

About Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or governmental body. The agreement limits certain uses on all or a portion of a property for conservation purposes while keeping the property in the landowner's ownership. The easement is nearly always perpetual—applying to all present and future owners of the land—and is recorded at the County Recorder of Deeds office.

The restrictions contained in an easement are tailored to the particular property and to the goals of the landowner and conservation organization. An easement might state, for example, that no building or road may be placed within 200 feet of a stream passing through a property; however the easement might allow for a house to be built elsewhere on the land. Another easement might support farming but forbid development. Yet another easement might prohibit all activities except for sustainable forestry and recreation. The flexibility of the easement tool is endless.

Most conservation easements held by land trusts are donated by landowners who wish to protect a beloved place. In rare cases, they are sold at a bargain price or fair market value. Federal tax benefits are available to easement donors whose donations meet IRS requirements.

About ClearWater Conservancy

The mission of ClearWater Conservancy is to promote conservation and restoration of natural resources in central Pennsylvania through land protection, water resources protection, and environmental outreach to the community.

ClearWater has conserved over 600 acres of land with easements, and an additional 2,400 acres have been protected through conservation partnerships. Conservation easements include Millbrook Marsh, Thompson Woods Preserve, Rhoneymeade, and several private farms. Streamside riparian easements are ClearWater's newest conservation focus as part of our long-term vision of a Ribbon of Green connecting the headwaters of Spring Creek to Bald Eagle Creek and beyond.

*Everyone working together to conserve natural beauty
and the environment in the heart of Pennsylvania*

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ClearWater Conservancy

Stories of Land, Water, and People

Rhoneymeade Rendezvous

A Farm, A Sculpture Garden, & An Arboretum

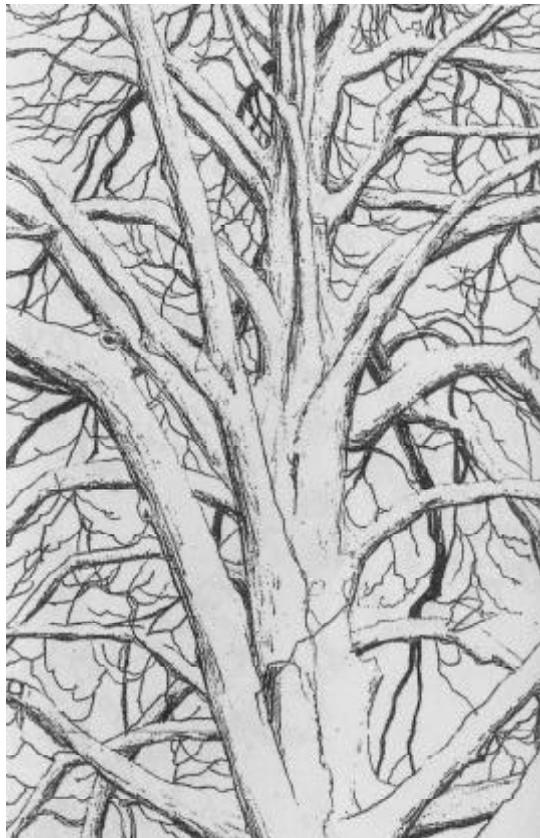
It started small. But before Dr. Richard Morgan, a retired Penn State molecular biology professor knew what was happening, he had one of the area's best-kept secrets on his hands.

“Conserving this land and developing an arboretum and sculpture garden have really been efforts of many hands,” says Morgan of Rhoneymeade, his 150-acre farm. Rhoneymeade is an intimate garden where a blossoming arboretum nurtures a variety of sculpture. This unique haven for nature and art lovers, tucked away just



off of Route 45 East in Potter Township is open to the public the first Sunday of each month from April through October, to provide a glimpse into Dr. Morgan's peaceful haven.

Along the tree-lined boundary of the property stands Dr. Morgan's home, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Its history is one worth noting—Leonard Rhone, best known locally as the founder of the Grange Fair, built the house in 1853. The land itself has been passed down



Rhoneymead Horsechestnut - *Aesculus hippocastenum*. Drawing by James Lescher, 2004.

through only a few families since being owned by William Penn.

Beginning at the home and neighboring artists' studio, visitors follow a gently sloping path around the Sculpture Garden, with works by local artists as well as Dr. Morgan himself. The route is designed with tranquility in mind, and the strategically placed gazebos, benches, and goldfish ponds invite the visitor to sit down and quietly observe the surrounding natural beauty.

Interspersed with the Sculpture Garden is the newly designed Tree Walk, which guides visitors to some of the oldest and most historic trees not only of the property, but of Centre County as well. Dr. Morgan speaks easily about each tree on the walk—but some of their histories remain a mystery.

“For all I know, this tree was planted by Leonard himself,” comments Dr. Morgan, referring to one of the oldest of the 28 trees on the trail. At the end of the route stands the centerpiece of the group—a towering, imposing Norway maple—named the largest of its kind in the area by the Centre County Historical Society.

Along the walk through the Sculpture Garden and Tree Walk, there are ample oppor-



“Nobody will ever build on this land.”

~ Richard Morgan

tunities to stop and take in the sights, sounds, and smells of this beautiful land. As far as the eye can see on this hazy summer day, brown and green hills stretch and intersect, punctuated only by cornfields, hedgerows, and the shimmering outlines of Mount Nittany and Tussey Ridge in the distance.

“Nobody will ever build on this land,” Dr. Morgan states quietly, looking over his property with pride. The easement, which legally prohibits any kind of development on 144 acres of the farm—the remaining six acres were intentionally excluded to allow growth of the Sculpture Garden, Tree Walk, and future projects—was signed into effect on October, 30 1986, just two years after Dr. Morgan acquired the land.

This marked the first easement deeded by ClearWater Conservancy, founded in 1980. “We couldn't have chosen a more appropriate property for our first conservation easement,” said

then conservancy president, George Beatty at the time.

Today the value of this conservation easement is even more apparent, as development spreads out from State College along the Penns Valley. Dr. Morgan's farm is surrounded on all sides by development—new homes, businesses, and highways—but thanks to his commitment to conservation, this small stretch of land will never feel the rumble of construction equipment, probing for the best place to build a home or install a new pipe line.

Instead, it will remain forever in its natural, scenic, and open condition—it will never grow houses on its soil.



Mount Nittany beckons in the distance, rising above preserved farm fields and protected hedgerows. Rhoneymead continues to be leased to the Rimmey family, who have farmed the land for three generations.