

Ripples

A Publication for Members and Friends
Killbuck Watershed Land Trust

Volume 4, Issue 1

Summer 2014

Inside this issue

Joy of piddling	1-4
Deep family roots	1-2
Why we plow	3
Landowner meeting	3
Website is evolving	3
Join KWLT!	4

Board of Trustees

Maryanna Biggio, President
Neal Caldwell, Vice President
Linda Bush, Co-Secretary
David Wilkin, Co-Secretary
Ron Holtman, Treasurer
Randy Carmel
Barry Cavanna
Bob Hunter
David Kline
Robb Stutzman
H. Dewey Thompson

Killbuck Watershed Land Trust
133 S. Market St.
Wooster, OH 44691
330-264-1712 (Biggio home)
330-317-2583 (Biggio cell)
maryannabiggio@hotmail.com

Ron Holtman, Treasurer
2171-B Eagle Pass
Wooster, OH 44691
Phone: 330-264-6115
Fax: 330-262-5729
www.killbucklandtrust.org

Melody L. Snure, Ripples Editor
jgrad72@yahoo.com

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

'Piddling,' when executed correctly, makes time pass quickly without regret

Dear Friends,

Author Rick Bragg defines piddling as a way to kill time without any great effort or even really meaning to. If one piddles correctly, time just goes away – no waste, no regret. In our family we are great piddlers, Tony more so than I. Don't confuse piddling as something with a finished product or with work or accomplishment, however satisfying, although that might be a final outcome.

For me, there's a fine line between piddling and procrastination. I like to piddle in a cupboard that holds a fabric collection, certainly more than a lifetime's worth of quilting projects. I found myself sorting one rainy day by color and yardage, maybe for a future project even though there were several in the works,

unfinished. The next day – sunny, warm and dry – I went back to the cupboard looking forward to more idle hours, but there was that nagging feeling that I should be doing something more productive like mowing the grass. I would call that "piddlemus interruptus."

Tony, on the other hand, is an expert when it comes to enjoying our farm. He can be found on the Gator with a chain saw down in the woods cutting logs for our two wood-burning stoves. That might seem like work to some, but for Tony it is a pleasure. The piddling part this summer was when he saw "creatures" in some of those logs before they were split. And the grandchildren were coming. The garage and yard are now home to an

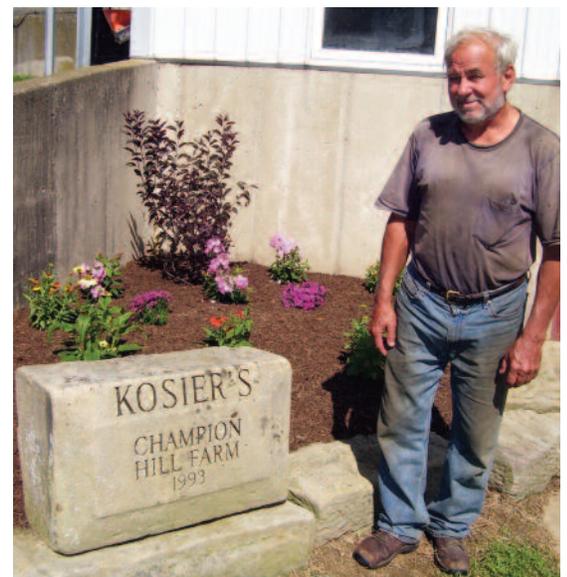
Continued on Page 4

Champion Hill Farm is in 4th generation of Kosier ownership

Don Kosier vividly remembers a summer in the 1960s when he was a teenager growing up on his family's Champion Hill Farm north of Marshallville. "There was a guy who hounded my parents all summer long about buying our farm," he recalled. "He wanted the land to develop a golf course."

The discussion got far enough along that Don's parents went out to look at other farms as they weighed the pros and cons of a big payday in exchange for giving up the 116 acres the family had called home since 1893. In the end there was no deal on the gently rolling property that lies along State Route 94, a long stone's throw from Route 585.

Continued on Page 2



DON KOSIER is the fourth generation of his family to own Champion Hill Farm along State Route 94 north of Marshallville.

Promoting, protecting and preserving our natural heritage

Kosier hopes family farm will remain an asset

Continued from Page 1

A life resident of the farm, Don lives there with his mother Helen, now 93. Never married, he farms alone with a hand as needed from Kurt Conkle, a friend and neighbor who began helping on the farm as a teenager. Because Don has a job in Wooster working in farm operations at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, he does much of his own work at night.

While the mix changes annually as he rotates crops, the Champion Hill fields this season include about 30 acres of wheat and oats, 25 or so acres of corn, 20 acres of soybeans and 25 to 30 acres of hay. Several acres of woods make up the balance of the protected land.

“If my father and grandfather could see this farm today, they wouldn’t recognize that it’s the same soil they plowed,” Don said, explaining the benefits of no-till farming that he began phasing in nearly 30 years ago. A close look at a lush cornfield illustrates the point. Neatly matted under the thriving stalks is last winter’s stand of rye, which conserves the moisture and



DON KOSIER lifts the thick rye mat, last winter’s cover crop that enriches this season’s healthy no-till cornfield.

enriches the soil.

Along the edge of the fields is another indicator of how no-till farming is different. All of the Kosier farmers have been avid “rock-pickers,” removing every sizable stone that emerges in the fields. As Don eyed the pile of rocks that stretches for more than 200 feet, he pointed to the spot where huge rocks picked by previous Kosiers stop and much smaller ones begin.

“With no-till, I’m not plowing up rocks like we used to,” he explained. Some of his friends tease that the small rocks he still seeks out and removes are “nothing more than gravel.”

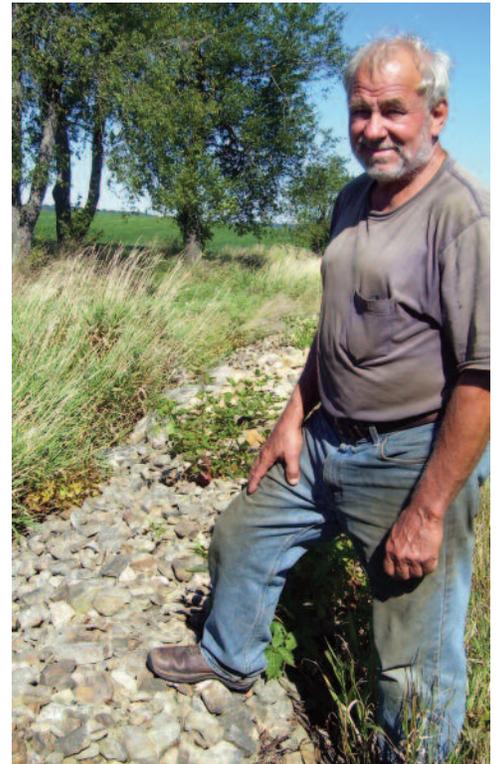
To ensure that the four-generation Kosier farm would never be sold for development, Don placed a conservation easement on it through the state’s Agricultural Easement Purchase Program in 2007. It was his fourth attempt to be approved by the state program that purchases development rights from successful applicants.

“If I hadn’t been approved that time, I was just going to donate the easement outright. One way or another, the land was going to be preserved,” he said. His message to potential program applicants is this: “Don’t expect to get selected the first year you apply. It’s like so many other things in life: perseverance counts.”

Not only has the process become more streamlined, Kosier said, there is plenty of good help available from the Wayne County Planning Department and Auditor’s Office. “It’s important to get good (legal) counsel, too,” he added, praising KWLTVice President Ron Holtman as an attorney who is supportive as well as knowledgeable about conservation easements.

Don has always been interested in environmental issues, from water quality and farmland preservation to recycling and population growth. “As we get older, it’s natural to look at the legacy we will leave,” he said. “I want this farm to be an asset to the community rather than a liability.”

Don plans to leave the family farm to his only nephew, son of his twin sister.



DON KOSIER shows off his farm’s unique four-generation rock pile.

Currently living in a Chicago suburb and working as an engineer, the nephew enjoyed visiting the farm while growing up in the Portage Lakes area.

Don’s other sister, Joanne, and her husband, Rick Simpson, live just to the north of Champion Hill in a home built for his grandparents’ retirement.

“I’d like to see someone else get an opportunity to farm,” said Don. “My parents and grandparents made many sacrifices for this land.

“Most of us who farm curse it at times, but I don’t think any of us regret the experience,” he added.

Don views the conservation easement as an asset to his farm’s future. “It used to be a farmer could make a big profit by selling land off in residential lots. But today farms are being sold for huge prices to remain as farmland,” he said.

“Many of the biggest farmers lease most of their acreage,” he added. “They had better hope that some of us little guys preserve our land so they have something to farm.”

Melody Snure, Ripples editor

Why we plow: 10 good reasons

Although we have been rotationally grazing for over 40 years and intensively for the past 17, we still do some till farming. For a number of reasons – one, for the enjoyment of seedtime and harvest and to feel and smell the rich springtime earth beneath my feet. Saluting the spring sunshine with rich loam purling off a polished moldboard is reason enough. As Aldo Leopold wrote, “One of the defects of our mechanical society is the decreasing proportion of people privileged to plow.”

That reminds me of a story a college professor told me last year. His brother, who had retired as a Navy recruiter and following a long battle with cancer, was dying. One day while visiting him he asked, “Looking back on your life, do you have any regrets?”

After a brief pause his brother said, “Yes, one.” Then he confessed:

Landowner meeting is set for October 26

Attention landowners with Killbuck Watershed Land Trust easements:

The 2014 landowners meeting will be held Sunday, October 26, starting promptly at 2 p.m. at the Barry Cavanna farm, 4686 Valley Road, Wooster.

Please mark this date on your calendar and plan to attend. More information will follow by mail soon.

“I lived in northern Ohio and was scheduled to speak in Columbus that evening. Since it was spring and the season was coming into its peak glory of blooming apple trees and dandelions, I left early and wandered south through the hill country. I saw numerous farmers plowing, but one particularly caught my attention. He was plowing with horses: three matched Belgians in a walking plow. I stopped the car, got out, walked to the fence, and watched the team and plowman.

“When the farmer, shirtsleeves rolled to his elbows in spite of the cool day, reached my end of the field, the team turned, he flipped the plow on its side, and stopped in front of me. All this without any loud sounds, only the creaking of leather and a single ‘Whoa.’ The farmer and team obviously knew each other well.

“We talked about the beauty of the season and the pleasures of plowing and sowing. Then he asked me, ‘Would you like to make a round?’ I looked down at my dress uniform and highly polished shoes and then at the five strands of barbed wires separating us and said, ‘No, I’d better not.’

“I have regretted it ever since.”

I hear you, romanticism doesn’t pay the bills. Perhaps no and possibly yes. So here is **reason two** for plowing: we can incorporate more nitrogen into the soil through the plowing down of manure. Real manure, that is, not merely

fecal matter from grazing animals. The ages-old recipe for good manure is a combination of feces, urine and a source of carbon. We prefer home-produced straw as the carbon source and so we need to grow small grains.

In my opinion, the finest manure produced is with a manure pack – a daily or twice-daily spreading of straw (I prefer loose straw, but I will spare you the benefits, and the labor of that) in an area where the cows wander at will and bed down. As the winter progresses the pack builds, and ages, and improves. When it is spread on the field prior to being plowed down, it doesn’t stink, but has a rich fertile aroma. (If you smell a farm before you see it, there is something being done wrong.)

Reason three: We feed some grain to the cows, six to ten pounds a day, and the best quality corn and oats we can feed is grown right here on our own farm using sunshine. There are no transportation costs and very little oil is used in producing the crop. Twenty acres of corn is sufficient (in normal rainfall years) for silage (eight acres) and grain for our forty cows.

Reason four: By not buying off-farm, especially hay, we eliminate many brought-in exotic weed problems.

Reason five: We like to establish some new pastures annually. Grazing and new grasses and legumes are moving ahead so rapidly that we don’t want to be locked into outdated technology.

Reasons six and seven: The need to cultivate the corn at least twice. Cultivating corn on a 75-degree June day is pure bliss – cumulus clouds, the rich aroma of good soil, dogs chasing rabbits, bobolinks’ flight-singing, finding arrowheads. What more could one desire?

Reason eight: It keeps our feed costs low.

Reason nine: I save on health club membership costs.

Reason ten: It works.

David Kline, KWLT Trustee

KWLT web update: work in progress

The Killbuck Watershed Land Trust web site (www.killbucklandtrust.org) is undergoing a major update. If you’ve visited the site lately you have probably noticed the difference.

Because KWLT is an all-volunteer organization, projects like a web update don’t happen overnight. We are NOT finished. Keep watching our site as it evolves into a much more useful and user-friendly spot to get information about land conservation.

As we make this transformation we welcome your input. KWLT Board of Trustees member Robb Stutzman is leading the web effort and would love to hear from you about what you would like to see on the KWLT site. Contact him at rstutzman@lhslaw.com or drop him a line at the KWLT office, located at 133 S. Market St., Wooster, OH 44691.

Piddling (and notes from KWLT president's desk)

Continued from Page 1

imaginative menagerie of sculpted farm critters – horses, deer, a turkey and pig (big enough for kids to ride on pretend adventures), skunks and raccoons, and possums hanging from the big maple tree shading the patio.

I like to take Tony a cup of tea while he's piddling just to see what he's doing. He's happy; I'm happy. I go back to the house to do a load of laundry and putter around. Might true piddling be a gender thing? It knows no season and it's good for you.

You can read Rick Bragg's essay, "The Fine Art of Piddling," which was published in the February 2012 issue of *Southern Living* magazine, at the Southern Living website.

* * *

We'd like to report to you in this issue of "Ripples" that Congress has finally voted on the Conservation Easement Incentive Act. (H.R. 4719). Land trusts around the nation have been waiting for this action as have landowners who are considering placing a conservation easement on their land.

But this piece of the 2014 Farm Bill has only half passed. The House of Representatives, in a bipartisan vote of 277-130, went on record to make the

easement incentive permanent. The bill then went to the Senate for confirmation. Congress recessed before the bill was addressed by the Senate. Call this piddling or procrastination or both.

However, that does leave us more time to contact our senators to encourage them to vote yes as the bill comes before them when they return to Washington. As friends of Killbuck Watershed Land Trust and conservation of farmland, you can e-mail or call Ohio Senators Sherrod Brown and Rob Portman and ask them to support the Conservation Easement Incentive Act.

You can reach U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown at:
www.brown.senate.gov-contact.cfm or call 1-216-522-7272

Contact information for U.S. Sen. Rob Portman is:
www.portman.senate.gov or call 1-216-522-7097

We know it does make a difference when legislators hear from their constituents.

* * *

A 42-inch gas transmission pipeline proposed by E.T. Rover Pipeline, LLC is making headlines and causing furor among landowners across Ohio and Michigan. It will affect hundreds of

landowners including at least four farms with easements under the stewardship of KWLT.

We have attended informational meetings to learn as much as is currently available about this project. The question for us is: Does having a conservation easement on a farm that is in the pathway of the pipeline make a difference in the pipeline right-of-way route?

We are fortunate to have legal professionals on our board of trustees (Robb Stutzman and Ron Holtman) who know how to read and interpret the paperwork offered by the pipeline company. If this becomes a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)-approved project, which seems likely, eminent domain will override landowners' rights to reject the pipeline crossing their farmland.

Soil and Water Conservation District experts have stated that the prime-rated agricultural soils that are disturbed by pipeline construction and maintenance will never be the same. There are many other issues of concern. We will keep you up to date when we know more.

* * *

Jim and Susie Nelson of Wayne County have had their application, sponsored by KWLT, accepted into the state's Clean Ohio Agricultural Easement Purchase Program. They will be protecting forever their 126-acre farm south of Shreve.

We have enjoyed working with the Nelsons and are delighted to play a part in preserving this beautiful and productive piece of land.

* * *

Happy rest of the summer to all.
Enjoy piddling!

Maryanna Biggio, President
Killbuck Watershed Land Trust
Board of Trustees

Your KWLT membership helps to conserve area lands

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 2014 membership dues will be 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

To become a new member or to renew your membership for 2014, write a check payable to Killbuck Watershed Land Trust. Mail it to Killbuck Watershed Land Trust, 133 S. Market St., Wooster, OH 44691. 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.