

THE ROLE OF MONITORING



Easement owner Russel Quinn drives monitoring team led by Sam Donley, LTEP, Liz Wheeler and Jane Tabb, JCFPB, and Bonnie Stubblefield, LTEP.

In spring or fall you can see groups of people walking on conservation easements.

They are volunteers of the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle monitoring properties to ensure that the land is being preserved as provided for in the easement.

The volunteers work from a field copy of the Baseline Documentation Report, which contains maps and photos, recording the condition of the property at the time of the easement and a copy of the easement deed. (The original Documentation Report remains in the Land Trust's protected archive).

They also have copies of previous annual monitoring reports, which record any gradual changes, such as the growth of trees or changing crop patterns. With these documents, they can see whether there is something different and how it may relate to the easement itself. Easements usually limit new construction to the farmstead complex or residential area(s), so they particularly look for evidence of new buildings or earth disturbance.

These monitoring field visits are scheduled for early spring and late fall because that is when the lack of foliage allows the monitors to see into wooded areas and the ground without disturbing crops. Rain will sometimes but not always postpone a monitoring visit. The land trust team monitored on foot a forested 100 acres in Morgan County in light rain.

Monitoring visits are always set up with the landowner, with the hope that he or she will be on hand for the visit itself. In some cases, the monitoring team is joined by the land owner and driven around the easement. Some properties can be covered by vehicle in as little as half an hour; some require over an hour, even in a vehicle, to insure visual coverage. And some need as much as two hours or more on foot, with considerable climbing.

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Board member **Gavin Perry** manages monitoring of the 36 easements in Jefferson County, with assistance from volunteers and other board members as needed. Since all of the land trust's easements in Jefferson County are held together with the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board, the land trust team is normally joined by FPB Administrator **Liz Wheeler** and often by a FPB member as well.

Board member **Terry Camilletti** manages the monitoring of our 12 easements in Berkeley and Morgan Counties, joined by Berkeley County Executive Director of FPB **Mark Schiavone** for those easements jointly held with the Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board.

So far, land trust monitoring have uncovered no problems of the magnitude of that the Land Trust of Virginia faced, when it found that the new owner of a property had bulldozed a road through a forest in one of their easements. Fortunately, the Land Trust of Virginia had thorough documentation, including photographs, of the easement before the road and had signed up for the same easement defense insurance that the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle holds.

We are always looking for more volunteers to help with monitoring. It's a great opportunity to get outside in good weather to see interesting landscapes and agricultural activity. **Please call Gavin Perry at 304-876-3960 or Terry Camilletti at 304-281-5420.** ■

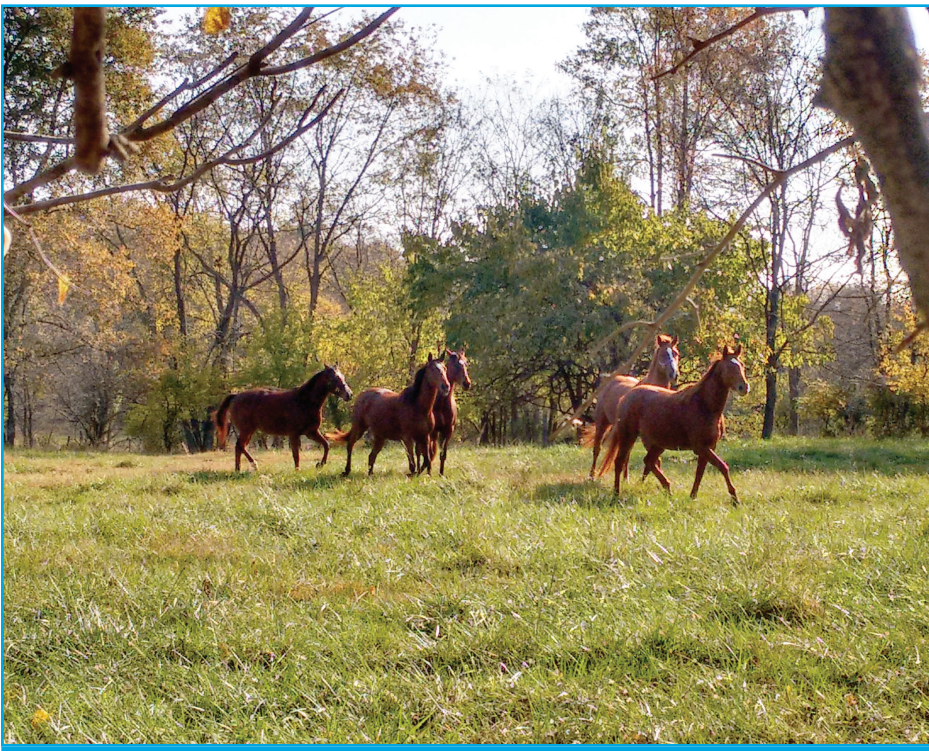


Monitoring the Scott property are Grant Smith, LTEP, Liz Wheeler and Peter Fricke, JCFPB.

EASEMENTS IN PROGRESS

Besides working with the Farmland Protection Boards (FPBs) in Berkeley and Jefferson Counties on farmland easements, we have also placed an emphasis on woodlands and water quality. Shortly, we will be putting in place a conservation easement on 30 acres of forested land along a half mile of steep bank along Opequon Creek in Berkeley County. We will have detailed information in our next newsletter.

In Jefferson County, we are helping the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission and the Civil War Trust to get money from the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) to protect, through conservation easements, additional Potomac riverbank land involved in the 1862 Battle of Shepherdstown. There are other, large parcels of farmland that could be protected using ABPP funds in cooperation with the Jefferson County FPB. ■



Horses enjoy morning run on Claymont easement in Jefferson County.

CHALLENGE

We would like to invite you to join us, to become a volunteer and be engaged in helping frame the future of the Eastern Panhandle. We are beginning to enlarge our board and increase our skill mix. Whatever your skills and background such as business, financial, legal, information technology, web communication, marketing, and others, we would be pleased to talk with you. We have easements in Morgan, Berkeley and Jefferson Counties and residents of all three counties are welcome, especially Morgan County, where we would like to increase the awareness of conservation easements for preserving the natural beauty of the county.

We look forward to talking with you and exploring your interests.

THANKS FOR ALL YOU DO

The Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle is an all-volunteer Land Trust. We have no paid staff. All of our donations directly support establishing conservation easements. Our volunteers are very important and special to us.

We would like to express our appreciation and thanks for all the hours that our volunteers have given to the Land Trust of The Eastern Panhandle. Volunteers have joined **Gavin Perry** and **Terry Camilletti**, our monitoring team leaders, visiting annually all 48 easements covering over 4700 acres to monitor compliance with the covenants of the Easement Deeds. All we can offer in exchange is the opportunity to see some of the most beautiful land in the eastern Panhandle and to meet and talk with the interesting land owners committed to preserving their land. Also, on occasion on cold blustery fall days after completing the monitoring, we have been treated to a steaming hot mug of soup and a chance to visit.

We appreciate the organizational support that several people are providing. Thanks to **David Hammer**, **Joseph Ferretti**, and **Robert Schiavoni**, who make their Law offices available to us for our monthly Board Meetings and have done so for more than a decade. Thanks to **Lavonne Paden**, who has volunteered countless hours for years providing accounting expertise and information on easements that were established over a decade ago. Also, thanks to **Margarita Carey**, who has maintained our data base for many years.

Don Owen in his capacity as a Circuit Rider for the national Land Trust Alliance provided us a bridge to that organization and opportunities to tap into it for grants and training. He is now continuing as a volunteer to funnel information and contacts to us.

Thanks to our donors, those of you that have placed conservation easements on your land and to those of you who provide financial support that allows us to continue to facilitate preserving the beauty of our landscape in the Eastern Panhandle. ■

COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE

The LTEP holds or co-holds 48 easements in the Eastern Panhandle. Over the past 20 years, the Land Trust has helped land owners put conservation easements on their land. The conservation easement is specific for each property, identifying what qualities and aspects of the land that the owner wants to be preserved in perpetuity. The land may be a working landscape with fields of crops or pastures dotted with animals or a managed forest. It may be open space with a spectacular view shed, or just a natural landscape, or historic land such as a Civil War Battlefield. The easement protects the land from future development.

As of this year 15 easements or 30% of the 48 easements have new owners. The lower appraised value for land, with an easement on it, has helped new owners often young people to purchase the land and often to continue farming. The agricultural value and the beauty of the natural landscape is often passed on to another generation to value and enjoy.

As we consider what our community will look like 25 or 50 years from now, we know that some of the natural beauty of the landscape will remain. Thanks to the commitment of our friends and neighbors who preserved some of the present beauty to share with the future. ■

Landscapes

News from the Land Trust
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 developments;
- Encourage wise stewardship of the regions 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
Sam Donley
Barbara Humes
Gavin Perry
Grant Smith
Bonnie Stubblefield

Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle

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Support Your Community Conservation Partner!

- ☐ I would like to **discuss** sharing my expertise 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.
- ☐ Please contact me to discuss Estate Planning Opportunities.

NAME

ADDRESS

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Visit our website for more information: www.landtrustepwv.org



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