993

1. We respect the sacredness of the land at Saint Xavier Cemetery, and, as such, we will maintain, make the necessary repairs, and provide room for future burials by pre-excavating the area where the old grotto used to be, and/or, the old markers were placed, or extend the cemetery to the east.
2. We value the opportunities Bellbrook provides for retreats and recreation. As such, we will maintain Bellbrook, make needed repairs, and add additions if/when necessary and when financially feasible.
3. We value the land at Saint Xavier for its beauty, for the ecological diversity it provides for many plants and animals, and for the fertility contained therein, and as such, we will continue to lease 115 acres to Mr. Firestone providing proper farming techniques, such as contour farming, crop rotation, fertilizing, etc. are employed. To guarantee that the above procedures are maintained, supervision may be necessary. As such, the Department of Agriculture's guidelines need be followed and recommendations for good maintenance be supervised by said Department.

We will abide by the Wetland Preservation Act and protect the wetland area. This action, will not only provide suitable habitat for organisms that inhabit the area, but will also help to purify the ground water and air.

We will continue to explore our relationship with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and/or other groups who may be interested in purchasing the grove or other areas to help us protect the land and enable revitalization of the grove.

We will consider reclaiming the orchards and planting new trees.

4. We value the Mercy ministry possibilities for the land, and, as such, will actively pursue ministries related to the service of the poor such as the Food Bank, etc., provided these organizations meet our guidelines as stated in #3.
5. We will continue to dialogue with the Latrobe community authorities and other interested parties and cooperate in any further development provided the guidelines stated in #3 are fulfilled and the cemetery and Bellbrook are protected.
6. We will consider selling that acreage that is outside our present and/or anticipated use due to the poor quality and location of the land provided that the sale is consistent in our own use of the land as described above.

Other Conservation Work at St. Xavier

Other work throughout 2023 included tending the nearly 3000 trees and shrubs that were planted in 2022, with care of their protective tubes, weed mats, and protective netting that deterred birds from entering the tree tubes. WLT Board member John Lohr was instrumental in coordinating work related to the conservation plantings, and Board member Patrick Roberts coordinated volunteer assistance of Latrobe High School Capstone Science Honor students for stewardship of the tree and shrub plantings.



Caring for tree tubes at St. Xavier

WLT engaged Brian Schmucker of Unity Memorials to fill large drainage holes in the farm fields and remove downed branches and trees throughout the arboretum alongside St. Xavier Road known as the Grove. The Grove includes many magnificent specimens which had been planted over the years by graduating classes of St. Xavier Academy. Over the course of the year, hunter volunteers worked extensively to remove additional downed trees.



Left: Rob Moffa, Jonathan Emert, and Lee Bickerstaff from ATI Latrobe at St. Xavier; Right: Rob Moffa cleaning sidewalks through the Grove



Removing litter along Route 30

Other 2023 volunteer work at St. Xavier included cleaning up litter along the sides of the roads and opening trails and farm roads throughout the property. In August volunteers from Civil and Environmental Consultants, Inc. and others completed extensive work around Bellbrook and through the Grove. October Jonathan Emert, Lee Bickerstaff, and Rob Moffa of ATI Specialty Steel Products, Latrobe worked to scrape and clean years of moss, dirt and debris from the long sidewalk through the Grove.

Throughout the year Fahringer McCarty Grey Inc. collected information as part of their preparation of a comprehensive plan for management and stewardship of the St. Xavier land. WLT also worked with Dr. Karen Kehoe and a Public History class at St. Vincent College to gather information about the history of St. Xavier.

In November THG Geophysics of Murrysville contributed extensive field work involving use of 3-D ground penetrating radar and electromagnetic terrain conductivity mapping to locate the foundations of the old St. Xavier Academy and Convent buildings. This research would culminate in a February 2024 report. WLT thanks THG Geophysics President Peter J. Hutchinson, Vice-President Kate McKinley, and Lead Geophysicist Matt Toland for their hours of work on this project.



Research carried out by THG Geophysics at St Xavier

Other Work at St. Xavier

Throughout the year Board member Kim Miller oversaw and personally helped with extensive rehabilitation of Bellbrook, the Civil War era guesthouse at St. Xavier. To remediate internal water damage to the house, rehabilitation entailed replacement of the furnace, plumbing, wiring, ceilings and floors, and the installation of ductwork. Green Solar Systems of Greensburg was engaged to construct a small solar array in the field behind Bellbrook. The construction work was done by several local contractors including Tom Mikan of Ligonier and Ken Skovenski of West Newton, and finished just in time for the September 9th, 2023 Open House.



Although the day was bleak for a winter visit by Green Solar (above), the completed array (photographed in April 2023) brings significant energy savings for Bellbrook



Some views in Bellbrook before and after rehabilitation courtesy of Bob DeJesus, Westmoreland Photographers Society

Bob DeJesus of the Westmoreland Photographers Society visited several times throughout the process of rehabilitation of Bellbrook and very generously established and contributed a photographic record of the rehabilitation effort.

During spring 2023, Bill Powers of PixCams and Dr. Jim Kellam of St. Vincent College placed three bird nest boxes outfitted with live webcams at St. Xavier. These allowed online observation of two families of Eastern bluebirds (below) and one family of house wrens through successful fledging of their nestlings.



Jim Kellam makes observations of a nest box and its bluebird nestling occupants



Celebration!

A September 9th 2023 Open House brought many Sisters and alumnae/i of St. Xavier Academy, and supporters of the work of the WLT. Former students came from throughout the Mid-Atlantic and from as far away as Idaho! Over 350 folks visited to celebrate conservation of the lovely 248-acre St. Xavier property, to tour Bellbrook and the grounds, and to reconnect with friends and classmates from years past.



Westmoreland County Parks contributed use of tents, tables and chairs; the Westmoreland Arts and Heritage Festival contributed use of golf carts; and many WLT Board members assisted staff in welcoming visitors, and hosting tours and discussions about the property. Sarah McIntosh and Sarah Middlemiss provided Celtic



harp music, and Bridget Smidga of Simply Good in Ligonier served refreshments from Simply Good and The Lunch Lady in Irwin.

Throughout the day WLT board members led walking and golf cart tours of the property, and visitors explored Bellbrook and the grounds, and learned about planning for the St. Xavier Nature Preserve. A ceremony allowed WLT Board Chair Bill Mihalco to welcome the visitors; Sister Patricia Flynn, Sister Sheila Carney, and Tom Guelcher to explain the long process leading up to conservation of the land; WLT Executive Director Betsy Aiken to thank all who contributed to its conservation; and Sister Cynthia Serjak to deliver a benediction.

At the Open House WLT recognized Karen Jurkovic, John Lohr, and Loree Speedy (pictured at right) with induction into WLT's Hall of Honor. Karen, John, and Loree are each long-time board members who have contributed extraordinary effort to advance the work of the WLT.

St. Xavier Open House

THE BOARD OF THE WESTMORELAND LAND TRUST
EXTENDS MANY THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

PLATINUM (\$1,000)

PATRICK AND LYNN GURRENTZ
ANN & LAURA LOFTUS, IN LOVING MEMORY OF SR. ELEANOR LOFTUS, RSM,
AND HER BROTHER EDWARD W. LOFTUS

GOLD (\$500)

CIVIL & ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS, INC.
CLARK-HUNTER FOUNDATION
UNITY MEMORIALS (BRIAN AND SHARON SCHMUCKER)
WESTMORELAND COUNTY AIRPORT AUTHORITY

SILVER (\$250)

COMMISSIONER DOUG CHEW
FAHRINGER MCCARTY GREY, INC.
GREEN SOLAR SYSTEMS LLC
BILL AND KATHY MIHALCO
THOMAS J. & JANICE MIKAN
PITTSBURGH PIRATES

BRONZE (\$100)

FRED BONONI
CAROLYN FALCON
TED HARHAI
DR. MARY ANN HVIZDOS, IN MEMORY OF OUR GRANDMOTHER MARY K. PEVARNIK
GREATER LATROBE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
LARRY LAUDE AND MARIANNE KASICA
LAUREL NURSERY / GARDEN CENTER
CAROL AND JOHN LOHR
LOWES OF LATROBE
NICKOS CHIMNEY COMPANY
DEBORAH PAVETTI, ST. XAVIER ACADEMY CLASS OF 1972
PITTSBURGH STEELERS
PATRICK ROBERTS
SECOND HALF WEALTH MANAGEMENT
KEN SKOVENSKI
TROUT UNLIMITED

AND ALL WHO HAVE HELPED
WITH PREPARATIONS AND THE OPEN HOUSE



Celebration!

Children’s activities rounded out the day, including gyotaku (Japanese fish printing) hosted by Latrobe Senior High School honor students, t-shirt tie-dying, and a range of other activities organized by Paula Purnell, WLT’s Coordinator of Educational Programming, and fellow PA Master Naturalists.



Photos of Open House (courtesy of Cary Bohl)



Looking Ahead

Forthcoming work at St. Xavier includes:

- Completion of a comprehensive Stewardship Plan
- Preparation of a Master Plan for improvements at the St. Xavier Nature Preserve
- Planning improvements of the farm stand area along Route 30
- Development of interpretive materials about the rich history of the property.



Work of calligraphy presented to the Sisters at the Open House



Otto and Magdalene Ackermann Nature Preserve

The Ackermann Nature Preserve was the site of much WLT 2023 outdoor programming. Mark Bowers and Loree Speedy, who serve as Lead Stewards at Ackermann, led a March Tree Walk for the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania.



March Tree Walk



April Wildflower Walk

PA Master Naturalist Melissa Reckner led an Earth Day Wildflower Walk in April. In May, herpetologist Aaron Capouellez (who formerly assisted WLT as an AmeriCorps Service Member) hosted a well-attended Evening Nature Walk.

On May 10th 2023, the Pittsburgh Ramblers visited and explored the Ackermann Preserve. They are seen here checking out the impressive walls of the historic sandstone quarry at the preserve.



Pittsburgh Ramblers at the Ackermann Quarry (photo courtesy of Jim Tremel)



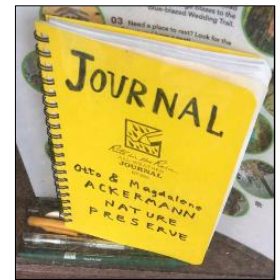
May Evening Nature Walk (photo courtesy of Maria Manon)



Stewardship at Ackermann in 2023 focused on trail maintenance and continuing control of invasive plants, especially knotweed and Japanese stiltgrass in the floodplain of Blue Dell Run.

Throughout 2023 Dr. Robert Loeb, Professor of Biology and Forestry at Penn State University, Dubois Campus, continued research that he started at Ackermann in 2022, with ongoing observation of relationships between soil chemicals and forest regeneration and composition.

Wingstem and other native plants in the floodplain amidst residual knotweed and Japanese stiltgrass



Visitors share observations in a journal at the preserve



Dr. Loeb explains research at the Preserve (photo courtesy of Mark Bowers)

WLT thanks the Ackermann family for their conservation of the Otto and Magdalene Ackermann Nature Preserve and their ongoing commitment to its stewardship.

Carl A. Schwarz Memorial Park

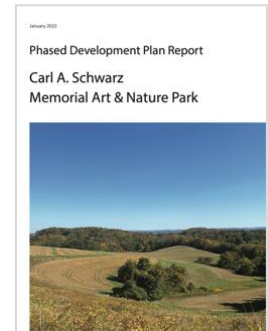
WLT's second major focus throughout 2023 was the future Carl A. Schwarz Memorial Park.

Background

In March 2021 WLT completed conservation acquisition of the extremely scenic 96-acre Schwarz farm just north of Greensburg for the land to be conserved as an art and nature park featuring significant works of outdoor sculpture and other art.

In September 2021 WLT engaged LaQuatra Bonci Associates (LBA) to plan phased development of the future park. A Revitalizing Westmoreland grant from the Pittsburgh Foundation/Community Foundation of Westmoreland County allowed WLT to host meetings in Greensburg, Jeannette, and Hempfield Township to gather community input about the project. LBA's work was guided by the mission to "Protect the vista and enhance the ecological value of the property while presenting complementary artwork in a dramatic pastoral setting for public benefit".

In January 2023 LBA completed conceptual planning of the park's phased development, and throughout 2023 WLT worked to advance detailed planning for the early development of the art and nature park while gathering funding to advance the project.



From LBA Plan, an aerial view (at left) of the Schwarz farm and a plan (below) for its development as an art and nature park



Rendering of the future Schwarz Art and Nature Park (left) from the LBA Plan

The Plan also includes examples of structures at other nature or art centers (below), as well as sample illustrations showing the possible scale of artwork envisioned for the park.



(Left to right): Andy Goldsworthy wall; interior at Touchstone Center for Crafts; Barn at Stamford Museum & Nature Center.

WLT has engaged Christopher Ruane and Aydaen Lynch to develop presentation materials about the future art and nature park. Their work will develop and build upon five rendered views, the first of which is shown below, to communicate what is envisioned.

(below): Works by Anthony Howe show possible scale and type of artwork for the park



Future view of updated farmhouse by Christopher Ruane and Aydaen Lynch



WLT worked to gather furniture and office supplies for the house, which has become a base for WLT operations. During 2023 WLT also started to assemble a collection of nature books - some for retention for ongoing reference, and many to be available for visitors to borrow or keep.



View of Schwarz farm in LBA Plan

The Schwarz fields were leased to farmer Mike Kepple to grow field corn; year by year lease of the fields for farming will continue while WLT assembles the funding needed to establish meadows of native grasses and wildflowers.



Mark Youngo, Terry Stemmler, and Gary and Jacob Denne remove invasive bittersweet

Stewardship activities in 2023 focused on addressing invasive plants in the treeline behind the farmhouse, and on initiating control of Asiatic bittersweet at some of the wooded edges of the property. This work will continue over the coming years.

Westmoreland County Photographers and Pittsburgh and Westmoreland County Plain Air Painters have visited Schwarz and have generously shared their photos and paintings.



Marcia Koynok's painting of the farm was shown at the Greensburg Art Center

The future nature and art park at the Schwarz farm will become a noteworthy destination in central Westmoreland County, contributing to the economic strength, cultural vitality, and ecological resilience of the region, with particular benefit to the nearby communities of Greensburg, Southwest Greensburg, and Jeannette as well as Hempfield and Penn Townships.

Twin Lakes Meadow

The Twin Lakes Meadow of native grasses and wildflowers was planted in Westmoreland County's Twin Lakes Park in 2021 in partnership with Westmoreland County Parks & Recreation (WCP&R) to:

- enhance the habitat value of its 17-acre field
- create a scenic and interesting destination for park visitors
- serve as an educational resource for establishment of other meadows.



During 2023 the Meadow was designated as a Monarch Waystation, and the alignment of the Meadow's mowed paths was refined. Careful



(Left to right) Volunteers Nancy King, Sarah Poklembo & Patti Schildkamm tackle teasel in the Meadow

mowing by WCP&R of poison hemlock in 2022 yielded successful control of this noxious weed. Special efforts during 2023 to protect the diversity and mix of meadow plants focused on cutting of teasel and Canada thistle to reduce seeding. Ongoing effort will be required for meaningful management of both teasel and Canada thistle in the Meadow.

WCP&R and volunteers are key to successful maintenance of the Meadow, and WLT is grateful to all who assist.

Evaluating and Selectively Advancing Conservation Projects

Throughout the year WLT evaluated several potential land conservation projects. Evaluation entails meetings with landowners, exploration of the sites, and research to build a picture of the conservation value of the land and the potential for problems associated with its conservation. Considerations include the property's characteristics, location including proximity to other conserved land, anticipated public benefit, availability of funding and project partners, and constraints of WLT capacity. To make best use of available resources, WLT works - subject to feasibility and capacity - to advance those projects with the greatest conservation value. WLT's evaluation of potential projects is guided in part by an extensive GIS-based analysis of the conservation value of land across Westmoreland County. A brochure, "[Green by Design](#)", about this analysis is available upon request.



WLT representatives visiting a potential project



Environmental Education

WLT’s designation by the state of Pennsylvania (PA) as an Educational Improvement Organization enables businesses and individuals to apply for substantial PA tax credits to support WLT workshops in Westmoreland County public schools under the PA Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program.

Environmental Education

- Enhances academic achievement
- Supports learning in STEM content areas
- Develops research and analysis skills
- Encourages teamwork
- Promotes environmental stewardship

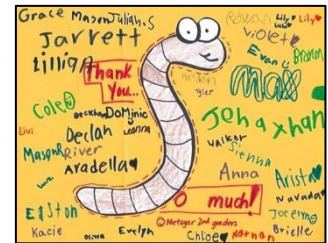
Businesses may apply to Pennsylvania for generous PA Tax Credits. If tax credits are awarded, they can be secured by donations to WLT for its educational workshops.

Dr. Paula Purnell, WLT Coordinator of Educational Programming, has developed a series of environmental education workshops that are offered free of charge to participating public schools (to the extent that EITC funding allows). The programs are extremely well received and are equally popular with both students and teachers.

For the 2023-2024 school year, the following Westmoreland County school districts authorized teachers’ use of WLT’s nature workshops:

- Belle Vernon
- Greensburg Salem
- Burrell
- Hempfield Area
- City of Jeannette
- Mount Pleasant Area
- City of Monessen
- Norwin
- Franklin Regional
- Southmoreland
- Greater Latrobe
- Yough

A creative thank you for a February workshop from Metzgar Elementary 2nd graders



During 2023 Dr. Purnell reached over 1800 public school students like those seen above with her in-school nature workshops. In addition to donating through the EITC program, businesses and individuals may also support WLT’s environmental education programs directly.

To raise a nature-bonded child is to raise a rebel, a dreamer, an innovator... someone who will walk their own verdant, winding path.

- Nicolette Sowder

Westmoreland Nature Backpacks

Throughout the summer of 2023, Dr. Purnell brought workshops to Westmoreland County libraries encouraging and explaining the use of Westmoreland Nature Backpacks. These workshops reached over 300 participants and were a popular summer activity for families with children. They were also enjoyed by many librarians!



Scenes from Library workshops



Other Activities

On February 7th 2023, Susan Huba, Executive Director of the **Loyalhanna Watershed Association** (LWA) kindly hosted an extensive tour and visit of LWA's Watershed Farm by members of WLT's board and staff.



Westmoreland Botanical Society touring the Schwarz farm in April

During 2023, WLT also hosted several other events, including an April 23, 2023 tour of the Schwarz farm by the Botanical Society of Westmoreland County.

WLT was proud to support Westmoreland County's 21st annual **March for Parks** on March 25, 2023, with a donation of funding for conservation land acquisition and a raffle basket full of dog friendly items.



WLT organized a family Firefly Watch at St. Xavier in July, and a September tour of St. Xavier by the Botanical Society of Westmoreland County.

Betsy Aiken addressed the Botanical Society of Westmoreland County in April about the Schwarz farm, and addressed the Irwin Garden Club in November about the Ackermann Preserve.

2023 Westmoreland Ramble

To celebrate the **250th anniversary** of Westmoreland County and of Hempfield Township, the 2023 edition of WLT's Westmoreland Ramble provided written directions for a scenic 1-hour drive following the route of the historic Forbes Road from Historic Hanna's Town to Fort Ligonier.



The guide for the Ramble provides information about points of interest along the way and is available as a printed booklet and also [online](#) in print-friendly format.



October Walk in Penn's Woods

Walk in Penn's Woods

On October 1, WLT hosted Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association for their 2023 Walk in Penn's Woods at St. Xavier. Participants enjoyed a beautiful day of exploration of St. Xavier's arboretum known as the Grove.



Scenes from Firefly Watch at St. Xavier

0 IMPORTANT! . . . Set your Trip Odometer to "Zero" near the Athletic Complex sign. Exit the parking lot by turning L onto the park access road to Stop, then R onto Forbes Trail Road. Note that the speed limit on this section of Forbes Trail Road is 25 mph.

Forbes Trail Road is named for its connection to Brigadier General John Forbes. British and colonial forces under his command constructed the original Forbes Road here in November 1758 on their way to assault Fort Duquesne in Pittsburgh. West of this park, the army's marching route followed Route 66 north toward Murrysville where forces under the command of George Washington camped for three days near the site of historic [Staymates Cabin](#).



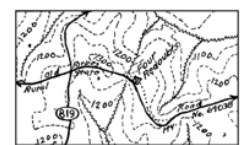
1.5 Stop at Harvey Avenue (Route 819). Note that opposing traffic does not stop.

A village called Forbes Road is located about a mile north of this intersection. It was common for different units of Forbes' Army to take divergent routes as they constructed their road through the virgin forests of the Allegheny Plateau. That may have been the case here, but it is more likely that this coal mining 'patch' town (shown here in an old post card) simply adopted its name from the nearby road. Mining operations removed over 600,000 tons of coal in the early 20th century before shutting down at the end of World War II.



1.9 Pass by Miller's Paws and Claws Boarding facility 0.4 miles east of Harvey Avenue.

Forbes Trail Road curves south here, following the flat top of the ridge. This has been identified by Professor Harold Thomas³ as the location of the "Four Redoubts" encampment (also known as Armstrong's Camp) where George Washington's forces camped on the night of November 18, 1758.



AmeriCorps

Nonprofit organizations, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based groups may apply to Pennsylvania Mountain Service Corps (PMSC) to host an AmeriCorps Service Member.



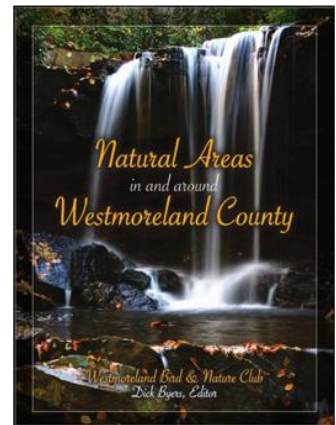
From September 5th 2023, WLT has benefitted from the assistance of Sarah Poklembo as an AmeriCorps Service Member. Sarah is a May 2023 graduate of Juniata College in Environmental Advocacy, and came to the WLT after AmeriCorps service at Westmoreland Cleanways. Sara has provided invaluable assistance with environmental education, outreach, stewardship, and mapping. *(Photo courtesy of Paula Purnell)*



From December 11th 2023, WLT has enjoyed the assistance of Dominic Demangone as an AmeriCorps Service Member. Dominic attended St. Vincent College and Duquesne University, and retired in 2021 after serving 50 years in education as a teacher and principal in the Diocese of Greensburg and a Special Education Supervisor in the Westmoreland Intermediate Unit. Based at Bellbrook in the St. Xavier Nature Preserve, Dominic assists with environmental stewardship, building and maintaining trails, and research and outreach about St. Xavier. *(Photo courtesy of Sarah Poklembo)*

Natural Areas in and around Westmoreland County

Throughout 2023 WLT continued to offer at cost copies of the excellent book of the **Westmoreland Bird and Nature Club, Natural Areas in and around Westmoreland County**. Copies can be purchased at either St. Xavier Nature Preserve or at Schwar



Board News

In January 2023 WLT welcomed Sue Anderson, who served on the board for part of the year. During 2023 the board also accepted the resignation of Tammy Colt and Bill Danchuk. WLT is grateful to all the board members for their dedicated service.

Staff News

In May 2023 WLT welcomed Dr. Karen Rose Cercone as Operations Assistant. Dr. Cercone taught geology for many years at Indiana University of PA, after receiving her AB from Bryn Mawr College and PhD from the University of Michigan, as well as an MFA in Fiction from the University of Pittsburgh. Karen Rose's knowledge, commitment, and zeal for organization have been invaluable for WLT's operations. *(Photo courtesy of Barbara Kay Bosserman)*



Thank you, WLT Donors and Supporters

In 2023, the WLT's fall fundraising campaign once again coincided with "Give Big Pittsburgh".



WLT was extremely fortunate to have invaluable support and assistance from so many individuals and groups during 2023. Thank you to all who supported WLT in some way during the year. Your support made our work possible!

Benefactor

\$10,000 and above

Joanne Ackermann*	PA Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources
Allegheny Foundation	Richard King Mellon Foundation
Colcom Foundation	Ben Sampson
Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation	Roberta N. Schwarz Charitable Foundation
Westmoreland County	

Patron

\$5,000 to \$9,999

Gurrentz International Corporation	Lynn and Patrick Gurrentz
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Friend

\$2,500 to \$4,999

Mid-Penn Bank	Michael J. and Aimee Rusinko Kakos
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Sponsor

\$1,000 to \$2,499

Betsy Aiken*	Chuck and Judy Duritsa
Anonymous	Ann and Laura Loftus*
ATI Specialty Products - Latrobe Operations	McCutcheon Enterprises
Clark Hunter Foundation	Bill and Kathy Mihalco
Theo and Pia van de Venne	

Partner

\$500 to \$999

Jack and Valerie Baker	Carol and John Lohr
Cary and Ken Bohl	Mike Schneck, Gridiron Partners
Bob and Sue Brooks	Larry and June Schultz
Civil & Environmental Consultants, Inc.	Regis and Diane Synan
Comm. Foundation of Westmoreland County	Jay and Mary Lou Tarara
David Lester	Unity Memorials (Brian and Sharon Schmucker)
Lewis and Katherine Lobdell	Westmoreland County Airport Authority

Thank you, WLT Donors and Supporters

Associate

\$250 to \$499

Fred and Norine Bononi
Joe and Deborah Bulava
Commissioner Doug Chew
Fahringer, McCarty, Grey, Inc.
Alyson Fearon
Ray and Gail Follador
Kenneth Goebel

Green Solar Systems
Tom Guelcher
Dianne Henderson*
Brian and Julie Lawrence
Mikan Contract Services (Tom & Janice)
Kim and Dianne Miller
Kiran Paranjpe and Tonnie Markley*

Joe and Chris Romano

Donor

Up to \$249

Eileen Bartolomucci
Dorothy Boyles Beckwith
Laura Branby
Eileen Byers
Susan Caroleo
Karen Rose Cercone
Joyce Clohessy*
John Conti
Diane and Charles Conway
Rob Cronauer
Carol and Louis Darold
Mark and Sharlene Emerson
Carolyn Falcon
Bernadette Farah
Dwayne Fielder
First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Greensburg
Forbes Trail Trout Unlimited
Greater Latrobe Educational Association
Ted Harhai
Tom and Donnis Headley
Hillview Motors, Inc.
Susan Hunter
Dr. Mary Ann Hvizdos
Robert Hylva
Irwin Garden Club
Stephanie Jellison
LaZae LaSpina
David Krizan*
Larry Laude & Marianne Kasica
Megan and Ryan Kellogg*
Maureen Kelly*

Thomas and Janet Kuehl
Mike and Diana Kuzemchak
Nan Loncharich
Dr. Robert and Susan Loeb
Dr. Andrew L. and Lydia Mack
Barbara McMillan
Art McSorley
Kestrel Michaud*
Lauren and Clint Mullen*
Robert Mulvihill
Helen and Doug Murray
Nickos Chimney Company
Zygmunt and Kathy Osiecki
Jack and Debbie Paulik
Deborah Pavetti
Patrick Roberts
Sally and Bob Ralph
Ann Manoli Ruddy
Susan Salata
Second Half Coach Wealth Management
Malcolm and Patti Sias
Brandon and Alicia Simpson
Ken Skovenski
Rosa Beth Snyder-Boyd
Katherine Tarara*
Anjelika and David Paranjpe Temple*
Jim and Rhea Thompson
Lauren Jones Titterington
Delia White
Judith and Ned Wilson

Thank you, WLT Donors and Supporters

*Tribute Gifts

Joanne Ackermann, in memory of Nobi Ackermann
Betsy Aiken, in memory of Arvind Paranjpe
Joyce Clohessy, in memory of Nelson Herbert Gundy
Dianne Henderson, in memory of Norbert Ackermann
Megan and Ryan Kellogg, in honor of Bill Mihalco
Maureen Kelly, in memory of Arvind Paranjpe
David Krizan, in memory of David Grapes
Ann Loftus, in memory of Sr. Eleanor Loftus, RSM and her brother Edward W. Loftus
Kestrel Michaud, in honor of Gene and Mecce Grapes
Lauren and Clint Mullen, in honor of Bill Mihalco
Kiran and Tonnie Paranjpe, in memory of Arvind Paranjpe
Katherine Tarara, in honor of Jay Tarara
Anjelika and David Paranjpe Temple, in memory of Arvind Paranjpe



*Indian pipes
(Photo courtesy
of Doug
Bauman)*

In-Kind Donations of Services or Goods

During 2023 the WLT also received substantial in-kind donations including office space, specialized services, supplies, and legal advice. Contributors of in-kind donations included:

Bruce Adamson
Betsy Aiken
Bill Aiken and Eric Wallis
Sue Anderson
Mark Boettner
Cary & Ken Bohl
Fred & Norine Bononi
Karen Rose Cercone
Bruce Corna
Rob Cronauer
Kathy Davis
Dominic Demangone
I.B. Dronin Photography (Ron Bryant)
Julia Ecklar
Jim Kellam
Giant Eagle, Latrobe
Laurel Nursery
Rachel Long, Autumn Ridge Farm
Lowes, Latrobe
Andrew L. Mack

John McHugh
Bill and Kathy Mihalco
Greg Miller
Penn-Franklin News
Pittsburgh Pirates
Pittsburgh Steelers
Sarah Poklembo
Bill Powers
Paula Purnell
Melissa Reckner
Patrick Roberts
Ben Sampson
Skelly and Loy, a
Terracon Company
THG Geophysics, Ltd.
John Ward
Westmoreland Arts & Heritage Festival
Westmoreland Conservation District
Westmoreland County
Ed Zinkan



*Wormy chestnut case kindly
built by Bruce Adamson
for WLT's pheasant*

Thank you, WLT Volunteers

Note: This list does not include WLT Board members, who every year devote many hours of volunteer work to the organization!

Bruce Adamson
 Ethan Adams
 Alex Balog
 Trent Barnhart
 Chris Bergman
 (Deputy PGC)
 Lee Bickerstaff
 Autumn
 Blozowich
 Mark Boettner
 Mark Bowers
 Aaron Brownley
 Landon Butler
 Aaron Capouellez
 Tammy Colt
 Sydney DeGram
 Bob DeJesus
 Mary DeJesus
 Dominic
 Demangone
 Mason Dempsey
 Gary Denne
 Jacob Denne
 Maddie Duda
 Julia Ecklar
 John Elder
 Jonathan Emert
 Zoey Favata
 Paul Ferry
 Jason Fronczek
 Rachel Frye
 Kevahna Graham
 Lucy Gross
 Eric Hall
 Jill Hamill
 Hanna Howard
 Derek Hussak
 Jim Kellam



Brynna King
 Nancy King
 Colin Kirschner
 Laurie Kirschner
 Travis Kline
 John Krajc
 Andy Krinock
 Dan Krinock
 Jacob Krinock
 Jessie Lehman
 Dr. Robert Loeb
 Carrie Lucci
 Rachel Lyons
 Richard Maga
 Jake Maher
 Mary Maher
 Maria Manon
 Zach Marazza
 Alyssa Mattes
 Robin Mattes
 Kate McKinley
 Abbi McAnany
 Matt McCreery
 Bob Mihalco
 Greg Miller
 Rob Moffa
 Nico Myers
 Joanna Moyar
 Dannika Mucino
 Clint Mullen
 Lane Mullen
 Mae Mullen
 Alexis Noel
 Zygmunt Osiecki
 Kathy Osiecki
 Judy Parker
 Jace Pedicone
 Chip Pletcher



Bill Powers
 Donna Powers
 Melissa Reckner
 Christopher Reed
 Ryleigh Repko
 Lucy Rodell
 Patti Schildkamp
 Malcolm Sias
 Alicia Simpson
 Brock Simpson
 Brynnley Simpson
 Madison Snyder
 Rachel Snyder
 Jenna Sonnie
 Loree Speedy
 Elizabeth Stas
 Jarred Stein
 Terence Stemmler
 Maria Stiteler
 Dan Stockberger
 Matt Stockberger
 Renee Stockberger
 Alec Sukay
 Jack Thompson
 Jim Thompson
 Rhea Thompson
 Matt Toland
 Maureen Tuttle
 Dennis Urban
 Mike Uschak
 Destiny Walker
 John Ward
 Caden Watson
 Pati Lindauer Wolinsky
 Mark Youngo
 Boden Zalewski
 Ed Zinkan



WLT also thanks these organizations who generously contributed assistance to WLT during 2023:

AmeriCorps
 ATI Specialty Products – Latrobe Operations
 Civil & Environmental Consultants, Inc.
 Loyalhanna Watershed Association
 PA Master Naturalists
 PA Mountain Service Corps
 THG Geophysics, Ltd.

United Way of Westmoreland County
 Westmoreland Arts & Heritage Festival
 Westmoreland Bird & Nature Club
 Westmoreland County Parks & Recreation
 Westmoreland Library Network
 Westmoreland Photographers Society
 Westmoreland Pollinator Partners

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Opst & Associates, LLC completed audit of the Westmoreland Land Trust financial statements for 2023.

Westmoreland Land Trust

Statement of Financial Position

December 31,	2023
Current Assets	
Cash	\$ 1,302,439
Grants receivable	25,000
Investments	<u>1,177,889</u>
Total Current Assets	2,505,328
Property and Equipment - net	<u>3,045,432</u>
Total Assets	<u>\$ 5,550,760</u>
Current Liabilities	
Accounts payable	\$ 1,300
Accrued expenses	<u>849</u>
Total Current Liabilities	<u>2,149</u>
Net Assets	
Without donor restrictions	3,425,778
Without donor restrictions - Board designated	138,752
With donor restrictions	<u>1,984,081</u>
Total Net Assets	<u>5,548,611</u>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	<u>\$ 5,550,760</u>

Notes to these financial statements, which are an integral part of the statements, are available upon request.

In giving you are throwing a bridge across
the chasm of your solitude.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Westmoreland Land Trust

Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets

For the Year Ended December 31,	2023		
	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
Public Support and Revenue			
Corporate and foundation grants	\$ 38,464	\$ 558,086	\$ 596,550
Government grants	85,600	-	85,600
Donations and contributions	79,609	-	79,609
In-kind donation of land and building	2,502	-	2,502
EITC revenue	-	10,889	10,889
Investment income	48,008	-	48,008
Unrealized gain (loss)	86,782	-	86,782
Miscellaneous income	50,534	-	50,534
Book sales	767	-	767
Net assets released from restrictions:			
Satisfaction of donor restrictions	175,187	(175,187)	-
Total Public Support and Revenue	<u>567,453</u>	<u>393,788</u>	<u>961,241</u>
Expenses			
Program services	275,994	-	275,994
Management and general	59,911	-	59,911
Fundraising	1,883	-	1,883
Total Expenses	<u>337,788</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>337,788</u>
Change in Net Assets	229,665	393,788	623,453
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	<u>3,334,865</u>	<u>1,590,293</u>	<u>4,925,158</u>
Net Assets - End of Year	<u>\$ 3,564,530</u>	<u>\$ 1,984,081</u>	<u>\$ 5,548,611</u>

Notes to these financial statements, which are an integral part of the statements, are available upon request.

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait
a single moment before starting to improve the world.

Anne Frank



... *SAVING SPECIAL PLACES IN WESTMORELAND COUNTY*

Properties Conserved

From its founding in December 2007, the Westmoreland Land Trust has acquired properties **in eight distinct Westmoreland County communities** totaling 618 acres.

Properties Conserved by the Westmoreland Land Trust (December 2023)

<u>Property, Size</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Valuation¹</u>	<u>Ownership</u>
Ackermann Reserve, 59 acres ²	Ardara, North Huntingdon	2009	\$ 148,000	Westmoreland County
Skena Reserve, 22 acres ²	Murrysville	2009	\$ 415,000	Mun. of Murrysville
Budd Parcel, 21 acres ²	Rostraver Township	2009	\$ 21,500	Westmoreland County
Cabin Hill, 3.5 acres ²	City of Greensburg	2009	\$ 262,000	Westmoreland County
Pingor Property, 4 acres ³	Ligonier Township	2011	\$ 265,000	Loyalhanna Watershed Ass'n
Yerick Parcel, 9 acres ²	Murrysville	2011	\$ 36,000	Mun. of Murrysville
Van de Venne Parcel, 49 acres ²	Murrysville	2013	\$ 150,000	Mun. of Murrysville
RDE Land Parcel, 16.5 acres ²	Murrysville	2013	\$ 32,000	Mun. of Murrysville
Manno Parcel, 22 acres ⁴	Murrysville	2014	\$ 84,000	Mun. of Murrysville
Marziano Parcel, 1 acre	Mount Pleasant Township	2015	\$ 4,451	Westmoreland County
Zimmaro Parcel, 28 acres ²	Rostraver Township	2016	\$ 127,500	Westmoreland County
Schimizzi Parcel, 39 acres ²	Hempfield Township	2018	\$ 194,916	Westmoreland County
Schwarz Farm, 96 acres ¹	Hempfield Township	2021	\$ 232,000	Westmoreland Land Trust
St. Xavier Property, 248 acres ¹	Unity Township	2022	\$ 2,180,000	Westmoreland Land Trust
TOTAL	618 acres with valuation of		\$ 4,152,367	

Footnotes:

- 1) The appraised value at/near the time of purchase; if this is not available, then the sum of purchase price + other expenditures directly associated with the purchase.
- 2) Conserved in partnership with Westmoreland County.
- 3) Conserved in partnership with the Western PA Conservancy and the Loyalhanna Watershed Association
- 4) Conserved in partnership with Westmoreland County and the Municipality of Murrysville.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

*It is your support, contributions and assistance that make our work possible!
Here are some ways to get involved ...*

Volunteer

Volunteers are key to our success! There are many ways to volunteer as much or as little as you like. Possibilities for helping range from fieldwork to outreach, programming, administration - or most anything of interest to you!

Land Conservation

WLT will assist your exploration of possibilities for conservation of your land, or of other land of special value in Westmoreland County.

Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program (EITC)

Businesses may apply for generous Pennsylvania tax credits, and if awarded may secure them by a contribution to WLT for STEM nature workshops in Westmoreland County public schools. Pass-through entities such as S-Corporations, Partnerships, LLCs, etc. may also apply for these tax credits.

In Kind Contributions

The WLT welcomes and values contributions of needed materials and services.

Funding

Contributions of funding are essential for acquisitions, stewardship of conserved land, and WLT operations. Gifts may be made at any time of the year. *Have your gift matched* if your employer has a matching gift program. *Make a gift to honor, or in memory* of, someone.

Gift of Securities

A gift of securities has great value to the WLT, and may yield a tax advantage to you.

Gift from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA)

If you are age 70-1/2 and older, you may make a Qualified Charitable Distribution as described in the Internal Revenue Code, as part or all of a Required Minimum Distribution from your traditional Individual Retirement Account (IRA), up to a limit of \$100,000 (if you file jointly, your spouse can also make a Qualified Charitable Distribution within the same tax year for up to \$100,000).

Planned Giving

You can factor WLT into your estate planning by identifying the WLT as a beneficiary in your will, IRA, trust, or life insurance policy.

Email westmorelandlandtrust@gmail.com or call 724 325-3031 to learn more.

*The Westmoreland Land Trust is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.
Contributions are tax deductible under the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code
to the extent of the law. For any gift or transaction, it is important that you obtain
independent legal, financial, and tax advice.*

www.westmoreland-landtrust.org

Back cover photo of American Goldfinches on millet courtesy of Judi Carvell



WESTMORELAND LAND TRUST
218 DONOHUE ROAD | GREENSBURG, PA15601
(724) 325-3031
westmoreland-landtrust.org



The Westmoreland Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, and is an Educational Improvement Organization under the PA DCED Educational Improvement Tax Credit program.

Contributions to the Westmoreland Land Trust are tax-deductible under the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code to the extent of the law.

