



Ripples

A Publication for Supporters of Killbuck Watershed Land Trust

VOLUME XIII | SUMMER 2022

Inside...

Wood ducks
in the Killbuck
Watershed area

Our first-ever
Community
Fund Drive

Board Meeting
Highlights



Photo by Paul Swarmer



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5 Ways You Can Support Killbuck Watershed Land Trust

In addition to cash gifts, there are many other ways to support Killbuck Watershed Land Trust.

1 Donations of Securities - A direct transfer of securities (stocks, bonds or mutual funds) to KWLT will avoid taxable capital gains and the sale transaction costs."

- Your gift will be considered as part of your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) and will avoid both federal and state income tax.

2 Life Insurance Benefits - Name KWLT as a beneficiary on a portion or all of your life insurance policy benefits.

4 Name KWLT as a beneficiary of your will, trust or charitable trust or qualified retirement plan - As you plan your estate, your advisors can help you send a benefit to KWLT through a variety of "Planned Gifts."

3 Make a Qualified Charitable Deduction (QCD) from your IRA

5 Gift Real Property to KWLT

Contact our Executive Director, Tate Emerson, who can assist you with your planning. The Wayne County Community Foundation manages several funds on our behalf and can also assist you with planning.

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Killbuck Watershed Land Trust is a tax exempt organization pursuant to Section 501(c)3 of the IRS Code.

Little Boxes on the Hillside: A Threat to Farmland

We can all understand the conundrum farmers find themselves in when they are looking to retire. If there is no one obvious to continue farming the land, it can seem like their only option is to sell their land for the "highest and best use," which often means selling for development purposes. These developments consume urban edge farms and takeover entire rural landscapes.

According to American Farmland Trust's report "Farms Under Threat: State of the States" published in 2020, Ohio lost

approximately 312,200 acres of farmland between 2001 and 2016. 109,500 of these acres were lost to commercial, industrial and high-density residential land use. Whereas nearly twice that amount, 202,800 acres, were lost to another, more intense threat reshaping our farmland--low-density residential land use, which is generally single-family housing.

American Farmland Trust, in partnership with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, has been collecting data and reporting on the loss of farmland across the U.S. since 1993. They have published six reports, each containing more detail and ever-increasing accuracy. The organization has also ranked the soil suitability, food production and land use of the contiguous U.S. to "assess the suitability for long-term cultivation and food production." The areas with the highest rankings are classified

as National Significant agricultural land...a.k.a. land best suited for farming.

72% of Ohio's agricultural land has been classified as Nationally Significant. Unfortunately, our state lost 181,400 acres of this highly

productive land between 2001 and 2016. That fertile Ohio soil that makes our land so agriculturally significant is a finite natural resource and holds immense value. It has taken thousands of years, dating back to when the glaciers retreated, for our rich soils to develop.

Meaning, the conversion of farmland to development is irreversible within our lifetimes. Once converted, we lose the natural resource necessary for sustaining us. We need this soil to grow food, filter water, recharge aquifers and sequester carbon from the air. We need the land to provide habitat for wildlife and scenic view sheds for our mental health. And we need this land to maintain our resilience to climate change.

Over the next 20 years, American Farmland Trust considers it likely that 40% of today's farmland will change hands due to owners retiring. Whether it's high-density urban development or low-density residential development, if left unchecked, we could lose another 24.4 million acres across the United States by 2040. Without



Local folks working together to preserve local land.

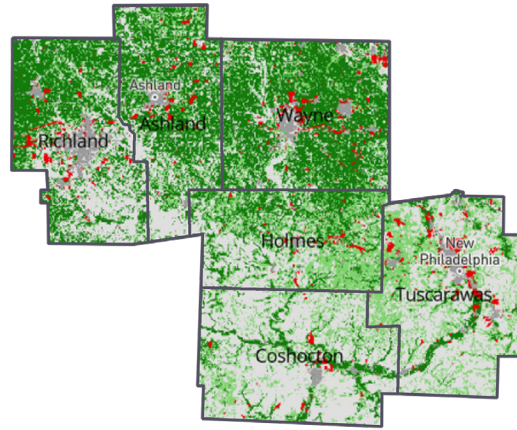
Continued on page 2

Little Boxes *continued*

action, the rolling hillsides, beautiful farms, and nationally significant land we value so much will be dotted with little boxes...or maybe big ones.

However, we can prevent this from happening. Local organizations and individuals must step up and take on the conservation effort ourselves. Farmers can place agricultural conservation easements on their properties through Killbuck Watershed Land Trust. Easements are a way for farmers to extract the value of development from the land while also preserving the future of the property as farmland—forever—and still maintaining ownership and the right to sell the land or pass it along to their heirs.

If you are unsure about placing an easement on your property but still want to preserve farmland, or if you are not a farmer but wish to support farmland preservation, there are other solutions. You can push for our communities to develop smart growth policies, focusing on compact development and reducing



Above red areas indicate 2001-2016 conversion of agricultural land to high-density and low-density land use.

Image Credit: American Farmland Trust

urban sprawl. You can support programs that assist new-generation farmers and historically marginalized producers gain equitable access to farmland. And, you can advocate for smart solar siting, which prioritizes placing new solar arrays on rooftops and in brownfields instead of using agricultural lands.

being very short-sighted in developing the prime farmland in our area. I love that KWLTL gives landowners a conservation easement option to keep farmland intact. It's a wonderful way to pass down a family legacy to future generations."

Michelle's interest and passion for the outdoors began in her childhood as she roamed their family farm near Ragersville in Tuscarawas County, and disappeared for hours at a time into the woods or stream.

Michelle's husband, Duane, is a soil scientist and their son, Wyatt, will be a junior at Triway High School this fall. In addition to their home south of Wooster, they also own 35 acres of woodland adjacent to her family farm where they spend time hunting, hiking, and making never-ending efforts to control invasive species.

Killbuck Watershed Land Trust is committed to doing just that, and your support of our non-profit organization ensures that we can continue to do it. On page 3 you will see the announcement of our KWLTL Community Fund Drive. It's the first time in our 20+ years that we've held a formal fundraiser, and I'm excited about what that means for our Land Trust. It means we're growing; we're making an impact. And it's an opportunity to educate an increasing number of community members about how KWLTL can help them preserve the land they value for generations to come.

Tate Tate Emerson
KWLTL Executive Director

Spring Board Meeting Highlights

In addition to welcoming Michelle Wood as our newest board member, we also...

- Established the Killbuck Watershed Land Trust Stewardship Fund with Wayne County Community Foundation
- Reviewed and pre-approved preserving (3) new properties containing 226 acres. This brings the 2022 total to (5) likely easements preserving 520 acres!
- Randy Carmel presented the final steps for taking ownership of the 192 acre Crane Swamp south of Killbuck...which we have since completed!
- All of our officers were voted in for new 3 year terms. Thank you! We are all grateful for your continued effort in furthering KWLTL's mission.
 - Randy Carmel, President
 - Robb Stutzman, Vice President
 - Linda Bush, Secretary
 - Ron Holtman, Treasurer

Meet our newest KWLTL member



Michelle Wood

Michelle Wood retired as Administrator of Holmes Soil and Water Conservation District. She got to know about the Killbuck Watershed Land Trust from her co-worker and KWLTL board member Karen

Gotter, and from working with KWLTL board President Randy Carmel on several grant proposals.

"Randy's enthusiasm drew me like a moth to the flame to this organization," Michelle says. "I'm looking forward to helping out however I can to further the KWLTL mission of protecting natural areas as well as farmland. We as a society are

KWLTL Community Fund Drive

Since our founding in 2000, KWLTL has operated and grown our local non-profit primarily through conservancy partnerships, grant funding and volunteer work.

We are proud of our Land Trust's growth and accomplishments, which include:

- Supporting Ohio's agricultural economy by helping farmers permanently protect more than 10,000 acres of farmland
- Purchasing 380 acres of wetlands and woodlands near Killbuck Village
- Acquiring 114 acres of rare prairie land near Brinkhaven
- Collaborating with the Friends of Wooster Memorial Park to add 67 acres to Wooster's largest city park

Through a lot of hard work and dedication from many community members, we have moved beyond our all-volunteer model. This summer, for the first time in more than 20 years, we are planning our first official fundraising campaign. Please consider continuing to support us with a donation as we enhance our operations, improve public access to our nature preserves and endow our future. Details about how you can get involved will be coming out in the next few weeks.

Thank you for helping us preserve our unique rural landscape; we couldn't do it without you!

Wood Ducks

This spring a pair of wood ducks claimed the nesting box I had erected specifically for, in my opinion, the prettiest duck to nest in the Killbuck Watershed area.

This little pool where the nesting box is located is a human-created vernal pool and is on a farm that has a conservation easement with KWLTL.

Some years back I had put up a wood duck box that our oldest son had made while still in grade school; a box that was looking for a home. But over the years, the weight of the nesting box caused the one-inch-in-diameter pipe (too small) to lean forward toward the surface of the water. When a pair of wood ducks often visited the pool, I checked the box to see if the hen may be laying and was surprised when I found a fox squirrel curled on the bottom surrounding a litter of newly born young.

I gently closed the lid, went home and made a new one for the ducks. Using cedar wood, the box measures 12 inches square by 24 inches high with an oval entrance hole three inches high and four inches wide.

I mounted it on a two-inch by 10-foot long steel pipe driven into the ground at the water's edge with a muscle-powered T-post driver. The box has a side-opening door for easy checking. I added three inches of wood shavings for nesting material and hoped for success.

Over the years my variety of nesting houses---from natural hollow logs to more fancy handmade ones---have had a medley of occupants, but never wood ducks. This year my hopes weren't



Photo by Paul Swarmer

soaring as I never saw the ducks on the pool.

On a hunch that the woodies may be more secretive when the hen has chosen a nesting cavity and is laying, I opened the side door, which is at eye-level, and found the shavings rearranged but no down from a duck. I lightly stirred the shavings with my finger and found, to my surprise, two eggs, obviously from a wood duck!

I checked the box every few days until there were eight eggs now covered with

an abundance of down. Then I stayed away for five weeks until the eggs hatched and left the pool with their mother to nearby Salt Creek.

The only thing I worried about was that the pool has a massive snapping turtle. Twice I've surprised her as she had left the pool to lay her eggs. The first time was on the bank of the pool, and she startled me. She was covered with algae that had stuck to her shell when she left the water and looked like a green monster. I couldn't find a measuring tape so I used a yardstick instead; the shell measured 16½ inches by 12 inches (she's quite docile.) Her feet were the size of my hands and her head like a cabbage attached to 10 inches of leathery hose.

Our second meeting was the following summer on a path several hundred feet from the pool and since she's likely older than I am, I gladly yielded her the right-of-way.

The pool has no fish, so the snapper must be living on frogs and salamanders, I hope not, baby wood ducks.

David David Kline
KWLTL Board Member