



Sunny Lane Farms, Ross Township, Greene County

Land Preservation is Booming in Ross Township, Greene County, Again!

When TLT secured funding from the Ohio Department of Agriculture to purchase an agricultural easement on the first Ross Township farm in 2004, no one knew how quickly this program would take off. Since then, TLT has closed 11 more easements on a total of 3,034 acres. Two of the newest properties are Phil Spahr’s Century Farm and 387 acres owned by Sunny Lane Farms. Sunny Lane Farms contains 367 tillable acres currently planted in a soybean and corn rotation. Talking with Mike Hartman, co-owner of Sunny Lane along with his brother Richard, you quickly hear their passion for farmland and agricultural preservation. Seeing so much farmland disappear to urban development during his lifetime, Mike wanted to “set aside his farm for his family and the next generation.” Mike went on to say, “and Michele is the bomb,” emphasizing the “invaluable” asset that the land trust has been to assist in the process of preserving his farmland. He admitted being unsure if he and his brother would have pursued this avenue without the help and backing of TLT. “People [in these counties] need to realize the value of having an organization for the purpose of helping landowners in this process, not everyone has access to something like this.” In fact, this is the Hartman’s second easement with TLT. In 2007, they closed an easement on their 270 acre farm which is contiguous to TLT’s second largest block of preserved land. This new easement is on a farm located just two miles from approximately 1,389 acres of contiguous preserved land. Mike’s goal of preserving his farmland for his family and the next generation is has been realized thanks to the work of TLT. Coming soon is a new block of preserved land in Ross Township consisting of four different properties with a long stretch of Brickle Creek traversing the fields – stay tuned!

TECUMSEH LAND TRUST



Spring 2022

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Annual Meeting Notice

**34,406 acres
preserved**

“Protecting local farmland, water, and natural areas forever.”

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Founded in 1990, we are a private non-profit conservation organization serving Clark and Greene counties and surrounding areas.

Our mission is to preserve agricultural lands, natural lands, water resources, and historic sites in voluntary cooperation with landowners, and to educate the public about permanent land preservation.

To learn more contact us at:
937-767-9490
tecumsehlandtrust.org

TLT does not solicit in states in which it is not registered as a charity.



- Sound Finances
- Ethical Conduct
- Responsible Governance
- Lasting Stewardship

Jacoby Creek RCPP Update

This year marks TLT's 4th year as the lead partner of the Jacoby Creek Partnership, a Regional Conservation Partnership Program, with USDA. The program brings funding into the Jacoby Creek watershed for conservation practices and easements, as well as educational programming, with the goal of improving water quality.

We expect to use all the funds left in the RCPP pool of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds this year which are used to help pay for conservation practices. Application ranking for 2022 was completed this spring. Four applications will be funded. RCPP-EQIP funds have already been used to pay for brush management, grassy waterways, cover crops, fencing, and to convert cropland to pasture.

The Nature Conservancy has started work to re-meander the Jacoby Creek on the Agraria property in March. This 10-year project will meander the creek and create wetlands which will ultimately improve water quality and create habitat for wildlife.



Tiffany collecting data from water sonde

Water quality was continuously monitored in both the Jacoby Creek and Yellow Springs Creek throughout 2021 on two farms including Xarifa Farm and Last Adventure Farm. Tiffany Schirmer, an engineer with water instrument company Xylem, presented the findings from this water quality monitoring effort at the Growing Green Conference in February. This spring, continuous water quality data collection will begin again on the two creeks.

New to this effort are water quality testing pens which are available at the TLT office to anyone wanting to monitor their water quality. Jordan Gray and Evan Pitstick, both with Honeycomb Archive, have created an app which allows users to enter water quality data and make data comparisons. More info about this will be available on TLT's website.

Finally, TLT and Agraria hosted the Growing Green 2022 series over the months of February, March, and April. The series included great presentations on topics focused on conservation and water quality in the Miami Valley, local foods systems in the pandemic, and promoting wildlife habitat. The recordings from some of these presentations will be posted on TLT's website.

Conservation efforts in the Jacoby Watershed continue.

Why Protect Farmland—the Global Importance of Farmland Preservation

Most of us don't think of land as a finite resource. The United States is certainly flush with land compared to other countries. However, not all land is created equally. Really productive land is made up of prime soils. Those are the soils identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as having the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. There are only four areas in the world, consisting of about 3% of the Earth's surface, that contain prime soils: the Ukraine, China, Brazil into Argentina, and the U.S. Corn Belt. Within the U.S. Corn Belt, the four largest states with prime soils are Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, and Ohio. And within Ohio, prime soils exist primarily in the western half of the state. Ohio has 13,600,000 acres of farmland, 44% of which is considered prime. Prime soils are hugely important to global food supplies and being able to grow food efficiently on those soils is critical to feeding a growing population and minimizing impacts to the environment.

Despite having the best soils on Earth, Ohio is experiencing incredible pressures to convert these soils to other uses. According to the American Farmland Trust, Ohio lost 312,000 acres of farmland to commercial, industrial, residential, and utility uses between 2001-2016. Farm fields in our part of Ohio are generally flat with few obstructions making them easy to develop. Land in Ohio, according to some developers, is cheap compared to other parts of the country (tell that to a young farmer looking to buy land), which is another reason land is converted. In the face of a changing climate the pressure to convert more of Ohio's land is only going to increase.

Tecumseh Land Trust is in the business of preserving these prime soils forever and we don't intend to slow our pace of preservation in southwest Ohio. However our state and local leaders really ought to be thinking of prime soils in the context of the finite resource that they are. Even if land can be converted back to agriculture after a development, research today is showing that those soils are never as productive as they were and require more inputs and resources in order to attain the pre-development yields. In 1997, Governor Voinovich created the Ohio Farmland Protection Policy by Executive Order because he recognized then that agricultural lands were finite and in need of protection. He understood that once converted these lands wouldn't be as productive. Governor Voinovich made it the responsibility of all state agencies to consider their impacts to agricultural lands, not just the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Perhaps its time we all start getting back to this way of thinking.

— Michele Burns, Executive Director

Tecumseh Land Trust is in the business to preserve our prime soils forever.

Earth Day 2022



The 6th Annual Native Plant Swap & Sale was a great success. Over 450 native plants including flowers, shrubs, ferns and berries were rehomed. Native plants support habitat for our vitally important local pollinators. Thanks to all those who donated cuttings and seedlings.

We are already planning next year's event. Keep this event in mind as you get out in your garden next spring.



TLT participated in the Habitat Community Celebration at the Miami Township fire station by organizing the Children's Activity Area. Children *and adults* made clay animal tracks, looked at insects in compost and made native wildflower seed bombs.

Thank you to the Stitch-n-Bake 4H Club for helping TLT at the children's area.

Heritage Grain Trials and Heritage Grain School

Locally grown grains are the missing component in many local food systems. How do we find the deep rooted, drought-tolerant, disease-resistant grains that work best for our region?

Agraria and Antioch College are participating in the Heritage Grain Trial program that was offered by the Rocky Mountain Seed Alliance from 2016-2021. Participants in the Heritage Grain Trials are setting out to first identify ancient and heritage grain varieties that will perform well in specific areas, and then



to increase quantities of the best performing varieties for use by local farmers. In doing so, they are building the necessary seed stocks and laying the groundwork for a new local grain economy to emerge.

Along with the grain trials, a three-day *Heritage Grain School* is being offered August 12-14, 2022 in partnership with Agraria, Antioch College, Tecumseh Land Trust, the Appalachian Staple Foods Collaborative, and Cornville Seed. This is a three-day immersive course exploring the history, culture, cultivation and culinary uses of ancient and heritage grains. Day one highlights farmers, day two brewing, malting and milling, and day three baking, marketing, policy and a field trip to heritage grain farmer Jon Branstrator's farm.

Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/grain-school-tickets-272126456557> or contact Beth Bridgeman, bbridgeman@antiochcollege.edu for information.

The Value of Clark & Greene County Preserved Farmland on 4/26/2022

Tecumseh Land Trust has protected over 30,000 acres of farmland.



Corn

Typical Yield = 175 bushels/acre
30,000 acres = 5,250,000 bushels

1 Bushel = \$8.04
5,250,000 bushels =

\$42,210,000



Soybeans

Typical Yield = 61 bushels/acre
30,000 acres = 1,830,000 bushels

1 Bushel = \$17.05
1,830,000 bushels =

\$31,201,500



Wheat

Typical Yield = 95 bushels/acre
30,000 acres = 2,850,000 bushels

1 Bushel = \$10.86
5,250,000 bushels =

\$30,951,000

CALENDAR

May 21, 2022

Maximizing Dollars to Enhance Your Woodlands

2 p.m. Tour begins

2306 Stewart Road, South Charleston

Learn from Don & Peggy Grigorenko about improving your woodlands using funding from the National Resource Conservation Service's cost-share programs including Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). This is a moderate level hike. Please wear hiking or mud/rain boots and bring a water bottle.

June 5, 2022

32nd Annual Meeting

2 p.m.

See article on page 8.

June 8, 2022

Wright Patt Pollinator Expo 2022

10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Wright Brothers Memorial, 2380 Memorial Rd, Dayton, OH

Organizations from across the state, including TLT, will be onsite to highlight their work to preserve pollinator populations and their habitats. This family-friendly event is free and open to the public.

July 10, 2022

Julia Cady Society Event

By invitation only

August 12-14, 2022

Grain School

See article on page 4.

September 10, 2022

Woodland Management

2 p.m.

Xarifa Farm

3194 Snively Road,

Yellow Springs

Learn how NRCS can help you manage invasive species and restore your woods with native plants

October 5, 2022

Tecumseh Day

Look for details on our website



Watercolor by Libby Rudolf

18th Annual Harvest Auction

September 23, 2022 | 6:00 pm

Hollenbeck Bayley

Creative Arts & Conference Center

Springfield

TLT NEEDS A VEHICLE

When Krista retired in September of last year she took her truck with her! Now, TLT is left without a vehicle for hauling tools, supplies, auction items, mulch, and so much more. If you happen to have a vehicle you can donate or sell, or have a connection with a local dealership please get in touch with Michele at 937-767-9490 or michele@tecumsehlandtrust.org.



Sketch by Bob Huston

Beggars can't be choosers, so we are open to what type of vehicle we get, but it has to be able to haul large items.

Meet Our New Easement Monitor & College Intern!



Patrick Dwyer, Easement Monitor

Patrick received his degree in Environmental Biology from the University of Dayton. He has worked for various Park Districts in the Dayton area as an Environmental Educator. He is currently a volunteer Naturalist at Glen Helen. In his spare time, he and his wife Tara, enjoy hiking, gardening and visiting waterfalls.



Maggie Hayes, College Intern

Maggie is studying Environmental Science at Cedarville University with plans to graduate this May. Being born and raised in Valparaiso, IN, which is a stone's throw from the Indiana Dunes, she grew up spending more time outdoors than in. She is an avid hiker and advocate for our beautiful earth. Maggie wanted to intern with TLT to have a better understanding of the work land trusts do to see if this area of work is something she'd be interested in doing for her career. She has a broad spectrum of interests within the large field of environmental science and she is hoping to narrow those down! She has assisted the staff with research, map making and funding applications for easements. Maggie has been an outstanding intern.



April was **Native Plant Month**. Plant some in your garden or yard for our very important pollinators!

Soil Health- Rotational Grazing at Finch Creek Farm

On a brisk snowy day in March, a brave group of hearty folks toured Finch Creek Farm in Xenia Township, Greene County. The farm is operated by the Finkes Family, Reinhold and Melissa and their children Karl and Katie. Tour attendees listened to Mr. Finkes explain his family farm's cattle operation while riding in a wagon pulled by Percheron draft horses. The family raises cattle organically and prioritizes conservation on the land. In the cold months, the cattle eat highly nutritious fermented bales of hay grown on the farm. In the warm

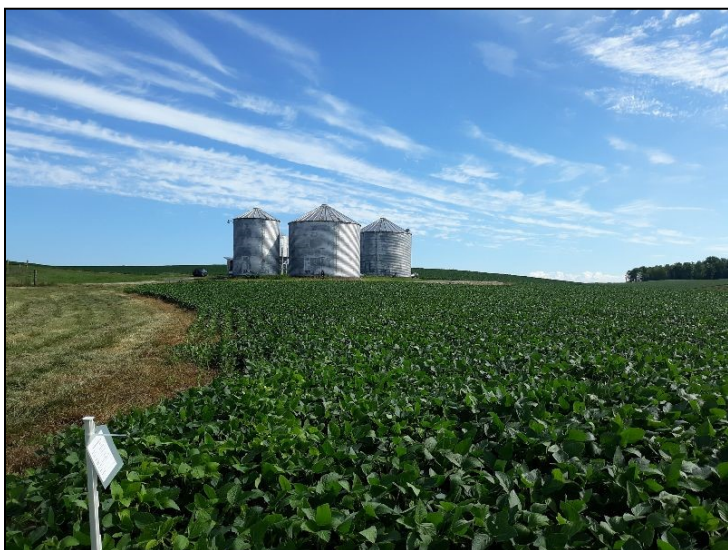


months, the cattle are rotated to graze on different fields each day. Mr. Finkes has noticed the cattle actually select some grasses over others to eat first. Rotational grazing allows for better forage utilization and limits runoff. As Mr. Finkes said, his cattle are in great health and have not needed a lot of veterinarian care. Recently, the farm received an NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program contract for extensive fencing. The family offers their organic meat through direct sales, and through community supported agriculture.

TLT has secured funds for a permanent conservation easement on 237 acres of Finch Creek Farms through NRCS. In April, they submitted another application to the state and federal funders to protect 50 more acres.

The family is eager to see their hard work and investment in the land live on knowing the land will be protected forever. We look forward to seeing these projects on the farm grow!

A Growing Block of Preserved Land in Pleasant Township



The rolling hills of Pleasant Township in northeast Clark County certainly make for beautiful views of open spaces. Brent and Megan Neer's 115 acre farm on McConkey Road has some of the best views around. The Neers purchased this farm in 2017 and soon after pursued a conservation easement to preserve the land. "Contiguous to 762 acres of already preserved farmland, protecting this farm was in-line with the goals of state and federal funding programs," says Michele Burns, Executive Director of Tecumseh Land Trust. With much farmland changing and the increasing urban pressures to develop, Brent wanted to preserve this farmland for many generations to come. Talking with Brent, the historical aspects of this land are very important to him. This land has been in production since the early

1800s. Before the Neer family owned it, the McConkey family resided here and farmed the land. Their property has over 1,600 feet of Sinking Creek and eight grass waterways that contribute to the protection of habitat and better water quality in the Mad River watershed downstream of the farm. The Neers primarily grow soybeans and corn in crop rotations on about 89 acres of land. One conservation practice they have found to be very beneficial is no-till. Brent began no-till practices in 2017 and has noted no-till has decreased erosion from storm and water runoff, since the farm has many hills and changing gradients.

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Spring 2022 Newsletter

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Photo by Jordan Gray

32nd Annual Meeting
Sunday, June 5 @ 2 p.m.
Xarifa Farm
3194 Snively Road
Yellow Springs, OH 45387

Tecumseh Land Trust is ready to get back together and celebrate our many accomplishments over the past few years! Join us for a brief business meeting followed by a walk along the beautiful bluebird trail at Xarifa Farm and along the Jacoby Creek . The farm has been under the protection of a conservation easement since 1994.

This is a family friendly event. Please consider biking or carpooling. Please bring a chair or blanket to sit on. Wear sturdy shoes for the activities. Visit tecumsehlandtrust.org or call 937-767-9490 with questions.