



North Branch
Land Trust



The Horizon

From Ellen Ferretti, Executive Director:

It's October in Northeastern Pennsylvania! Of all the beauty in all the seasons, NEPA shines in the autumn.

I hope you, our Reader, take some time from your busy day to simply take in and enjoy NEPA's abundance of nature this time of year. The mountains, fields, forests, and streams – and all the life that lives among them - are part of who we are, where we came from, what we come to love if we move here, and what we hold in our hearts if we leave.

In this edition of The Horizon, you'll hear about one of our easement landowners who literally took the love of nature she acquired in Wyoming County and grew that into a worldwide environmental education experience that has touched the lives of countless individuals, and no doubt resulted in the appreciation and conservation of untold acres of land and waters. You'll read about a milestone success with the conservation of 1,400 acres of forested lands and waters, and all the innovative and fun programs North Branch Land Trust is offering. We hope to meet you outside as we enjoy the precious lands and waters of our region and all the great nature-based recreation opportunities NEPA has to offer.

Your Land Trust could not do this without you. At this time of giving thanks, we thank you, our supporters. Without you and your generosity, we cannot conserve the precious places we hold dear, we cannot provide nature programs, we cannot promote nature-based recreation and all the benefits of just being outside and "among the trees".

But with you, we can.

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What's new with NBLT?

NBLT is thrilled to offer a sneak peek at our upcoming Outdoor Educator Bootcamp. We are currently in development with regional partners PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureau of State Parks and DiscoverNEPA to train emerging outdoor leaders to be certified interpretive hosts.



North Branch Land Trust, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry and Bureau of Recreation and Conservation and other project partners are finalizing the transfer of 2.8 miles of the D&L Trail from NBLT to the Bureau of Forestry.

Reminder: The trail is NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AT THIS TIME but will be a welcome reprieve in the near future.



NBLT is working with two private landowners in Schuylkill and Luzerne Counties which will protect more than 250 acres of forests, fields and wetlands!



"The D&L trail will be a great asset to our region connecting the Pinchot State Forest and points beyond to the residents of the greater Wyoming Valley."

-Nicholas Lylo, District Forester, PA DCNR

Know an emerging outdoor leader? Tell them to reach out to info@nblt.org for updates about the program



Meet Emma Thompson & Sue Libertoski



Working at NBLT is a dream come true. Everyday we see forests and fields being developed while old structures fall into disrepair. Through our work, those forests and fields are now conserved, providing opportunity for revitalization of the existing developed areas and allowing for open green spaces. It's a win-win, keeping green spaces green and encouraging development to be done in already built-up areas.

As the office administrator at North Branch Land Trust, I find it rewarding to know that all money received through private donations, fund raising, and grants are carefully accounted for and used for benefit of preserving Northeast Pennsylvania's natural resources.



Sponsor Spotlight: DiscoverNEPA Powered by Mericle

NBLT is grateful for the support of all of our local sponsors who have committed to land and water conservation throughout the year. In this issue, we are highlighting DiscoverNEPA! In addition to financial support, DiscoverNEPA has also produced videos like the one shown at our Annual Dinner, published articles, and captured photography highlighting the stunning beauty of NBLT's properties and the NEPA outdoors.

What is the number one thing NEPA folks should know about DiscoverNEPA?

We offer an ad-free, comprehensive online resource promoting ten counties in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Our content shines a spotlight on what makes NEPA so special and we encourage residents to follow us on social media and visit our website to "rediscover home".



Website: www.discovernepa.com

Facebook: facebook.com/DiscoverNEPA

Instagram: instagram.com/discovernepa

TikTok: tiktok.com/@discovernepa

Headquarters: Wilkes Barre, PA

Founded: 2017; website launched 2018

Founder: Robert K. Mericle

Executive Director: Mary Kolessar

How has DiscoverNEPA evolved since its founding?

Since our launch, outdoor recreation and conservation related articles have proven to be among our most popular. As a result, we have increased the number of photographs taken, produced more videos and published more blog posts to highlight the beauty of Northeastern Pennsylvania.



DiscoverNEPA visits Forest Echo Bird Sanctuary Summer '23

Tell us about an interesting project you are working on!
While we continue to promote local businesses and outdoor recreational activities available in our ten-county footprint, we really enjoy being able to highlight local individuals in our "Why NEPA?" blog series. Be sure to check it out on our website!

Where do you see DiscoverNEPA in the future of conservation in Pennsylvania?

We hope to contribute to conservation efforts by partnering with organizations like NBLT to educate our followers on both the importance of conservation and the ongoing conservation efforts that are taking place throughout Northeastern Pennsylvania.

My Land, My Story: Diane Davies



In August, Emma Thompson joined Diane Davies in Mehoopany to talk about her conservation easement with North Branch Land Trust and the impact it had on her life and the lives of others. Please enjoy this short excerpt about

some of her work in environmental education. The full interview will be available at nblt.org in the near future.

As a child, this area became my playground and my classroom.

This special place, this beautiful place was the foundation of my entire life and my entire career working in the field of Environmental Education. I would spend most of my waking hours in the creek swimming, fishing, climbing the rock wall over there and hiking the mountain. I would take my horse Target and ride all day long, come back about 6:00 or so and jump in the creek and swim and then go out and fish until 12:00 at night. When I say that this is my classroom, it became absolutely that because I learned so much from the land.

I found my way down to Georgia, and I was eventually hired by Dr Tom Rogers who was then the state coordinator for a 4-H program. He told me, "Look Diane, this is a complete experiment. We've never done anything like this before, but I'll tell you what I'll give you 6 months--if you can make the program work on an annual budget of \$300." I thought that I had been given the greatest gift. I knew I had the best classroom of all, I had the outdoors, so I didn't look at the barriers of money. I



didn't look at the barriers of anything. I knew that I had a chance to make a difference.

The purpose of the program was utilizing the outdoors as a dynamic living laboratory for academic study, and so through the years the schools understood that when the students participated in our program they were not "absent." They were considered at school but in a different location. I made that essential from the very beginning because I didn't want the schools to think that it was a "frivolous activity." It needed to be grounded in academics.

With one school, the program started at Rock Eagle 4-H Center. That's where my office was, and I was the only staff member for 7 years. In the 7th year of the program, I was serving over 5,000 students as a one person staff. I developed curriculums in forestry, pond ecology, archeology, everything. I [hosted] teacher workshops, and then when they brought their students, they came prepared with their curriculum. I would lead all the hikes over to the Rock Eagle Effigy and lead various classes--outdoor survival, canoeing, what have you. And I was literally running from class to class.



So, in the 7th year of the program, I had a meeting with state staff. I said, "If I'm able to hire staff, this program will explode." And from that meeting, I was able to get staff. And subsequently the program exploded! We disseminated the 4-H Environmental Education Program to our mountain facility at West Eagle 4-H Center. We had two coastal centers, one on



Jekyll Island and one on Tybee Island, where we focused on Coastal studies. We added our Fulton Center, which is in near Metro Atlanta, and, of course, Rock Eagle is our Flagship Center. We can accommodate about 1,200 people there at any given time. And so when I retired from the University of Georgia in 2003 we were just about ready to serve our millionth students in our Environmental Education Program which became the largest program of its kind [not just] in the nation, but also in the world.

So, how did this land [in the North Branch of the Susquehanna] influence me in my life? It influenced the world.

We started with one school, and by the time I retired we were serving over 500 schools from six southeastern states, not just from Georgia. So, when you ask how this place influenced my life that's pretty much what happened. And that's why I know how important it is for land to be protected, to be conserved.

Having these kinds of experiences early in life in these kind of beautiful, unique, natural places... you never know the impact it is having on a child.



YOU GOT THIS

CONGRATS BACK MOUNTAIN TRIATHLON RACERS!



Congrats Back Mountain Racers & Thank You for Your Support!

We are so grateful to all the bikers, swimmers, and runners who participated in the Back Mountain Trail New Year's Eve 5K and the Back Mountain Triathlon! These talented athletes and gracious organizers have done incredible work to help fund regional non-profits including North Branch Land Trust!

The BMT5K will return New Years Eve 2023!
Pre-Register before Dec. 13 to receive an Event Hoodie.
www.bmt5k.com



Hanover Reservoir

Photo by Earth Conservancy Staff

STATS

- 1,400 acres of forest
- 16 acre Hanover Reservoir
- 20 miles of existing trails
- 3 perennial cold water streams

North Branch Land Trust, working with regional conservation partners Earth Conservancy and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation of Natural Resources (DCNR) Bureaus of Forestry and Recreation and Conservation, have finalized the conservation of 1,400 acres in Hanover and

President/CEO Terence J. Ostrowski. “This project – totaling 1,400 acres – will preserve the undisturbed ridgeline of the Wilkes-Barre Mountains between Sugar Notch Gap and Alden Mountain Road and protect the gem in those woods – the Hanover Reservoir. All will now be part of the Pinchot State Forest. The project also supports Earth Conservancy’s mission of allocating 10,000 of its original 16,000 acres of former Blue Coal land for greenspace and recreation. We now are within a few hundred acres of that goal. Wild areas like these are integral to the character of Lower South Valley. By transferring ownership to the Commonwealth, we help safeguard the region’s natural beauty and its ecosystems and improve its quality of life.”

Newport Township, including the Hanover Reservoir.

Now under the stewardship of DCNR’s Bureau of Forestry, the Hanover Reservoir has officially joined the Pinchot State Forest System and will provide natural connectivity in perpetuity. The project area also joins a greenway corridor that spans approximately eighty miles! This corridor running northeast from Luzerne and Carbon Counties to Pike County and the Delaware River is an important flyway for migratory species in addition to providing natural habitat.

“As the steward of Pennsylvania’s public lands, we are excited to join our partners in acquiring this land for conservation within Pinchot State Forest,” said Pinchot District Forester Nicholas Lylo. “This partnership gives us the opportunity to sustain healthy forests, protect important wildlife habitats and expand recreation opportunities for locals and visitors to the region looking to experience the majesty of Penn’s Woods.”

“North Branch Land Trust is thrilled to have a hand in conserving this stunning ridgeline,” said Executive Director Ellen Ferretti. “We have been working in collaboration with Earth Conservancy and DCNR since about 2019 to realize this conservation success. The diversity of habitats, wildlife, and plants in this tract is a wonderful representation of magnificent Northeastern Pennsylvania’s natural resources. The Hanover Reservoir is an area of adventure and nostalgia for many members of the local community. We are overjoyed to see these lands and waters conserved in perpetuity for the benefit of the natural resources and future generations.”

“Earth Conservancy is pleased to continue its partnership with the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and North Branch Land Trust in conserving local forests for public benefit,” said



Tamarack



Great Spangled Fritillary

Mark your calendars!

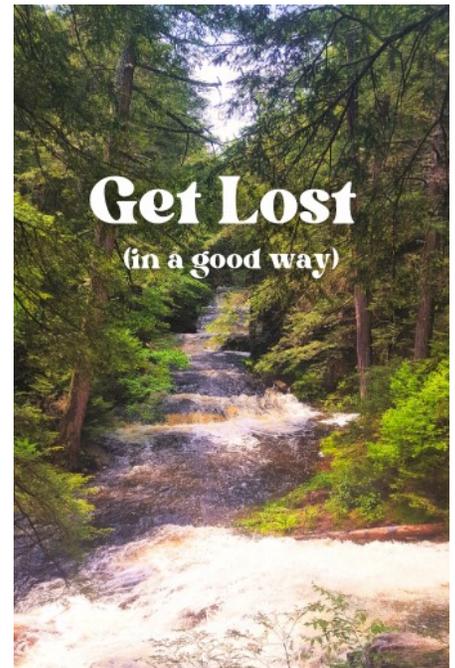
NBLT has plenty of fun planned for 2024

- Monday April 22—Earth Day Cleanup
- Wednesday May 1—Annual Dinner & Auction
- Saturday June 15—Nature Photography Preserve Day
- Friday July 5—Outdoor Fun Preserve Day
- Sunday August 11—Friends in the Forest Preserve Day
- Tuesday September 17—3rd Annual Barn Banquet

Visit nblt.org/events for more information and registration.

Full event details will always be made available no less than 30 days in advance.

If you would like to host a community or educational event with NBLT, please reach out to info@nblt.org



Our New Home Base

In January, North Branch Land Trust moved into our new home base at 105 Lt Michael Cleary Drive, Dallas.

Although we will miss the beautiful sunsets and wildlife visits at our former Huntsville-Idetown Rd. location, we are so grateful for our new neighbors: Dallas Township, Back Mountain Chamber of Commerce, and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council. Of course, having the Rimple Loop Trail in our back yard is another happy boon. Come visit soon!

Preparing for our first Mary Louise and Eberhard Faber Conservation Intern

At our Annual Dinner this spring, we announced the North Branch Land Trust Mary Louise and Eberhard Faber Conservation Scholarship through the Luzerne Foundation.

Thanks to your generosity and the hard work of the scholarship committee, North Branch Land Trust is excited to announce that we will be accepting applications for our first **Conservation Outreach Intern** starting this winter!

In addition to helping create conservation articles, newsletters, and social media, this intern will also have opportunities to get out in the field and work with established career conservationists

If you would like to contribute to the next generation of conservationists, visit nblt.org/faberfund. Application materials will be made available at the same link.



Wonderful Wilds



NBLT now has clothing,
accessories and more!

NBLT.ORG/SHOP



Fun with Friends



Support Conservation this Giving Season

As we prepare to celebrate our 30-year anniversary, we have reflected on the North Branch Land Trust's accomplishments and legacy in so many ways. We are immensely proud of having successfully protected over 20,000 acres throughout the eight counties of Northeastern Pennsylvania. These lands, waters, fields and mountains are forever conserved, preserving the character of our region. Now, we look to the future. We are currently engaged in an ambitious strategic planning process which will position NBLT for the future. We are tremendously grateful for the commitment of this community and ask that you continue to support our efforts to conserve our most precious and vulnerable land for future generations.



- Christina Dilks Taylor, Board Chair



**conserve what
you hold dear**

North Branch Land Trust conserves the natural, scenic and working landscapes in Northeastern Pennsylvania that sustain us.

When you support North Branch Land Trust, you give the gift of nature to future generations in NEPA and beyond.

www.nblt.org/AnnualAppeal

Thank you for all your hard work!

North Branch Land Trust is grateful to all of our board and committee members.

Yet, it is time for us to say a fond farewell to Christina Taylor and Guthrie Mitchell who will be completing their terms this December.

We also want to wish the warmest of welcomes to our new board members: Cathy O'Donnell and Kay Strickland!

Thank you all so much for sharing your gifts!



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Dallas, Pa 18612



Is NBLT included in your planned giving? Let us know at info@nblt.org