

# PROTECT & RESTORE

## Inspired to Give Big for Nature

Earlier this year we announced a major campaign to protect and restore the natural landscape in Lancaster County and along the Susquehanna River in York County. Over the last few months, many people stepped up and pledged additional support for the Conservancy's work.

During this season of reflection and gratitude, we want to take a moment to honor several donors who have inspired us with major gifts to this campaign and share the impulses that drove their philanthropic decisions.

### Bill and Kitt Gamber

"We've been longtime supporters of the Conservancy's work. We wanted to make an extraordinary gift to the Lancaster Conservancy because their work to protect land is critically important to bees and other pollinators," said **Bill Gamber**, Chairman of Dutch Gold Honey. "We've lived in Lancaster County our entire lives and we want to ensure that despite all the growth and development, nature is prioritized and preserved," said **Kitt Gamber**. "I love making a gift that will have a 'forever' impact on keeping Lancaster County a special place to live."

▶ To thank Bill and Kitt Gamber for their million-dollar gift to the Protect & Restore Campaign, the primary trail at Shenks Ferry Wildflower Preserve, scheduled to be restored, will be called the Gamber Wildflower Trail in their honor.

### The Shenk Foundation

**Willis and Elsie Shenk** were naturalists long before young people started worrying about habitat loss and climate change. Willis Shenk served as Chairman of the Board of the Steinman Enterprises until his retirement in 2004. Before his death in 2014, Willis set up the Shenk Foundation.

"Our natural world needs all the help it can get," said Shenk Foundation Board Member, Mary Louise Shenk. "Investing in acquiring and setting land aside for nature is important to all of our futures."

▶ To honor Willis and Elsie Shenk's love of forests, the Shenk Foundation made a remarkable seven figure gift to this Campaign. As a result, our habitat-focused Fishing Creek North Nature Preserve will become the Willis and Elsie Shenk Nature Preserve.



Barry Shaw, Chairman of the Wenger group, and his daughters, Abby Lowry and Jennifer Finch. PHOTO BY BARBARA SHAW

### The Shaw Family Foundation

"As an avid outdoors man, our father, **Barry Shaw**, used to enjoy hunting, but today he prefers a camera to stalk nature—documenting the wildlife we share this planet with," said daughters Abby Lowry and Jennifer Finch jointly. "Our family believes in protecting our natural landscape. We love the idea of supporting an organization whose mission saves habitat for wildlife."

▶ To honor the Shaw Family for their \$1.5 million gift to the campaign, our new nature preserve along the Conewago Recreation Trail, acquired last year, will be named the Shaw Family Nature Preserve.

Fishing Creek Nature Preserve PHOTO BY NICK GOULD



Bill and Kitt Gamber at the 2022 Dine On Harvest Moon Dinner & Auction PHOTO BY NICK GOULD



FROM LEFT, Shenk Foundation Board Members Stuart Herr, Mary Louise Shenk, Hannah Koch, Randy Moyer, and Wesley Lewis stand next to the new preserve sign.



117 S. West End Avenue  
Lancaster, PA 17603  
www.lancasterconservancy.org

Providing wild and forested lands and clean waterways for our community, *forever*.



A winter interpretive hike at Welsh Mountain Nature Preserve. PHOTO BY KEITH WILLIAMS

Winter woods beckon as the days grow longer and our future brighter, because of you.



PHOTO BY GREG SMOLIN

Over the last three years, when things were dark, we took risks and were rewarded.

## Winter Blues Turn Green

**IT'S WINTER.** The light is low in the sky and cold has settled across our landscape. Animals and insects slow down and await spring's renewal. It's a time of year when I struggle. A war in Eastern Europe, a divided country at home, rising costs, climate change denial, inequity in our conservation movement—there is a pessimistic pall in the air.

But when we look back at what we accomplished and the plan for the 2023, I feel better. It chases away the blues when inspired people align around a purpose, share their resources, and join this movement to protect our forests and streams.

Over the last three years, when things were dark, we took risks and were rewarded. We protected a LOT of land—12 transactions totaling over 1,800 acres. We grew our

stewardship team to meet the growing demand on our expanding lands. We built a robust team to educate and inspire you to act to help our planet in peril. The blues turn to green as I reflect on our accomplishments.

Our success and growth only happen because we are honored to have friends and supporters who lift our spirits and inspire us to quicken our pace and focus our resolve to protect and restore our amazing lands.

*Phil Wenger*  
Phil Wenger,  
President



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## ON THE TRAIL

Lancaster Conservancy Newsletter by  
Phil Wenger, President

Volunteers and staff at Kellys Run Nature Preserve after a day planting native trees. PHOTO BY GREG SMOLIN

## A Growing Movement

**WHEN WE THINK ABOUT** what makes a good organization great, we think about the three M's: Mission, Money, and Momentum. We see a number of organizations with these characteristics, but the Conservancy is going above and beyond, and adding a 4<sup>TH</sup> M—Movement.

Movement is our growing, energized, inspired members and supporters, who show up at our events, contribute their hard-earned dollars, volunteer their time, and inspire others to join this cause. We have friends in the Pequea River Hills, friends at Welsh Mountain, friends in the Highlands, friends in Hellam Township, hikers, environmentalists, hunters, seniors who witness a landscape changing over time, and young people driven to address climate change and protect our natural world. We see unprecedented numbers of volunteers, money being raised, and new donors and supporters. This is a

**This is a remarkable time for the Conservancy. This is now a movement, thanks to all of you.**

**PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** The Conservancy Team during a Summer Staff Meeting (Credit: Kelly Snaveley), Conestoga River Club Paddle Attendees during Lancaster Water Week (Credit: Michelle Johnsen), Tippetts Weaver Architect employees at a Corporate Volunteer Workday at Climbers Run Nature Center (Credit: Peggy Eppig), Save Woods & Water Party at ExtraGive (Credit: Nick Gould), Educational hike at Welsh Mountain Nature Preserve (Credit: Peggy Eppig)

remarkable time for the Conservancy. This is now a movement, thanks to all of you.

Our gratitude overflows and we do not know how to fully thank you for your support. The best way we know to show our gratitude is to turn your donations into meaningful change. This issue is dedicated to showing you the IMPACT of your investments in this movement. Land Protection has more deals in the works than we can handle. Stewardship has more grants, projects, and nature preserves with recreational opportunities to bring on-line than ever before. Community Impact is exceeding every goal while adding events, training more volunteers, and inspiring more students every week to care about and for nature.

Reflecting back.  
Looking forward.







# LAND PROTECTION

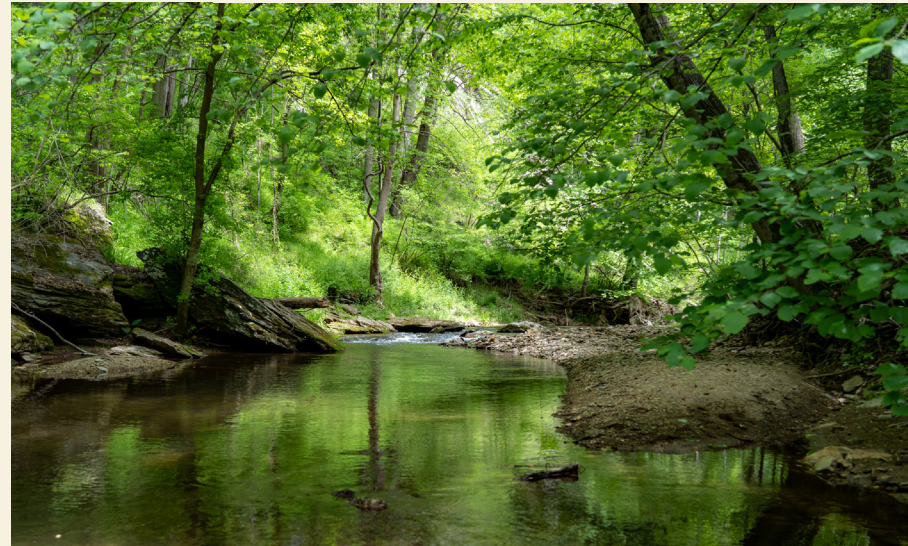
**Over 1,050 acres protected in 2022 breaks the 10,000 mark of total acres of land protected, forever!**

2022

Our single biggest land protection success for 2022 was the acquisition and then transfer of 1,044 acres in the Hellam Hills Conservation Area to the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources creating a new Susquehanna Riverlands State Park. Putting this parcel under agreement for \$11 million and completing this deal required a momentous amount of work this year and pushed us over the edge into more than 10,000 acres of land protected!

*But it wasn't our only success!* In September, we bought at auction an important 8-acre tract that expanded Fishing Creek Nature Preserve. We also put under agreement a \$1.9 million 77-acre property that is adjacent to our small, inaccessible de Perrot Woods Nature Preserve along the Conestoga Trail. This acquisition, which will settle in the spring, will allow us to create an accessible over 100-acre nature preserve that protects a tributary of Speedwell Forge Lake and Hammer Creek.

Fishing Creek Nature Preserve ►  
PHOTOS BY NICK GOULD



## More opportunities than money!

2023

During our 2023 planning meeting last month, **Kate Gonick**, SVP of Land Protection and General Counsel, shared a list of potential projects in the pipeline, including almost 300 acres within the Susquehanna Riverlands and around 300 acres in the federally designated Pennsylvania Highlands. Some of these projects are collaborations with DCNR and other land trusts where the Conservancy does all or part of the work and the land is protected but not held by the Conservancy.

The value of these high-scoring land protection projects, around 600 acres of potential acquisitions, totals over \$7 million in land value. Land protection takes confidentiality until we lock in a sales agreement.

**Watch for more BIG NEWS soon.**

▲ Susquehanna Riverlands State Park Announcement PHOTO BY GREG SMOLIN



# STEWARDSHIP

**More Challenges, More Opportunities: Grants Awarded, Studies Completed, Trails Built**

2022

**50 Nature Preserves, 45 miles of trails, dozens of parking areas, invasive plants and insects, increased numbers of visitors and trash, new nature preserves being added to the portfolio every year.**

This could be a recipe for disaster, but instead Brandon Tennis, SVP of Stewardship sees nothing but opportunities as he surveys the multiple challenges of managing a growing portfolio of publicly accessible nature preserves.

► **PLANNING:** In 2022, we completed a major \$200,000 study of the Hellam Hills Conservation Area. This blueprint is our guidebook over the next several years as we build trails, take on restoration projects, and put in infrastructure including an Engagement Center and Stewardship Hub at Wizard Ranch Nature Preserve.

► **RESTORATION:** The Stewardship Team has planted thousands of new trees and warm season grasses as we restore overworked farm fields and turn them into productive wildlife and pollinator habitat. The work to restore forest health by removing invasive species, like ailanthus, bush honeysuckle, climbing bittersweet, and multiflora rose, has been just as rigorous.

► **TRAILS:** A summer stewardship crew of young conservation professionals joined our team to build beautiful stone steps and reroute sections of the Pyfer Trail at Tucquan Glen & Pyfer Nature Preserves. Trails were also improved that run through Muellers Woods at Climbers Run Nature Center and were added at Hellam Hills and Wizard Ranch Nature Preserves.

Summer stewardship crew on their hike into work at Tucquan Glen & Pyfer Nature Preserves  
PHOTO BY MARK ROBERTS



Clearing the trail at Shenks Ferry Wildflower Preserve. PHOTOS BY TYLER FISK

## More Work than Hours in a Day

2023

**Here are just a few of the many stewardship projects to keep your eyes on in 2023:**

- **Lloyd Clark Universal Access Trail** at Clark Nature Preserve will receive final permitting, and construction will begin.
- Work is underway to fund and start the process of creating a master plan for the **Lancaster River Hills near Pequea**, that would address issues like parking at Tucquan Glen, connectivity of trails and visitor amenities, and integrate preserve management.
- A major grant was received to rebuild the trail at **Shenks Ferry Wildflower Preserve** to replace failing culverts and make the trail universally accessible, which will restore the trail's historic character as a narrow gauge rail line.
- **Mill Creek Falls Nature Preserve** will open with improved parking and trails that provide access to the Mason-Dixon Trail System.
- Restoration continues at **Hellam Hills and Wizard Ranch Nature Preserves** with trail building, infrastructure improvements, wetland restoration planning, and forest and meadow habitat restoration implementation.
- Work at **Ferncliff Wildlife and Wildflower Preserve** will begin as grant funding is awarded to expand the parking area and rebuild the trail, which was heavily damaged by flooding over the last few years.

The challenge we face looking forward is, can we do all the routine maintenance required by our users, meet all our standards for accreditation, monitor, plan and maintain lands as our user base grows AND implement all of these grants that require us to match funds and provide labor? We are confident we can. We will be adding a Project Manager position in 2023 to help further build out Stewardship capacity, and our dedicated and growing group of volunteers will play a vital role helping with this much needed work.



# COMMUNITY IMPACT

**Momentum's Impact**

2022

**Despite all the challenges these last few years have brought to engaging our community, Fritz Schroeder, SVP of Community Impact, determined we could grow our impact, and he invigorated his team to do just that.**

The Conservancy's education impact went from 0-60 in a year. Many of these initiatives were just pie-in-the-sky ideas in 2020, but with the addition of **Keith Williams**, Community Engagement Coordinator, they became a reality.

- **Our Volunteer Land Steward Program** entered its second year with more formalized on the ground trainings and workdays that deployed hundreds of volunteers, creating an army willing to show up, sweat, and work to help the Conservancy.
- **Our calendar is always packed** with new and exciting events to learn, explore, and engage with the natural world for people of all ages and abilities, throughout Lancaster and York. The team engaged over 6,000 people on group hikes and at interpretive events during 2022.
- **More and more businesses are taking advantage of corporate workdays**—a win/win, where organizations benefit from team building and community engagement, and we benefit from their time spent working on restoration on our preserves!
- **Hundreds of school children** from local schools and programs came out to our preserves, which was for some their first experience being immersed in and learning from nature.



(TOP) A nature journaling workshop at Clark Nature Preserve PHOTO BY PEGGY EPPIG (BOTTOM) Wilderness Advanced First Aid training participants practice rescue skills PHOTO BY KEITH WILLIAMS



## Growing a Conservation Centered Community

2023

**We're building on successes, continually looking for new ways to grow our movement by engaging and inspiring our community.** In 2023, made possible with funding from the Lancaster Clean Water Fund, the Conservancy will launch a series of educational classes aimed at sharing skills and resources for those looking to restore native wildlife habitat at home and in the community. This program builds on the work of the Community Wildlife Habitat Initiative and will help create healthy habitat beyond the boundaries of our nature preserves.

Other educational efforts in 2023 will concentrate on keeping both outdoor recreationists and our nature preserves safe.

With support from LCSWMA through the Protect & Restore Campaign, the Conservancy will ramp up its efforts to teach Leave No Trace conservation ethics to our community and preserve visitors. Wilderness Advanced First Aid courses will also return for those looking to be better prepared for any situation.

Facility improvements to the Russo Barn at Climbers Run Nature Center will enter a new phase of planning, while enthusiasm continues to grow for this project of the Protect & Restore Campaign. Acquisitions over the last four years along the Susquehanna River have also provided us with new education and engagement opportunities in York County.

Over 200 people participated in a wildlife habitat education event and native plant give away at Kellys Run Native Preserve & Pollinator Park. PHOTO BY PEGGY EPPIG

