

# Linn Log

**The Newsletter of the Merrill W. Linn  
Land & Waterways Conservancy**

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PO Box 501, Lewisburg, PA 17837  
conserve@ptd.net 570-524-8666 or 522-0487 FAX 570-524-8743  
www.linnconservancy.org

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## *Fall 2006*

### ***Educational Events:***

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#### **Merrill Linn Trail Walk Scheduled for Sunday October 15**

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Join us for a walk on the Merrill Linn Trail, the most secluded of the Conservancy trails, located in the Mohn Mill Pond area of Bald Eagle State Forest in northwestern Union County. Participants will meet at 1:30 PM on Sunday October 15th at the Dale's Ridge Trail parking lot located on Strawbridge Rd. From there the group will caravan to the Merrill Linn Trail located in the Mohn Mill Pond area of Bald Eagle State Forest in northwestern Union County. Conservancy and Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance board member Owen Anderson will lead the event.

The one-mile loop is an easy walk through a hardwood forest of red oak, red maple, and hemlock. Scattered throughout the area are vernal pools ringed by sphagnum moss and cinnamon ferns. These pools, recently identified as pingo scars, are believed to be created by the melting of large subsurface mounds of Pleistocene ice about 10,000 years ago. The area is home to a spectacular concentration of plants and animals.

Participants should call (570) 524-8666 to reserve a spot. The Dale's Ridge Trail parking lot is located on Strawbridge Rd., off Route 192 west of Lewisburg 1.7 miles.

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## Buffalo Creek Poster Contest Winners

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Ten area students representing Mifflinburg Elementary School, Linntown Intermediate School, and Shady Grove Christian School are being honored for their outstanding creative efforts in the Buffalo Creek Poster Contest, sponsored by the Merrill W. Linn Land and Waterways Conservancy and its affiliate, the Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance.



*Cassidy Gasteiger, First Place Winner*

Cassidy Gasteiger, a Linntown School student, has been named Grand Prize winner, receiving a \$50 award from the Conservancy. Ms. Gasteiger's poster was judged the most outstanding contest entry, based on originality, artistic ability, and understanding of the subject matter.

First, second, and third place prizes were also awarded to students at each of the participating schools. At Mifflinburg Elementary School Brandy Shrawder was First Place winner; Brendon Hicks won Second Place, and Ilonna Speer received Third Place honors. Honorable Mention went to Donald Rearick and Madison Reed. The students worked under the direction of Mifflinburg Elementary School art teacher Betsy Fickes.

Shady Grove Christian School winning entries included posters by Alisha Wenger, First Place; Christopher Beiler, Second Place, and winner Candace Yoder, Third Place. Jay Miller and Megan Stoltzfus received

Honorable Mention. Fourth and Fifth Grade teacher

Diana Riehl directed the poster contest at Shady Grove.

At Linntown First Place honors, Vivyan Martin, Third Place. Kaye the student's efforts.

Over 70 students designed to raise Creek to the area, the what the Conservancy Creek for future

The winning Dale/Engle/Walker will be shown as well at other venues throughout



Intermediate School Micaela Fisher won Zhang, Second Place, and Nathaniel Wagner, Linntown's art teacher, guided

participated in the contest which was awareness of the importance of Buffalo problems that the waterway faces, and and BCWA are doing to save Buffalo generations.

posters were displayed at both the House and R.B. Winter State Park and the Union County Court House and the area.

*Buffalo Creek Poster Contest Entries*

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## Photography Fundraiser Planned

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In order to publicize conservation efforts at the properties it has under easement, the Linn Conservancy will sell photographs of these properties to the public. Prints will be mounted in mats suitable for framing and the plan is to have prints available to sell this fall for the holiday season.

This fundraiser has come at the suggestion of John Gardner, a conservancy member and professional photographer who owns Lewisburg Studio, a local photography company. Gardner has already photographed the Dale's Ridge and Koons properties, and the plan is eventually to photograph all the properties in various seasons. Tom Gibson, John Tonzetich, and Owen Anderson are assisting John Gardner on this project; others who wish to help or who have suggestions can contact Tom by phone or email: 570-568-8444, 570-713-4812, or tom@progressiveengineer.com.

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## Montandon Community Days 06

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Montandon Community Days again saw major Linn Conservancy involvement. Board member Lettie Davis, working with fellow Montandon area residents in the winter and early spring, played a critical role in planning activities. Lettie was joined by conservancy member Jeannette Lasansky who developed advertising and the event's tabloid produced by the Standard/Journal. The Memorial Day weekend event began with a bird walk

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conducted by conservancy president Wayne McDiffett. Good weather and an attendant crowd stopped by the Conservancy table staffed by Jeannette, Geoff Goodenow, Susan Waggoner, and Owen Anderson. Positioned next to the Sewer Authority booth that also had lots of information and a welcoming staff, the booth drew the more serious-minded in what was a fun-filled weekend.

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### Native Plant Sale

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The Linn Conservancy would like to extend a hearty thank you to everyone who participated in our second annual native plant sale. Special thanks go to the many volunteers who assisted in the event. The sale was very successful this year with all plants being sold by the close of the event. Overall we sold 55 trees, 56 shrubs and 203 perennials, representing a total of 20 species. The sale is a major fundraiser for the Conservancy and reflects our goals of conservation and education through increasing awareness of native plants as potential garden species. We hope that your excitement about gardening with native plants continues and we look forward to organizing another sale in the spring of 2007 with an increased selection of plants.

## *Our Environment Matters:*

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### Current Land Preservation Activities *by Geoff Goodenow*

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The Site/Stewardship Committee is one of three standing committees of the Linn Conservancy. Currently, the committee is composed of nine members whose expertise ranges from legal to scientific and is charged with three major roles; all of its efforts and initiatives are supported by a large network of volunteers.

One role is to monitor the condition of the conservancy's current easements and land holdings. Each of these five properties is walked at least once per year to ascertain that conditions of the easement are being observed and to note any changes (human or natural) on the property. The status of land held outright by the Conservancy is also checked annually. Each property has a chief steward assigned to it that performs this duty and documents observations in written and photographic form.



*Geoff Goodenow, Site Stewardship Chair*

Overseeing property maintenance is another role of the committee. For sites where there is no or limited public access such as our Montandon wetlands parcels there is little to do. In contrast, the Dale's Ridge Trail, Koons Trail and Mohn Mill Trail require considerable time and effort to keep them clear and safe for users. Our chief stewards for each of those trails have engaged individuals and groups to provide regular attention to those sites. For example, Dale's Ridge steward, Tom Travis, has a different group of volunteers scheduled monthly, March through October, to keep that trail in prime condition.

New properties often come to the attention of the Conservancy for possible easement or other forms of protection. The third role of the Site/Stewardship Committee, then, is to perform on-site reviews of land brought to us for consideration. Those properties are evaluated against a standard set of criteria. If the committee finds that a particular parcel meets those criteria, it is presented to the board of directors for further consideration. If accepted by the board, development of specific easement language can proceed, involving the landowner and the Conservancy.

Among other activities of the Conservancy that relate to this committee are Linn's involvement in the state's Adopt-a-Highway program, stream clean-ups, and proactive efforts to assure future protection of essential natural habitat. Volunteer Jo Riley heads our work to keep litter-free the roadway along a part of Penns Creek. Betsy and Allen Quant have headed waterway clean ups in Buffalo Creek and in the river. Committee members looking to the next generation work with easement donor, Tony Markunas of Central Builders Supply, to consider future reclamation possibilities (outside the easement boundary itself) following gravel extraction in the Montandon wetlands.

Through the efforts of the dedicated members and volunteers of this committee, the Linn Conservancy is helping to preserve the natural qualities and scenic beauty that this area provides for each of us to treasure and enjoy.

Want to help? **Support** us with your tax-deductible dollars. **Tell others** about the Linn Conservancy, especially those new to the area. **Volunteer:** Contact the Conservancy for help in finding a way to use your time, energy and expertise. **Make referrals:** Keep us in mind if a friend, relative, or neighbor is looking for options to protect his/her property through easement or other mechanism. Together we can help protect the natural beauty of central Pennsylvania for generations to come.

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### New Law Signed Expanding Federal Tax Incentives for Conservation Donors

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Congress recently passed a new tax law that helps all of us interested in protecting clean water, natural areas, and family farms. The law enhances the federal tax benefits for landowners who donate voluntary conservation agreements. These agreements can provide a win-win solution for protecting resources important to our community while keeping land in productive private ownership.

What Congress just did makes the tax law work much better for many modest-income landowners who, under the old rules, got credit for only a small portion of the value of their donation. Now, a conservation donor can deduct up to fifty percent of their adjusted gross income in any year (up from 30%), and, if most of their income is from farming, ranching, or forestry, they can deduct all of their income. Even more important is that if the value of their donation is larger than this, they can continue to use the deduction for up to sixteen years (increased from six).

These agreements, often referred to as conservation easements, are donations of a landowner's development rights to land, to protect specific natural, scenic or historic resources. The landowner continues to own and manage his land, and continues to pay local taxes. The public gets protection of resources that are an important heritage for our community.

The Linn Conservancy has been accepting donations like this for several years, donations that have protected 432 acres in Union and Upper Northumberland County. This change in the law will enable us to help many more landowners to protect resources for our children and for our community's future.

We believe in protecting our family farms, ranches, forests, and wildlife habitat – part of the traditions that make this a great place to live. Thanks to a helping hand from Congress, we will be able to do even more of this in the next several years.

Source: Pennsylvania Land Trust Association: <http://conserveand.org/features/hb4update>

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### Two Grants Awarded to Conservancy

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The Norcross Wildlife Foundation has awarded a \$4,700 grant to the Linn Conservancy for upgrades to office equipment. This will greatly improve the conservancy's ability to protect additional significant properties, monitor and manage the easements currently held, expand membership, and enhance its educational outreach programs. The Norcross Wildlife Foundation was established in 1965 to support and ensure the integrity of the Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary in Massachusetts and Connecticut. The Foundation supports, through grants, gifts, easements and loans-for-land, the activities of a national and international constituency of not-for-profits.

Additionally, Wal Mart, Inc. awarded a \$500 grant to the Conservancy in support of local environmental efforts. We are grateful to these organizations for their generous support of the work that we do!



Grant Award Ceremony

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## Bucknell University Students Make a Difference

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On the clear, brisk morning of Saturday, March 25, a spring clean-up commenced at the Dale/Engle/Walker House. A number of community members, including over 30 students from Bucknell University, volunteered a few hours each to this endeavor.

The volunteers split into groups to undertake a variety of tasks. Around the house, they went to work clearing and raking the debris left in the yards after the winter thaw, scattering hay in the surrounding fields, and spreading gravel across the driveway. Others ventured into the woods to prune the sides of the popular Dale's Ridge Trail, helping to ready it for hikers drawn outside by inviting spring weather. Another group tore down the frame of a shed that had seen better days, a task eagerly tackled by an "all-guy" team from the university.



The clean-up was quite productive and concluded with snacks and conversation. Thanks to Saskia Madlener, Linn Conservancy intern and Bucknell student, for organizing the volunteer effort. Her success in convincing college students to rise before 8 am on a weekend was impressive! And, of course, thanks to all the volunteers for offering their time and energies in order to maintain the Dale/Engle/Walker property for the community's enjoyment.

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## Adopt-a-Highway Clean-up Slated for October 22

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The Adopt-a-Highway clean-up workers have scheduled a fall litter pick-up on a two-mile stretch of Wildwood and Red Ridge Road along Penns Creek west of Route 104. Volunteers are asked to meet at 1 PM at the pavilion on October 22, and plan to work for an hour or two.

Thanks to Jo Reilly, Joe Keller, and Steve Grey from Penn Dot for their effort in the April clean-up. New participants are needed and welcomed. Call or email for more information.

## *People, Businesses, and Organizations Effect Change:*

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### **Making Tracks** by Rolf Helbig

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Last spring, the cavity nesting birds that call Dale's Ridge and the surrounding area of the Dale/Engle/Walker house home had a nice surprise when they were ready to nest. For his senior project, Jeff Duck of Lewisburg volunteered to completely refurbish all of the bird boxes located on the Dale's Ridge Trail. The Linn Conservancy and Seven Mts. Audubon gave Jeff the details of the project and he went to work.



Jeff replaced all of the rotted roofs with brown aluminum flashing which is impervious to the weather and also blends in nicely with the surroundings. He applied a new coat of brown stain to the boxes to preserve the wood and of course make them look brand new. Probably the most important yet overlooked device a bird box requires is a predator baffle. A piece of aluminum tubing is attached to the post that holds the bird box. This baffle prevents predators from climbing up to the box and raiding it. Jeff installed baffles on every box. A study on nest box predation revealed that over 80% of bird boxes are raided by predators that did not have baffles installed.

Finally, Jeff made and erected new boxes for screech owls and kestrels, two of nature's finest rodent hunters. Jeff's work quickly paid off. On a Sunday during the "Caring for Communities" days, Jeff and several Conservancy volunteers were elated to discover a bird box next to the trail with five bluebird eggs inside.



Thank you, Jeff, for a job well done! Because of you, it was a successful nesting

season on Dale's Ridge.

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## Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance Update

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### *Acid Remediation Project in the Headwaters of Buffalo Creek*

BCWA has been working for several years on reducing the high acid conditions in the first 7-8 miles of the main branch of Buffalo Creek. The water quality in the upper reaches of the creek historically supported a wild brook trout fishery, but over time the fish population diminished to zero in this area. The reduction in water quality and consequent fish loss was the result of the gradual deposition of acid-causing air pollutants. The Tuscarora sandstone which is the bedrock in this part of the watershed has limited ability to neutralize the long-term accumulation of acid. As the acidity of the water increased over time it caused an increase in aluminum in the water to levels that are toxic to aquatic life. BCWA is seeking to remedy this impairment through the installation of a passive water treatment system designed to reduce acid load and restore alkalinity to the stream.

The design phase of the project has now been successfully completed by Dietz et al. Consulting with funds received from a Growing Greener grant last year. In early 2006, BCWA, again in collaboration with Dietz et al, submitted a second Growing Greener grant proposal for the construction phase of the project, which is now under consideration by the Department of Environmental Protection. At the same time, BCWA has been awarded a grant of \$12,500 from the Western PA Watershed Program to provide its required matching funds for this construction grant.

### *Public Education Activities*

This past June, BCWA hosted a public-speaking event held on the Bucknell University campus at which Maya K. van Rossum gave a talk entitled "Flood, Drought and Clean Water: Preserving our Waterways." Ms. van Rossum has been the Delaware Riverkeeper and leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network since 1996. This successful event was supported by the Bucknell Environmental Center and the Susquehanna Greenways Partnership and was funded by the WREN grant BCWA had received for public education during 2005-06.

In April BCWA participated in the Caring for Communities event sponsored by the Linn Conservancy, holding its second successful canoe float on the lower part of Buffalo Creek. BCWA members also participated one day in the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Expedition Susquehanna at Shikellamy State Park on July 1. Expedition Susquehanna is part of CBF's education program, a month-long journey by canoe and kayak down the Susquehanna River by CBF guides and a group of Pennsylvania Future Farmers of America.

### *BCWA Volunteers Needed*

BCWA is looking for volunteers to assist with the good work being done to protect and improve the Buffalo Creek watershed. We need people willing and able to serve as a webmaster, an email newsletter editor, a publicity coordinator and a riparian buffer planting organizer. We also have two open board member positions, which offer a good opportunity for the right person to contribute to the mission of the Alliance. If you are interested, please email [buffalocreek@dejazzd.com](mailto:buffalocreek@dejazzd.com) or phone 837-3409 or 524-0966.



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## Members Help Linn Conservancy Meet Its Goals through Gifts and Time

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Thanks to the *Caring for Communities Volunteers*:

Jeannette Lasansky: chairperson for the Caring for Communities committee, Celebration co-chair and logistics support, site preparation day coordinator

Diane Specht: for all publicity: research/writing and coordination, Buffalo Creek poster contest chairperson, committee member

Mark Berg: co-chair for Caring for Communities Celebration event and logistics support, committee member

John Tonzetich: chairperson for Native Plant sale and speaker, committee member

Neal Fogle: WKOK radio panel chair and participant; Celebration day presenter, committee member

Tom Gibson: *Rural Routes* bike ride organizer and participant, committee member

Greg Bonsall: Celebration event presenter, committee member

Shawn McLaughlin: Radio panel participant, Celebration presenter, committee member

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Bob Deffner: Wildflower walk leader, Radio panel participant, Celebration logistics support, committee member  
Dottie & Terry Zimmerman: Celebration foods stand chairs/donors, committee members  
Lettie Davis: Celebration foods stand and donor, committee member  
Hannah Holm: Buffalo Creek canoe ride coordinator  
Brian Gockley and Lewisburg Shade Tree Commission: Arbor Day tree walk  
Union County Conservation District: Caring for Communities underwriter  
Union County Planning Department: Caring for Communities underwriter  
Bill Deitrick: Radio panel participant, Celebration logistics support  
Tony Markunas III: Montandon Marsh walk leader  
Craig Kochel: Montandon Marsh walk leader  
Jeff Trop: Montandon Marsh walk leader  
WKOK: Radio panel host and spots  
Connie Timm and the Market Street Group: Conserve for All Seasons exhibit  
Wayne McDiffett: Video presentation host, site preparation day participant, Celebration table host  
Mary Ann Bierly: Celebration presenter and logistics support  
Ona Fleming: Celebration presenter  
Robyn Graboski: Celebration presenter  
Allen Schweinsburg: Celebration presenter  
David Blackbear Ramsey: Celebration presenter  
Clyde Peeling: Celebration presenter  
Jake Engle: site preparation day coordinator  
Saskia Madlener and Teal Zeisler: Celebration BU parking coordinators  
John Snook: Celebration parking  
Roy Fontaine: Celebration food stand

Thanks to the **2006 Native Plant Sale Donors**: Lewisburg Garden Club, Meixell-Diehl Agency, Mifflinburg Garden Club, Milton Garden Club, Molesevich Environmental, Sue Iddings, Susquehanna Valley Garden Club, West Milton State Bank and Wood-Mode. Thanks to Plant Sale volunteers Warren Abrahamson, Julie Cooper, David and Marcia Milne, Mark Spiro, Gretchen Walberg, Sally Nyquist, Tom Gibson, Wayne McDiffett, and Chairperson John Tonzetich.

Thanks to Lettie Davis, Geoff Goodenow, Owen Anderson, Susan Waggoner, Wayne McDiffett, the Standard/Journal, and Jeannette Lasansky for participating in **Montandon Community Days**.

**Welcome** to new members through August: Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Boop, Samuel & Roberta Haupt, Jeffrey & Nancy Hoyt, David & Shari Jacobson, Gladys Justis, Joe, Pauline, and Joanna Manzi, Susan Warner-Mills, Alex Wilce & Mary Hague.

**Thanks** to members who, from mid-March through August, have made *additional financial gifts, and/or increased their level of giving*: Ann Gelnett, Thom Rippon, James and Susan Mathias, Manning Smith, John and Martha Zeller, and the West Milton State Bank.

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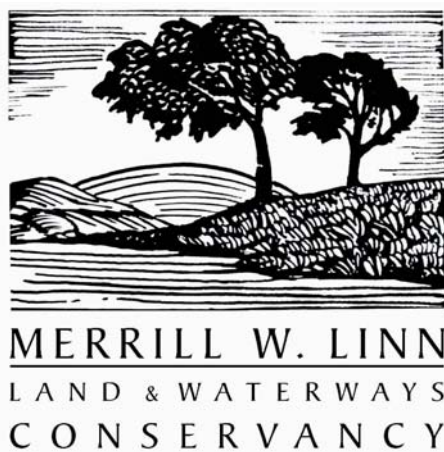
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The Merrill W. Linn  
Land and Waterways  
Conservancy  
P.O. Box 501  
Lewisburg, PA 17837  
[www.linnconservancy.org](http://www.linnconservancy.org)

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### Upcoming Events

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**Merrill Linn Trail Walk** . Meet at 1:30 PM on Sunday October 15th at the Dale's Ridge Trail parking lot located on Strawbridge Rd. Participants will caravan to the Merrill Linn Trail . Call (570) 524-8666 to reserve a spot.

See our website [www.linnconservancy.org](http://www.linnconservancy.org) for more details and events!