

About Land Trusts

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.

Nearly a hundred land trusts work to protect important lands across Pennsylvania. Governed by unpaid boards of directors, they range from all-volunteer groups working in a single municipality to large multi-county organizations with a dozen or more staff. They depend on landowner goodwill, member support and other donations for their continuing efforts.

Some land trusts address a wide variety of conservation needs. Some focus on a single conservation priority. Land trusts may conserve land to protect our rivers, streams and groundwater. They may protect community open space for new parks, scenic views, wildlife preserves or neighborhood gardens. They may conserve productive farmland or working forests. Some focus on protecting biodiversity while others preserve traditional hunting grounds.

Regardless of size or conservation focus, Pennsylvania's land trusts share a commitment to conserving natural resources for the people of today and for the generations not yet born.

The Nature Conservancy's mission is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

Visit www.nature.org

Conservation Options

Land trusts and landowners as well as government can access a variety of voluntary tools for conserving special places. The basic tools are described below.

A land trust can **acquire land**. The land trust then takes care of the property as a wildlife preserve, public recreation area or other conservation purpose.

A landowner and land trust may create an agreement known as a **conservation easement**.

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.

Landowners can **donate** land and easements. These charitable gifts may qualify the donor for federal tax deductions. In unusual cases, the land trust may offer to **purchase** a property interest for an agreed-to price using donations from others.

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 conserved 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 when the government is ready.

The Pennsylvania Land Trust Association fosters public understanding of conservation issues, advances public policy and provides land trusts and local governments with resources and training to more effectively conserve land. It is comprised of more than 70 voting conservation organizations.

Visit www.conserveland.org

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The privilege of possessing the earth entails the responsibility of passing it on, the better for our use, not only to immediate posterity, but to the unknown future, the nature of which is not given us to know.

~ Aldo Leopold



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Pennsylvania's Land Trusts Conserving our Commonwealth

The Nature Conservancy Pennsylvania Chapter

Have You Been to the Bog?

Con spring days, the Tannersville Cranberry Bog belongs to fourth-graders.

In the bog they see their lessons come alive. They touch 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.

"Show a fourth-grader an insect-eating plant and that's a lesson easily taught," says Roger Spotts, director of the Monroe County Environmental Education Center.

Fourth-graders in four Monroe County school districts have the bog written into their curricula. Steve Wynings, a student in Debbie Harris' class, is learning his lessons.

"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."

This kind of wonder saved the bog for today and for future generations: The bog could easily have been a casualty of development if it weren't for a group of enthusiastic, committed people.

One of The Nature

Conservancy's first purchases, the bog is used by teachers, scientists, photographers and nature lovers. But the bog is more than a wetland and more than a school classroom. It is part of the local culture, a part of the community.

"There are few people in the 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 spiky spruce, extends beyond the Poconos.

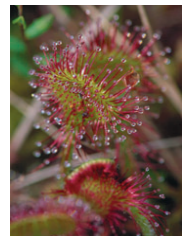


Debbie Harris' fourth-graders at the bog

The bog was designated a National Natural Landmark in the 1960s, earned ink in a National Geographic publication, and was studied by Ecuadorian park officials.



Fourth-grade students study and sketch the many plants they've read about.



The Tannersville Cranberry Bog was once a huge glacial lake. Since the ice receded 10,000-15,000 years ago, approximately 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 peat moss hosting beautiful plants like calla lilies, orchids, gold



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

thread and the carnivorous sundew and pitcher plants, with smatterings of shrubs like Labrador tea, leatherleaf, sheep laurel, bog rosemary and swamp azalea. The bog also provides habitat for many mammals including bears, otters, bobcats, beavers, porcupines, minks and snowshoe hares.

Inspiring art and science

Jerry Keltz grew up near the bog, yet never paid attention to it.

"We weren't allowed in there as kids," he said, laughing. "My mom told me that there was quicksand. We fished Cranberry Creek at night for eels and catfish, but not in the bog proper."

A lot of life took place between Jerry's mother's warnings and his discovery of the bog's wonders—a tour in the Air Force, a long career and settling down with family in Northampton County.

When he retired, he started volunteering with The Nature Conservancy, leading tours and documenting plant life at their preserves. It was this involvement that led him home and into the bog.

For six years, Jerry traveled to Tannersville every two weeks to catch plants in bloom. He photographically documented every plant species in the bog. His photographs have been featured in Conservancy publications.

"I was always in love with nature, but I was too busy while working to enjoy it."

Another local boy fell so hard for the bog that it shaped his career, and in turn, he helped to protect it. William Niering grew up a butcher's son in rural Scotrun with a fascination for the bog and its life.

After serving three years in World War II, Niering returned to Pennsylvania. He studied botany at Penn State. His Master thesis delved into what he loved: the flora of Monroe and Pike counties.

Niering authored numerous books on wetland ecology and became a renowned wetland expert.

"Even though he was teaching at Connecticut College, anytime he came home he went to the bog," Keltz said.

Niering also fought for the preservation of natural areas, becoming a volunteer with The Nature Conservancy.

The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) had just incorporated in 1951. With two or three employees and a thousand members nationwide, there were only hints that the organization would grow to protect more than 117 million acres of the world's most special places.



Volunteers from the Monroe County Vo-Tech School, Boy Scouts and The Nature Conservancy built the boardwalk.

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 did the legwork 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.

Over the years, TNC and Pocono Township acquired more land, protecting 775 acres at the Tannersville Cranberry Bog.

Stewardship

The bog had great educational value and a local college was interested in the property. The Nature Conservancy agreed to transfer 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 a sensitive ecosystem proved too cumbersome for the school.

The bog was being damaged by too much traffic and garbage dumping. Invasive plants—species not native to



the bog and far from their natural predators—were crowding out natives, damaging the unique ecosystem. By 1979, parts of the bog were a mess.

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 went to the school, wondering if they would need to enforce a reverter 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 bled to make things better at the bog."

With great effort, they crafted and implemented a plan to provide public access and on-site education while protecting the resource that made recreation and education at the preserve desirable. The Monroe County Environmental Education Center joined the endeavor, creating an education program that it manages to this day.

The Nature Conservancy, its volunteer stewardship committee and the Monroe County Environmental Education Center have now been successfully managing the preserve for more than 20 years.

Have You Been to the Bog?

A special place

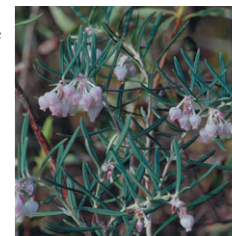
Today, a floating boardwalk—named for William Niering—brings visitors into the center of the bog. The wooden plank structure rests on pontoons atop the 40-foot deep peat moss and protects the bog's plants from trampling.

At their guide's prompting, Debbie Harris' fourth-graders enthusiastically jump up and down, rocking the boardwalk like a boat floating in thick soup.

The pinkish white flowers of bog rosemary embrace the edge of the boardwalk, peeking up at the kids. The guide notices the blooms.

"Botanists from far away travel to Tannersville just to see this plant," the guide tells the children. The entire class bends its collective head closer to the rosemary.

"This is another world—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."



Bog rosemary

Since European settlement, more than half of Pennsylvania's wetlands have been lost—filled in or dammed. The heaviest loss is in the Pocono region.