



Landscapes

2025

Our Changing Landscape

Traveling around the Eastern Panhandle these days, you may notice two things. The more obvious of the two is the building boom taking place. New housing developments seem to be popping up like mushrooms after a summer rain. According to data from the Jefferson County Office of Impact fees, by summer 2025, permits for new housing construction had already exceeded all of those issued for 2024 in its entirety. And Berkeley County, having experienced a nearly 80% population increase over the past 25 years, is the fastest growing county in the state, driving both residential and commercial expansion. Solar farms, data centers, industry — plans for all of these continue to be approved and are now joining the housing boom in forever altering this landscape we call home.



We at the Land Trust are not opposed to development. We believe in growth, so long as it is mindful growth, planned and implemented with the carrying capacity of the land and its resources clearly factored in.

While growth and development are obvious these days, the other thing you may notice as you traverse the local area is more subtle: small signs bordering farm fields and

woodlands proudly proclaiming, “This Land Protected Forever.” Seeing these signs, you may be comforted, as we are, in knowing that some of the richness and character of this changing landscape, our home, is being preserved for the future. Such protection relies upon a certain mindfulness too.

These two things — land development

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

In response to our changing landscape, we have made some shifts in our approach to land protection:

- **BROADENING** our focus from primarily farmland to an emphasis on non-agricultural land and resources while continuing to partner with the Farmland Protection Bureaus who maintain that focus
- **WORKING** with smaller parcels of ecological, historic, and scenic significance
- **CREATING** partnerships with landowners of neighboring parcels to preserve larger contiguous tracts
- **IDENTIFYING**, encouraging, and supporting potential easements more strategically and proactively

Learn more about our land protection efforts at: landtrustepwv.org/

In this Issue:

Our Changing Landscapep1
 Protecting Legacy Landsp2
 Highlighting Our Vice Presidentp3
 2025 Donations in Honor/Memory. . .p3

Protecting Legacy Lands

The Land Trust added two new easements in 2025, both located just outside of Shepherdstown and both what might be considered “legacy” lands, passed on from fathers to sons, now protected forever.

Keith Janssen, new holder of a permanent conservation easement on his 31 acres shares, "I am incredibly pleased to be able to place this family property into conservation easement with the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle. My decision to do so stems from a long-held and deep-seated belief in the importance of conserving our natural environment instilled in me from an early age and through my career with the Coast Guard. My father purchased this property in 1969, and it holds a special place in my heart for many reasons. I have long valued the idea of preserving it in its natural state so that it can be enjoyed by wildlife and future generations and encourage others to consider doing the same."

Mark Schiavone, the Land Trust's Easement Acquisitions Lead, explains,

“Permanently protecting this land was important to us. This property contains forested land over karst, which helps recharge groundwater in the area. It is also part of the headwater for Teague Run, which flows north to the Potomac River.”

And leading out of town, River Road serves as the gateway to the important Battle of Shepherdstown. The Land Trust holds several easements as part of the effort to protect the battlefield area, and now we include a new tract of land that helps solidify this gateway to the battlefield. The roughly 15-acre property spans both sides of River Road, just at the high point before the road falls away to the Potomac River. Owned by **John and Pheny Aldis**, the land includes a large, wooded tract and a smaller field still pressed into agriculture. John Aldis acquired the property, which was originally owned by his grandfather and father, 30 years ago. Preserving this land from future subdivision and development was a high priority for the property owners.

The Land Trust is so pleased to be carrying on the legacy of the Janssen and Aldis families as stewards of these lands. Permanently protected open space outside of Shepherdstown preserves the rural nature of Jefferson County and offers additional support to the preservation of the hallowed ground of the Shepherdstown Battlefield.



Changing Landscapes

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and land preservation — are, of course, interrelated. Increased development, and its associated infrastructure, raises pressure on natural resources: woodlands cleared, water quality impacted, wildlife habitat compromised, a beloved landscape forever altered. As development increases, so too does the importance of our work at the Land Trust.

For 30 years, the land trust has been preserving and protecting local natural resources.

With two new properties added in 2025 (see *Protecting Legacy Lands*, left), we currently hold 59 conservation easements protecting over 5000 acres across the three counties of the Eastern Panhandle. This land is protected forever — the land itself, the water that flows through and beneath it, the ecosystems it supports, the open space and viewsheds that lift our hearts.

THE LAND TRUST'S WORK IS DEFINED BY THREE PILLARS:

- **Preserving** scenic beauty and historic character that have long made our region attractive
- **Promoting** a healthy, balanced local economy by preserving land and encouraging appropriate development
- **Encouraging** wise stewardship of the region's natural resources

This is what those little roadside signs signify. “This Land Protected Forever” holds deep meaning for us. We hope it does for you as well. It serves as a reminder, an inspiration, a mindfulness of the growing importance of land protection and preservation in our changing landscape.

HIGHLIGHTING OUR VICE PRESIDENT:

Bonnie Stubblefield Inspiring us Towards Action

Conservation success lies in the power of individuals. It lies with those who understand the importance of building on our past, seeing current opportunities and challenges, and applying their skills and talents to prepare, plan, and execute actions for the future. These individuals are true conservation heroes and Bonnie Stubblefield is one of ours!

Bonnie has been a leader with The Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle for over 20 years. As Vice President of our all-volunteer board, Bonnie took on every task. She guided us through strategic planning, budgeting, and donation tracking. She composed and coordinated our annual newsletters and supported our outreach efforts. She tackled Board and partner development and built critical relationships across the conservation community. Bonnie also had a passion for our field work, giving time toward participating in easement monitoring and establishing trusting partnerships with our easement holders.

Now stepping aside from her role of VP to focus more on strategic Land Trust activities, we celebrate Bonnie's continuation as a key board member. We are grateful that she will



Bonnie Stubblefield (center) being recognized for her many years of service to the Land Trust by Georgia Jeppesen, Treasurer (left) and Jeff Feldman, President (right).

still be with us, ensuring our growth in line with our mission and assisting with the challenges facing our local land, water, and natural habitats, as she has for so many years.

Please join the Land Trust in celebrating Bonnie's long and continuing commitment to our organization and her passion for protecting and preserving our community's natural resources.

Landscapes

News from the Land Trust
of the Eastern Panhandle

Celebrating 30 Years
of Land Protection

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 individuals from a variety of backgrounds from Morgan, Berkeley, and Jefferson counties.

We meet monthly on Zoom.

Our vision is "Conserving Land, Water, and Open Space - Forever."

2025 LTEP DONATIONS

Received in Honor and
in Memory of Others

R. GRANT SMITH MEMORIAL FUND

- Donald and Betsy Camp
- Judith Miller-Jones
- Mark Schiavone
- Peter and Vicki Smith
- Jane Tabb

The Land Trust extends heartfelt thanks to the many donors who have helped build the **Land Trust's Legacy Fund**. Established in 2020 as an Agency-Endowed Fund with the Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation, the Legacy Fund is invested for long-term growth and income, creating a sustainable source of revenue to support future landowners and protect and expand conservation easements. For more information about the Legacy Fund or other giving options, contact Susan Caperton, Executive Director of EWVCF, at 304-264-0353 or visit EWVCF.org.

We also gratefully acknowledge the many donors who have given in honor and memory of Grant Smith, our longtime President. The **R. Grant Smith Memorial Fund** provides support for acquiring and maintaining conservation easements in Jefferson, Berkeley, and Morgan counties of West Virginia. To learn more, visit Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia at landtrustepwv.org/contact.

LEGACY FUND

- Georgia Jeppesen and Skylar Jeppesen Benedict in Memory of Mark Benedict
- Renny Smith in Memory of Grant Smith

GENERAL/OPERATIONS FUND

- Ms. Linda B. Colvin in Memory of Mark Benedict
- Betty Donley in Honor of S.J. Donley Jr.
- Georgia Jeppesen and Skylar Jeppesen Benedict in Memory of Mark Benedict

Board Members

Jeff Feldman
Georgia Jeppesen
Bonnie Stubblefield
Lucien Lewin
David Plummer
Mark Schiavone
Liz Wheeler
Steve Bauserman
Alex Beaulieu
Jane Tabb

Land Trust of the
Eastern Panhandle

PO Box 2240
Martinsburg, WV 25402
www.landtrustepwv.org

Support Your Community Conservation Partner!

- Please contact me to discuss **protecting** my land through a conservation easement.
- Please contact me. I am interested in **volunteer** opportunities and **sharing my expertise**.
- I would like to **support** the Land Trust with a tax deductible contribution:
 - \$1000
 - \$500
 - \$250
 - \$100
 - Other \$ _____
- I would like to have a part in the **Legacy and Future of the Eastern Panhandle*** // My Legacy Gift is \$ _____
- I would like to help offset costs to prospective conservation easement owners through the **R. Grant Smith Fund*** // My R. Grant Smith Fund Gift is \$ _____

NAME

PHONE

STREET ADDRESS

EMAIL

CITY/STATE/ZIP

**More information about the Legacy Fund and the R. Grant Smith Fund can be found on our website.*

Mail to: Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle • PO Box 2240, Martinsburg, WV 25402

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

PO Box 2240
Martinsburg, WV 25402

LAND TRUST
of the
EASTERN PANHANDLE