Conservation Options

Land trusts are charitable organizations that conserve land by purchasing or accepting donations of land and conservation easements. Land trust work is based on voluntary agreements with landowners and creating projects with win-win outcomes for communities.

Here are a few ways land trusts and landowners work together to conserve land.

1. **Voluntary Conservation Easements**
   - Land trusts and landowners may create an agreement known as a conservation easement. This type of agreement transfers the property to the land trust with the landowner retaining ownership and control. The easement limits certain uses on all or a portion of a property for conservation purposes while keeping the property in the landowner’s ownership and control.

2. **Acquiring Land for Conservation**
   - A land trust can acquire a property, place a conservation easement on it, and then sell it to a conservation buyer—someone who wants to own a conservation property. Sometimes a municipality or state agency wishes to conserve a property but can’t meet the financial or timing demands of the landowner. A land trust can help by acquiring and then donating or selling the land to the government where the government can afford it.

3. **Donating Land to a Land Trust**
   - Landowners can conserve a property but can’t meet the financial or timing demands of the landowner. A land trust can help by accepting land donations from others.

4. **Public Recreation Area**
   - The land trust may offer to place a conservation easement on a property and then sell it to a conservation buyer, a public recreation area, or other conservation purpose.

Pennsylvania’s Land Trusts: Conserving Our Commonwealth

About Land Trusts

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The Nature Conservancy

One of The Nature Conservancy’s many roles in preserving the land, water and wildlife that Pennsylvania communities depend on is to help land trusts conserve land. The Conservancy promotes conservation by encouraging land trusts to acquire land and conserve it for the public interest.

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Have You Been to the Bog?

On a spring day, the Tannersville Cranberry Bog belongs to fourth-graders.

As they look out their classroom doors, they see plants in the dense foliage that they only knew from pictures and words. The young explorers have no idea of the struggle to save the wetland and open it to the public. They just think it’s cool.

It’s pretty cool,” says Steve as he inspects the flower of a carnivorous plant. “The pitcher plants have these little hairs inside—when bugs go in they can’t get back out.”

“Show a fourth-grader an area who haven’t been to the bog,” said Bud Cook, director of The Nature Conservancy’s Northeastern Pennsylvania office. “I can’t tell you how many people say, “I’m really embarrassed. I haven’t been to the Tannersville Bog. My kids keep bugging me to go.”

The appeal of this mass of peat, murky water and unknown future, tells you how many people say, “I’m really embarrassed. I haven’t been to the Tannersville Bog.”

The Tannersville Cranberry Bog—part of a carnivorous plant. “The pitcher plants have these little hairs inside—when bugs go in they can’t get back out.”
In 1956, these volunteers helped TNC purchase the first 63 acres of the bog. Although settled as a professor in Connecticut, Niering came home frequently to lead an effort to protect the Tannersville Cranberry Bog. He organized a group of concerned locals who paid the legal fees and raised the money to finance the protection effort. In 1956, these volunteers helped TNC purchase the first 63 acres of the bog.

“They were scrambling to protect the place they loved. They wanted to insure its protection beyond their own lives. With The Nature Conservancy, they could do it,” Cook said.

The local people formed a stewardship committee to maintain the property.

Niering authored numerous books on fenland ecology and became a renowned naturalist. Although settled as a professor in Connecticut, Niering came home frequently to lead an effort to protect the Tannersville Cranberry Bog. He organized a group of concerned locals who paid the legal fees and raised the money to finance the protection effort. In 1956, these volunteers helped TNC purchase the first 63 acres of the bog.

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Stewardship

The bog had great educational value and a local college was interested in the property. The Nature Conservancy agreed to transmit the property to the college in the 1960s, under the strict condition that it be maintained as a natural area. The college accepted.

But over time, the task of caring for such sensitive ecosystems proved too onerous for the school.

When he retired, he started volunteering with The Nature Conservancy volunteers approached the leaders of TNC’s newly formed Pennsylvania Chapter with a plea to do something. TNC sent to the school, reminding it that it would need to maintain a revenue clause in the transfer.

A special place

Today, a floating boardwalk—named for William Niering—brings nature into the center of the bog. The wooden plank structure rests on pontoons atop the 40-foot-deep marsh and protects the bog’s plants from trampling.

Have You Been to the Bog?

“I was always in love with nature, but I was too busy with a fascination for the bog and its life. Another local boy fell so hard for the bog that it shaped his career, and in turn, he helped to protect it. Niering published his book based on his research in The Nature Conservancy publications.

"It was always in love with nature, but I was too busy with a fascination for the bog and its life."

Niering was a boardwalk enthusiast and took every opportunity to work with local nature organizations. He even taught at the Monroe County Vo-Tech School, wondering if they would need to enforce a reverent clause in the transfer. There was no need, as the college was happy to give the property back.

The property was chained and closed off to stop new damage. And then TNC’s volunteers began working for a long-term solution: How could they both protect the bog’s rich biodiversity and open it to the public?

Cook chokes up when talking about TNC’s band of dedicated volunteers. “They were so emotionally involved. There was a bond among those who felt a sense of ownership over their lives."

With great effort, they crafted and implemented a plan to provide public access and in-school education while protecting the resources that make restoration and education at the preserve doable. The Monroe County Environmental Education Center was created, and a dedicated education program that manages to this day.

In 1996, the Nature Conservancy purchased 215 acres of land to the west of the bog and from their main headquarters—a world not very many people get to see,” Debbie Harris says. “No one would get to see it at all if it weren’t for The Nature Conservancy building this boardwalk and protecting this land.”

The boardwalk’s white frame embraces the edge of the bog, peeking up at the kids. The guide notices the blooms.

“Cranberries form for every tried to Tannersville just to see this plant,” the kids tell the children. The entire area looks like a fairyland, but not in the bog proper.”

The bog was damming. The heaviest loss is in the Pocono region. There are two of the bog’s carnivores.

The bog was being damaged by too much traffic and the carnivorous sundew and pitcher plants, with smattering of shrubs like Labrador tea, leatherleaf, sheeplace, bog rosemary and swamp azalea. The bog also provided habitat for more commonly including bears, otters, bobcats, beavers, porcupines, minks and snowshoe hares.

The round-leaved sundew and pitcher plant are two of the bog’s carnivores.

Frustrated with the situation, local Nature Conservancy volunteers approached the leaders of TNC’s newly formed Pennsylvania Chapter with a plea to do something. TNC sent to the school, reminding it that it would need to maintain a revenue clause in the transfer.

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At their guide’s prompting, Debbie Harris’ fourth-grade students study and sketch the unique ecosystem. By 1979, parts of the bog were a mess.

Almost 40 feet of peat has accumulated on the floor of what was once the lake. Today, the bog stands out in contrast to the surrounding forests. It is a world of sphagnum moss, bogbean, yellow thread, and the carnivorous sundew and pitcher plants, with smattering of shrubs like Labrador tea, leatherleaf, sheeplace, bog rosemary and swamp azalea. The bog also provided habitat for more commonly including bears, otters, bobcats, beavers, porcupines, minks and snowshoe hares.

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