

Landscapes



News from the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle

Summer 2012

Eleven Easements in Jefferson County Protect 1161 Acres



The 73 acre conservation easement on WilBob Farms, funded by the American Battlefield Protection Program.

The Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle closed a record 11 conservation easements in 2011, including the first since 2007 with funding from the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP).

The ABPP-funded easement preserves from development 73 acres of scenic farmland along Rt. 51 east of Middleway, which was once known as Smithfield. Owned by Robert Henshaw's WilBob Farms, Inc., the property was featured in the Battle of Smithfield Crossing.

Fighting occurred on the property in August 1864, at the beginning of General Sheridan's Shenandoah Valley Campaign. Two Confederate infantry divisions crossed Opequon Creek and forced a Union cavalry division back along what is now the Middleway Pike, necessitating use of a Union infantry division to stop the Confederate advance.

The 11 easements closed in 2011 protect a total of 1161 acres. The LTEP now holds a total of 43 easements, protecting 4215 acres.

All of the LTEP easements in Jefferson County are co-held with the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board. Some have the Farmland Protection Board as the lead holder, while others – including all seven of the ABPP-funded easements – have the LTEP as the lead holder.

In each case, the landowner continues to own the land and can work the associated farm. He or she can sell the land, but any future owner is bound by the terms of the conservation easement.

Two of the 11 easements closed in 2011 protect land on Rattlesnake Run, bringing to seven the number of easements along it. The 198 acres of pasture and farmland owned and worked by Bill Knighten on Gardeners Lane includes the spring that is the headwaters of Rattlesnake Run, while the 69 acres of farmland owned by John Witt are located on the stream close to where it feeds into the Potomac River.

Of the remaining easements, the largest protects 220 acres of horse pasture and farmland along Currie Road owned by Wallace and Betty Stehr. The third large easement closed in 2011 protects 185 acres of farmland owned by Jack Burch just off Hinton Road in the southern part of Jefferson County.

Other easements closed last year included one protecting 43 acres on Rt. 45 near Kearneysville owned by Walter Walls and his children that is used for cattle, and another protecting 33 acres owned by Scott and Sondra Morgan that overlooks the spring-fed Lake Louise.

Four easements protecting a total of 340 acres completed in early 2011 were reported in the 2011 edition of Landscapes. They include two easements covering 247 acres of orchard at the intersection of Ridge and Luther Jones Roads farmed by the Twin Ridge Orchard Company and two properties along Engle Moler Road with a total of 93 acres.

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of the Eastern Panhandle

Your Partner in Rural Conservation

Our mission is to encourage people to preserve open space and rural landscapes in West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle. We use private, voluntary initiative and education to:

- Preserve the scenic beauty and historic character that have long made our region attractive to people;
- Promote a healthy, balanced local economy by preserving productive farmland and encouraging appropriate development;
- Encourage wise stewardship of the region's natural resources.

We are a private, non-profit, tax-exempt charitable organization incorporated in West Virginia in 1995. Our board is composed of men and women from a variety of backgrounds from Morgan, Berkeley, and Jefferson counties.

We meet monthly at the Martinsburg law firm of Hammer, Ferretti & Schiavoni, and we thank them for opening their office to us.

Board Members

Terry Rieman Camilletti

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Bonnie Stubblefield

Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle

P.O. Box 2240

Martinsburg, WV 25402

304-876-2583 (Grant Smith)

www.landtrustepwv.org

LTEP News

Easement Donors Sought in Morgan County

The Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle would love to help protect more farmland, forestland, or historic parcels of land in Morgan County. Currently only six per cent of the land the LTEP has under easement is located in Morgan County compared to 22 percent in Berkeley County and 72 percent in Jefferson County. To get the word out about the benefits of land trust easements to interested landowners in Morgan County, the LTEP provided a presentation and discussion with members of the Sleepy Creek Watershed Association at their annual membership meeting last Fall in Berkeley Springs. LTEP President Grant Smith explained how conservation easements can help preserve existing farms and forests and also potentially provide federal tax benefits for landowners. The chairman of the Morgan County Farmland Protection Board, Lin Dunham, described how the county's Farmland Protection Program is designed to ensure that land stays available for agricultural use. Charlie Biggs, who placed a conservation easement on his property in the Sleepy Creek watershed in 1998, provided testimony regarding the benefits of an easement. A lively question and answer period followed the presentations.

Gale Foulds, President of the Sleepy Creek Watershed Association, facilitated the presentation. Approximately 30 persons were in attendance.

Possible Funding for Civil War Battlefield Land

Money continues to be available from the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) for the purchase of conservation easements on land involved in the four engagements in Jefferson County recognized by the US Congress as named Civil War battles: Harpers Ferry, Shepherdstown, Summit Point and Smithfield Crossing.

The Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle, with the assistance of the Civil War Trust and the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board, obtained \$1,040,000 from the ABPP in 2004, which helped fund purchase of five easements on land involved in the movement of troops from Harpers Ferry to Antietam and the subsequent Battle of Shepherdstown, and one easement on land located in the Summit Point Battlefield.

The LTEP obtained commitments from the ABPP for just over another \$1 million in 2011, part of which went for the Battle of Smithfield Crossing easement on Rt. 51 reported elsewhere in this newsletter. The remainder is for an easement in the area of the Battle of Summit Point that will close shortly.

Basically, the value of an easement is the difference between the value of land when it can be developed and when it cannot be developed, as determined by an appraisal to federal standards. The ABPP funds half the value of an easement on property that lies at least 50 per cent in the area of a named battle. The balance can be donated by the landowner. If it has funds, the Farmland Protection Board may also be able to assist with the purchase.

Maps of the recognized battle areas are available on the ABPP website, at www.nps.gov/hps/abpp/CWS11StateReportWV.htm.

Easements Aid Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation



The Potomac riverfront "Cement Mill" parcel purchased by the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission in December connects to two conservation easements for which the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle obtained funding from the American Battlefield Protection Program in 2006.

Together, the three agreements protect 63 acres in the heart of the Shepherdstown Battlefield.

The 14-acre riverfront parcel, known as the Cement Mill Property, constitutes the West Virginia side of Packhorse Ford, where first Confederate and then, Union forces crossed the Potomac after the Battle of Antietam. Union forces occupied positions up the hill, on the land now protected by conservation easements, and they later retreated across the Potomac through the Cement Mill Property.

On the 250th anniversary of the battle this year, the Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association plans a tour of the battlefield. Participants will wade the Potomac, cross the Cement Mill Property and, with the permission of the landowner, climb up to the first ridge, on the northernmost of the two easements, for a view of the remainder of the battlefield.

Support Your Community Conservation Partner!

I would like to be a **Partner** with the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle.

Please contact me to discuss **protecting** my land through a Conservation Easement.

I would like to **support** the Land Trust with a tax deductible contribution

\$500 \$100 \$75 \$50 Other \$ _____

Please contact me. I am interested in **volunteer** opportunities with the Land Trust.

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Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle
P.O. Box 2240
Martinsburg, WV 25402