



Ripples

A Publication for Members and Friends
Killbuck Watershed Land Trust

Volume 2, Issue 1

Summer 2012

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Great Uncle Joe would be thrilled with continued stewardship of Holmes farm

Bob Hunter is passionate about his Holmes County heritage and loves to relate stories about his colorful ancestors. But don't ask to see his family tree unless you have an afternoon for his response, since Bob will gladly show you more than 40 of them.

The KWLTL trustee and his wife Karen epitomize responsible land stewardship. Their children Cody and Lindsey are the sixth generation to live on Ancestor Acres and Annie's Place, the contiguous Monroe Township farms that were once home to Bob's great-grandmothers on his mother's side of the family.

Both the Mitten and Hall family trees are actively represented in the Hunters' homestead. Standing tall and proud around the 390-acre property are more than 40 "legacy trees," each a tree of note with its own numbered tag.

The farm's Legacy Tree Guide describes giants including No. 23, a five-foot-diameter hollow tree where "there have been 15 fifth grade students inside" all at once, No. 5, a 215-year-old Shagbark Hickory "located at



the head of an old spring that family members used while working in the fields above," and one of Bob's favorites, No. 17, a 162-year-old beech whose pale bark his great-great-grandfather signed in 1925.

It's not surprising that the Hunters were named Ohio Tree Farmers of the Year for 2009 by the Ohio Tree Farm Committee. That followed their naming in 2007 as Holmes County Conservation Farm Family and in 2008 as Ohio Conservation Farm Family.

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Partnerships: The basis of land trust work

Just as in life and love, land trusts rely on developing successful relationships built on mutual ideology with our partners.

First we have to find each other and often this is a result of happy circumstance or word of mouth. The players are, first, a landowner with a conviction to preserve his acreage forever, and then a land trust, a legal entity with non-profit status and the expertise to assist the landowner to achieve his heart's desire.

An initial meeting between landowner and land trust is very important; something

clicks, or it may not. But if the needs and responsibilities are clearly understood between the two parties, a plan is put in place based on good faith and a clear vision for the future of the land itself – a commitment from both parties that lasts and grows better as time goes on.

Killbuck Watershed Land Trust values each of our partners whether an individual or family, a government entity, or another conservation organization. We are not monogamous

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Promoting, protecting and preserving our natural heritage

Hunter farm grew from respect of family heritage

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Bob Hunter didn't simply inherit the family farm. "I know what I have today, I have because other people made sacrifices," he said. "The family property is a huge resource they could have cashed in at any time, but they never did. They lived a simple life."

A 2010 Deed of Conservation Easement with KWLTL protects 234 acres the Hunters purchased from Bob Hunter's cousin David Mitten. "The easement allowed the family to sell it to me at a price I could afford," Bob Hunter said. "They have always treated me well. I've never had to pay market price for family property."

He spent many summer hours working on the farm his great-great-grandparents Lew and Julia Mitten had purchased in 1907, 18 years after moving to Mitten Ridge. Joe Mitten, Bob's great uncle, was highly regarded as a naturalist. While Joe left the Mitten family farm for Cuyahoga Falls to become an educator, he spent many summer days on the Holmes County family farm. He nurtured the legacy trees and their smaller neighbors and reforested open areas with extensive pine groves. Joe was the force behind keeping the farm in the family even though the family had left the farm.

After graduating from high school in 1978, Bob bought the Ancestor Acres property in the first of many purchases to assume ownership of the Mitten and Hall farms. He continued his involvement with the family beef operation, but also took a "day job" in the oil and gas industry.

In 1989 the cattle were sold and the beef operation ended. Bob quit his outside job to focus at home on the farm. The following year the Hunters moved to Ancestor Acres after gutting and renovating the log home where hired hands had recently lived. They began planting the first of what, at most recent count, has been 50,000 trees. Eighty-nine acres is classified as tree farm, planted in red and white oak, ash, walnut and poplar as well as pine, spruce and fir to provide wildlife habitat.



BOB HUNTER stands in the loft of the rustic cabin created from logs and other materials harvested nearby.



KAREN AND BOB Hunter, with their family and friends, built this covered bridge that spans a broad ravine.

More than six miles of well tended trails wind through woods and along several natural prairies the Hunters manage with periodic reseeding and controlled burns. A hilltop meadow is a registered way station for Monarch butterflies making their annual fall migration south.

Five acres of food plots including clover, turnips and oats and a small orchard designed for wildlife attract deer, wild turkeys and a host of smaller animals to the farm.

Among the family parcels the Hunters have bought over the years is Annie's Place, named for Annie Hall who was born in 1884 in the house where she lived all 95 years of her life. Contiguous on the north to Ancestor Acres, Annie's Place has a guest house the Hunters operate year around.

Built in 1884 by Annie's grandfather, the two-story house has modern amenities but is decorated with period prints and other items that link to Hall family history. The old bank barn, outhouse and chicken shed still stand, not far from a contemporary gazebo that houses a hot tub.

The Hunters have undertaken two major construction projects utilizing logs and lumber from their forest. Five years in the making, a rustic log cabin features white oak from trees that came down in a 2004 ice storm. A huge chimney and fireplace were created from stone hand picked from a nearby ravine. Spanning the ravine is a covered bridge wide enough for travel by small utility vehicles, the only motorized means to access the cabin. Both the cabin and Annie's Place are detailed on the family's website, www.naturesretreat.net.

The Hunter land also includes a catch-and-release fishing pond, a 25-house bluebird trail, beautiful gardens and various water features.

On Saturday, Aug. 18, the Hunter Family Tree Farm will be a stop on the annual Holmes County Farm Tour. Visitors will be able to walk part of the farm and get information from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Tour hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The farm's address is 12061 Twp. Rd. 252, Glenmont.

Melody L. Snure, KWLTL Executive Administrator

Midsummer is impossible to predict

The Dog Days, which began on July 3 and will end the second week in August, can be unrelentingly hot and surely have been this year. Yes, the Midwest is warm and humid in summer and for that reason makes the region ideal for growing corn, but seldom this hot. Even in this searing heat and lack of rain there are certain benefits, and one is in harvesting cereal crops.

We have already finished with our oat crop (July 11) and it was excellent. Golden-yellow and well dried-down plumb grains that flowed off the gravity wagon like mercury. This is the earliest we have harvested oats in my memory.

In the severe drought year of 1988 we were cutting oats the afternoon of July 18 when the rains came that finally broke the drought. While the rest of the family ran for the shelter of the barn, I stood in the midst of the field, raised my arms in gratitude and let the rain wash over me.

This year everything seems off-kilter. The unusually mild winter followed by an exceptionally warm March set the seasons off to an early start. Meteorologists say that this spring – defined as March, April, and May – was the warmest since record-keeping began in 1895.

The farming year is three to four weeks ahead of normal – corn in tassel in northern Ohio in June? Another first

for me was ripe tomatoes on the Fourth of July. Definitely not all is negative.

In the late afternoon when all creatures are seeking shade, the annual cicada, or Dogday Harvestfly, begins



buzzing its raspy call. The old farmer adage is that when the cicada begins “singing” it is six weeks to frost. Frost in mid-August?

We tend to forget the heat of midday after the sun sets and the evening turns pleasant. Sitting in the yard with family and friends and watching the fireflies light up the night and the bats seining the air for mosquitoes and fireflies is one of the pure pleasures of farm life.

So is listening to the night sounds. Right now we are in that pause between the frog calls of spring and the insect chorus of August. Gray tree frogs are calling only sparingly because of the drought. To me, the little frog’s delight-

ful, woodpecker-like trill is the transition night sound that carries spring into summer. This past week the gray tree frogs have been mostly silent as they, too, wait for rain.

Making up for the tree frog’s silence is the screech owl’s quavering call. The other night he kept it up until I fell asleep. Over and over he called, sometimes the higher-pitched, screech-like call and then followed by the lower-pitched quavering. I wonder what he was saying?

The pair of barn owls nesting in our neighbor’s barn often join the screech owl in piercing the night with their sharp cry. The female is incubating her second clutch of eggs in the two-foot by two-foot by four-foot long box after successfully fledging six young in late May. After the first young owl hatches you hear the male’s call all night as he courses the fields hunting for mice and voles.

As the night relents and the dawn begins to break and the owls return to their daytime roosts, a spectacular event occurs in the morning sky as Venus and Jupiter and the star Aldebaran are in conjunction with the crescent moon. This happens on July 14 – Woody Guthrie’s birthday ... and mine.

We do live in a wonderful place on Earth.

David Kline, KWLTL Trustee

We need partners to become active in our endeavors

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and we like it that way! Each relationship is special to us just as every piece of land and the wishes of the owner have unique characteristics. When we make a first visit to a property and meet with the owner, a bond begins. We tour, we talk, we recognize the attachment that exists between the land and owner, an association takes root and we all then get to work to create a conservation plan of mutual satisfaction. We thank our partners; we take our responsibilities seriously. You can rely on us!

We are appealing to our friends, members and landowners for fresh

ideas for gatherings we can sponsor to get more of us together in the coming months. Do you have an interest in fund-raising? An excursion to a protected property (with the owner’s permission, of course)? Special events? Easement monitoring? Volunteer time

in the KWLTL office?

We would welcome your help. In fact, we would LOVE it! Please call Melody Snure at our office, 330-263-8963, and she will take it from there.

Thank you!

Maryanna Biggio, KWLTL President

Easement incentive bills gain sponsors

HR1964 and S339, the bills to make permanent the Conservation Easement Incentive Act that expired Dec. 31, 2011, had 310 House and 22 Senate co-sponsors when Congress adjourned August 3 for summer recess. Without passage easement donations will still be tax deductible, but subject to lower caps.

Updated information about the status of these important bills is available on the Land Trust Alliance website: www.landtrustalliance.org.

WMP pavilion gets new life in visible new location

A deteriorating pavilion at Wooster Memorial Park has been given a new lease on life including a new location. Long tucked away in a secluded trail area where it invited inappropriate activity, the pavilion now welcomes visitors to the park's education area with a fresh look and picnic tables.

In April, Friends of Wooster Memorial Park removed and discarded the rotted roof, unbolted the heavy steel upright and support beams, and disassembled the structure. They moved the beams up Silver Road and back the drive to the octagonal concrete pad where the former Outdoor Education Center once stood. The beams were reassembled on new, 24-inch pads and a new shingle roof was installed.

The new pavilion site features several inviting picnic tables for park users to enjoy. Its strategic position is perfect for use as a support facility for special park events including the successful summer trail series.

Funding to cover the cost of the \$4,589 project included a grant from the Noble Foundation and contributions from FWMP members and supporters.

Wooster Memorial Park is a 325-acre primitive, heavily wooded natural area containing six miles of trails. It was formed starting in 1964 when local farmer and high school teacher Paul S. Spangler donated 133 acres of wooded land to the City of Wooster. The park grew to its present size with additional acreage both purchased and donated. Killbuck Watershed Land Trust was instrumental in obtaining Clean Ohio funding with which 71 acres were purchased and added to the park in January 2008.

Further information about Wooster Memorial Park is available at www.friendsofwmp.com



BEFORE - Volunteers prepare the rotted roof for removal.



AFTER - The rebuilt pavilion features picnic tables and offers a site from which park events can be conducted.

Have you paid your 2012 membership?

Your membership in the Killbuck Watershed Land Trust helps to maintain the rural atmosphere that has made our area a desirable and unique place to live.

Your annual dues are used for:

- Conservation education
- Public outreach
- Land acquisition and management
- Legal action to monitor and maintain conservation easements

Annual membership levels are:

- Friend, \$50
- Steward, \$100
- Conservator, \$250
- Protector, \$500

If you haven't yet paid your 2012 membership dues, please take time TODAY to send us your check. Killbuck Watershed Land Trust is a tax-exempt organization pursuant to Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Service Code. Donations are tax deductible. If you have already paid, we thank you!

Find great resources at www.killbucklandtrust.org

The Killbuck Watershed Land Trust web site features valuable information for people who have an interest in supporting land conservation.

The Documents tab on the home page (www.killbucklandtrust.org) has sample documents including a Deed of Conservation Easement and a Deduction for a Conservation Easement, as well as IRS Form 8283 for Noncash Charitable Contributions.

To better understand the need for land conservation advocacy and action, be sure to view the PowerPoint presentation "Walking the Land With Your Uncle." Find it in Documents.