

BY Rose Jenkins



Sunset at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michaels, Maryland.

New Model Land and Water Initiative Launches

The Land Trust Alliance recently launched the Chesapeake Bay Land and Water Initiative (the Initiative) to deploy an integrated and innovative approach to permanent land protection, stewardship, community engagement, partners and public policy that will preserve or enhance water quality across the 64,000-square-mile Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

The vision for the Initiative is a healthy watershed that uses permanent land protection and stewardship to ensure clean water for future generations. Land trusts and their partners across the watershed have the opportunity to play a leadership role in protecting and improving water quality in their communities, and while many are already doing so, more could be accomplished if opportunities exist to grow their partnerships, skills and capacity.

The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Land Trust Assessment: Accelerating Land Conservation to Protect and Improve Water Quality, a study

commissioned by the Chesapeake Bay Funders Network and conducted by the Alliance with Long Haul Conservation Advisors, identified opportunities for water quality improvements through permanent land conservation programs. Based on the findings, the Initiative calls for building robust and effective partnerships—with land trusts, watershed groups, state land trust associations and other conservation and civic partners—to support and expand high-leverage, innovative programs and projects.

The Initiative will also grow the clout of the land conservation movement in the Chesapeake Bay policy arena, notably within the Chesapeake Bay Program, the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The Alliance has hired Jennifer Miller Herzog, former Maryland grassroots manager for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, to manage the program. See www.lta.org/chesapeake-bay. •

Big Push for a Healthy Delaware River

Conservationists are thinking big to restore the Delaware River watershed. The William Penn Foundation is catalyzing the Delaware River Watershed Initiative with the goal of improving the health of the 13,500-square-mile watershed across four states. It has already awarded more than \$40 million of funding to nearly 50 nonprofit partners.

The Delaware River watershed is an ecologically diverse natural system that includes the longest undammed river east of the Mississippi. It provides drinking water for more than 15 million people—more than 5% of the U.S. population—including residents of Philadelphia, Wilmington, Trenton and New York. However, the watershed is struggling with multiple issues, including deforestation, agricultural runoff, stormwater runoff and aquifer depletion.

Land trusts are serving as key partners in this ambitious initiative. The accredited Brandywine Conservancy is coordinating a six-member team that focuses on the Brandywine-Christina sub-watershed. These partners are working to conserve farmland, promote agricultural best management practices and increase forested riparian buffers. David Shields, associate director of the Brandywine Conservancy, says, “Our goal is to provide clean and plentiful water across the entire Brandywine-Christina watershed for healthy ecosystems and human communities.” •

How Much for Those Trees?

The U.S. Forest Service is offering a free app, called i-Tree, that measures forest cover and quantifies the services that trees provide. For example, an analysis of urban forests in Austin, Texas, using i-Tree, found that the city has a 31% forest canopy. It also calculated the value of services provided by those forests each year—including reducing household energy costs (\$19 million), preventing air pollution (\$3 million), and storing and removing carbon (\$256 million.) Overall, the analysis found that Austin’s trees are worth about \$16 billion.

U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell says in an online audio clip, “When a city council and a mayor are looking at hard economic data [showing that] by investing in forests we can actually save money, if we can show that we can reduce people’s bills, if we can show they can increase the revenue off of their land, it’s pretty easy to get folks interested in conservation.”

Download the app at www.itreetools.org. •



FRANK LOSPALLUTO

The Rogue River in Oregon.

“Dallas” Star Helping to Save the Heart of the Rogue

While much of Oregon’s Rogue River basin has been cleared for pastures or home sites, one special place remains nearly untouched. It’s a natural oasis of oak savannas, vernal pools, meadows, woodlands and chaparral, with a mile and a half of river frontage. The gem of the property is its floodplain forest—one of the largest stretches of riparian forests along the Rogue. One naturalist says, “It’s like walking into a shaded, green cathedral.” For the accredited Southern Oregon Land Conservancy (SOLC), it’s a conservation dream—and the group has a chance to protect it.

The landowners have offered SOLC the 352-acre parcel at well below market value, but it will still take \$3.5 million to realize the land trust’s vision of the Rogue River Preserve. The land trust has until December 31 to raise the money. So it’s turning to the community, including one famous resident, to help make it happen.

Patrick Duffy, who played Bobby Ewing in the TV show “Dallas,” and his wife, Carlyn, live just across the river from the property and they’ve stepped up to help protect it. Duffy serves as the chair of the “Heart of the Rogue” campaign. He told the local *Mail Tribune*, “Our opportunity to preserve this comes once in a lifetime. I’m near the end of my lifetime, so I decided to become involved. We need to save this.” •

National Parks Celebrating 100 Years

America's National Park System turns 100 this year—and it's time to connect more Americans with our public lands. Surveys show that park visitors are disproportionately white. The most recent survey by the National Park Service, in 2011, found that just 22% of park visitors are minorities, although minorities make up 37% of the U.S. population.

Audrey Peterman has made it her life's work to engage people of color with America's great outdoors, inspired by her own experiences. The first park she discovered was Acadia. "Standing on the top of Cadillac Mountain and looking out over all that untouched natural beauty, I felt that I was in the presence of something so big and I was so infinitesimal, and yet I knew that I was an essential part of it," she says. "In the national parks, I find my sense of oneness, of being part of something sacred."

Exploring national parks also helps people of all backgrounds connect to American history—for example, by learning about the African American, Hispanic and Native American soldiers at Valley Forge with George Washington. "When I discovered that my black ancestors were there, I was like, 'Hey, this country belongs to me!'" says Peterman.

She believes that the most effective way to connect more people with national parks is to work with leaders within communities. Her



COURTESY OF AUDREY PETERMAN

Audrey and Frank Peterman in Denali National Park and Preserve.

company, Earthwise Productions, provides consulting and training to engage people of color in outdoor experiences and conservation. It includes the Diverse Environmental Leaders Speakers Bureau, which features diverse expert speakers on environmental topics. •

Pipeline Loses, Conservation Wins

A proposed 420-mile natural gas pipeline through upstate New York and Massachusetts would have cut through more than 110 conservation properties in Massachusetts alone, carrying natural gas from the fracking fields of Pennsylvania. But the proposal met with intense opposition—and it was withdrawn in May.

The accredited Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust first heard about the pipeline from landowners, who were told that it could cross their property, regardless of conservation easements. "For us, it was a land stewardship issue," says Executive Director Leigh Youngblood.

The pipeline would have increased the region's disproportionate dependence on natural gas, while damaging natural habitats and posing the risk of leaks and explosions. It would have crossed state parks, wildlife reserves, conservation lands, farmland and the Connecticut River.

The energy company Kinder Morgan unexpectedly withdrew the proposal in May, citing a lack of commitments to use the fuel. Youngblood attributes the pipeline victory to over two years of a "multipronged challenge that was just relentless from all sides." Farmers, municipalities, legislators, energy analysts, legal experts, conservation organizations and grassroots groups all took a stand against the pipeline.

When it was withdrawn, Jack Clarke of the accredited Mass Audubon, told MassLive.com, "This pipeline was the wrong infrastructure, carrying the wrong fuel, through the wrong state, at the wrong time. The days of dependence on fossil fuels are closing as Massachusetts turns its attention to clean renewable sources of energy, such as wind, hydro and solar." •

A Hub for the Agricultural Community

Not too long ago, you might have driven through Chimacum—a crossroads in farm country on Washington’s Olympic Peninsula—without noticing it. Then the community started taking an interest in local food. The accredited Jefferson Land Trust and its partners in the Jefferson Land Works Collaborative stepped up to preserve working lands and support local farms. As momentum grew, entrepreneurs took notice. A local-food grocery store and a cider tasting room opened at the crossroads. Now both are thriving businesses and popular gathering places.

That got community partners thinking about the future of Chimacum. It’s right on a main road where it could attract strip malls and chain stores. Or it could grow in a different way. Sarah Spaeth, with Jefferson Land Trust, asks, “How do we continue to grow Chimacum in a way that is appropriate for the landscape and for the community, that helps brand us as a wonderful, agricultural, sustainable place?”

To explore that question, the trust collaborated on a vision for Chimacum Crossroads as a hub for the agricultural community—including local food- and farm-centered businesses, farm worker housing and trails that link to the high school. This spring, four partners—Jefferson Land Trust, Chimacum Corner Farmstand, Finnriver Farm and Cidery and the North Olympic Peninsula Resources Conservation and Development Council—were awarded a Futurewise 2016 Livable Communities Award for this vision.

Jefferson Land Trust has worked in the landscape surrounding Chimacum to conserve habitat and working lands, restore salmon streams, protect a community forest and grow the local food and local wood movements. Spaeth says, “We see a big picture with this vibrant little community that’s built around the natural resources of the place.” •



JEFFERSON LAND TRUST

Sarah Spaeth holds a representation of the vision for the Chimacum Crossroads.

Temperature Trading—A Novel Solution

Discharges from factories or wastewater treatment plants can contribute to warmer temperatures in rivers, which hurt fish. But cooling water is expensive. It can also require large amounts of energy and massive “gray infrastructure.” In Oregon, the Freshwater Trust is pioneering a novel solution—water temperature credits. Essentially, if you’re making a river warmer, you can comply with the law by getting someone else to make it cooler.

In Medford, Oregon, the wastewater treatment plant discharges 17 million gallons per day into the Rogue River. The water is clean—but it’s warm. To fix the problem, the city had some options, including chilling the water, holding it in storage lagoons or reusing it elsewhere. Those options would have cost between \$15 million and \$40 million. Instead, the city purchased temperature credits from landowners who allow the Freshwater Trust and its partners to plant trees by the river. The cost? \$6.5 million.

This project will restore approximately 100 acres of streamside forest. The Freshwater Trust points out that this “green infrastructure” will do much more than cool the river. The trees also filter out pollutants, absorb carbon and provide wildlife habitat. Communications Director Haley Walker says, “We’re trying to offer a novel solution to ensure that every dollar spent for compliance is applied to the places where they will have the greatest benefit for the environment as a whole.” 🌿