

Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy

One That Got Away

Just as every fisherman has memories of the one that got away, your NPC staff remembers the properties that, for one reason or another, NPC just couldn't protect.

Over the years NPC has worked on several projects that were never completed. The latest one that "got away" is a 54 acre property that the Internal Revenue Service seized because the landowner owed a large amount for back taxes. As it does in such cases, the IRS put the property up for public auction. The property on the auction block is in Northumberland County, partially surrounded by Weiser State Forest and bisected by a road that could provide access to an extensive portion of the state forest. The road has significant potential for use by mountain bikers or as a snowmobile trail.

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) was interested in obtaining the property for inclusion in the state forest, but could not act quickly enough to bid at the auction. Why? – government action with multiple layers of approval takes considerable

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NPC volunteers discuss a property during a Technical Committee visit

Got Gas? Get Bucks...

...seems to be the newest theme in people's relationship to the land in northcentral Pennsylvania.

Northcentral Pennsylvania has recently seen a marked increase in oil and gas leasing activity. Representatives (landmen) of large oil and gas companies and small independent brokers have been contacting landowners throughout the area in an attempt to get them to sign oil and gas leases. Often, there are significant

amounts of cash involved – from signing bonuses (a per acre payment to sign the lease), to annual rental, to royalties on any oil or gas produced, to payment for future underground gas storage. Many owners of properties on which the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy holds conservation easements have been

contacted about leasing their property for oil and gas exploration and development. **All** conservation easements held by NPC **require** that any proposed lease be submitted to NPC for **review and approval** before the lease is signed.

There have been numerous newspaper and broadcast media reports, and public meetings about the economic benefits of leasing. Few of these have pointed out the other impacts including: the actual drilling activity, water usage, the waste generated, the roads accessing the drill site, and pipelines. Some of the impacts include fragmentation and loss of forest cover, acquisition and disposal of up to 1,000,000 gallons of water per well, erosion and sedimentation from roads and pipelines, trespassing by vehicles on roads and pipelines, incursion of exotic plants into newly disturbed areas, and disturbance of wildlife.

NPC's conservation easements all contain a clause dealing with oil and gas leasing. Based on

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Conserving working farms and forests

One That Got Away

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time. So DCNR requested NPC's help in acquiring the property, since we could act quickly enough to bid at the auction. DCNR placed a limit on the funds they were willing to commit to acquiring the property – thus setting the upper limit on our potential bid.

Before NPC could bid our Technical Committee, comprised of volunteers, had to visit the property to determine its conservation value; and NPC's board of directors needed to vote on whether to undertake the project. These necessary steps were completed in short order and the decision was made to assist DCNR, with DCNR providing a commitment to reimburse NPC. All this was accomplished in two weeks.

The auction was held in Mount Carmel with less than a dozen potential bidders in attendance. As it turned out, only two bidders competed: NPC and one other would-be buyer. The opening bid was \$18,700 and progressed quickly – very quickly – in \$5,000 increments, to and beyond DCNR's limit. The bidding process was over in less than five minutes. And so the property got away – from NPC, from DCNR, and from public ownership.



NPC volunteers discuss a property during a Technical Committee visit

Got Gas? Get Bucks...

(Continued from Page 1)

original easement donors' wishes, some easements prohibit any oil and gas leasing; others permit leasing, but limit it to a "non-developmental" lease, preventing any surface disturbance (NPC's

preference); other NPC easements permit oil and gas leasing and development. To protect the conservation values of protected properties, all easements require that any proposed lease be submitted to NPC for review and approval before the lease is signed.

NPC also has the right to review and approve the location of any well(s) to be drilled, and the access road and pipeline serving the well(s).

Some NPC protected properties had an oil and gas lease in place before the conservation easement was signed. In those cases, NPC has no right of review of either the lease, the location or number of wells, roads or pipelines. However, NPC must review and approve any new leases on those properties.

NPC has reviewed a number of proposed leases submitted by owners of protected properties and reminded all others of NPC's requirement to review any lease they might sign. Oil and gas lease drafts frequently don't acknowledge existing conservation easement and, therefore must be changed to reflect the easement protecting the property. NPC has contacted several oil and gas companies to obtain their written acknowledgement of easements.

NPC's review of proposed leases deals only with the leases' effects on the conservation values of the affected properties. Since the leases are complicated contracts with much technical language, NPC urges landowners to contact an attorney experienced in oil and gas matters to protect their own interests.

Accreditation Update

We're still chugging along!!! During the first quarter of 2008 the Accreditation Committee met several times to work on policies and procedures. Two areas tackled were in some ways at opposite ends of the spectrum - documenting a property's conservation purposes (or why a property is important to protect), and NPC's process for training the board of directors and providing them with the tools and information they need to do their job.

To help the Committee with its job, its members, Jerry Walls and Sue Sprout, joined NPC staff at the Pennsylvania Land Conservation Conference at the beginning of April. Jerry and Sue sat in on a session led by the Land Trust Alliance and a panel discussion of "lessons learned" from organizations going through the process now.

We'll continue to keep you updated.

West Branch Water Trail Stewardship Plan Update

Thanks to our Lycoming College intern, Jen Stinner, this winter was very productive for the West Branch Water Trails stewardship plan. Jen and Alice Trowbridge worked together to finalize an inventory sheet to be used at all the river access points from Cherry Tree to Northumberland. All but 10 of the sites have been inventoried and photographed.

The inventory analysis is underway, and photos are being used to help design recommendations for improvements at sites and to develop maintenance plans for the various sites. The information gathered during the inventory will also help determine the four locations to be used for case studies on ways to enhance the sites and improve ease of maintenance.

Jen also worked this winter on reviewing web based resources. Her research and other materials are going to be used to develop a “tool kit” to help water trail volunteers (on the West Branch and across the state) learn more and find information specific to an issue they’re facing.

Alice also met with several of the state agencies that own or manage land along the river to discuss their current roles in managing and maintaining river access points. The meeting was an opportunity to discuss common opportunities and concerns.

On April 18, over 70 gathered in Danville to learn more about water trail management and to discuss their water trail questions. The morning was spent learning about the Chemung Basin River Trail Partnership and the Delaware River Greenway Partnership. Jennifer Fais and Celeste Tracy shared their organizational structure for managing their water trails, and their experience and processes for working with private property owners.

Matt Beaver (DCNR, Bureau of Forestry) and Brook Lenker and Bruce Bischoff (Susquehanna River Trail Association) presented information on how these two groups manage camping along/on water trails. SRTA and the Bureau of Forestry have a partnership where SRTA volunteers (known as island stewards) assist in keeping the island camping sites cleaned up and report to the Bureau of Forestry any maintenance issues that need to be addressed.

The afternoon was spent in groups discussing topics such as yearly maintenance needs along water trails, water trail signage, and working with

volunteers. It was 80 degrees and sunny, so people took advantage of the outside seating and held their discussions outdoors as well as indoors.

Based on the evaluations and feedback received, the session was another step in the right directions for Pennsylvania’s water trail systems!!

Sponsors and Partners Who Helped with the April 18 Water Trail Working Session

- Pennsylvania Environmental Council
- Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network
- National Park Service – Rivers & Trails Assistance Program
- Department of Conservation & Natural Resources
- Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission
- Pennsylvania Recreation & Parks Society
- Geisinger Center for Health & Research

NPC Well Represented at PALTA Conference

The Pennsylvania Land Trust Association (PALTA) held the Pennsylvania Land Conservation Conference at the beginning of April. NPC’s Renee’ Carey, Charlie Schwarz, and Alice Trowbridge all attended, as well as volunteers Jerry Walls and Sue Sprout.

As part of the planning committee, René helped monitor sessions eligible for professional credit, and led an all day session. Charlie monitored an all-day session on Friday. NPC volunteers Helen Schwarz and Rick Sprout worked the registration desk, and collected evaluation forms on Saturday.

René worked with Peter Williamson and Davide D’Antonio on the all day session, *Determining Stewardship Costs and Raising & Managing Dedicated Funds*. René spent the morning discussing with the class the various aspects of stewarding conservation easements, methods for calculating stewardship costs for conservation easements, how to raise those funds, and why it’s important to have these funds. Peter (Vice President of Conservation Services at Natural Lands Trust) discussed stewardship costs of land owned in fee, and David (Chief Financial Officer of Natural Lands Trust) reviewed the various types of “funds” a non-profit can have (donor restricted, board restricted, etc.).

NPC Receives Dominion Grant to Help “Voices of Pine Creek”

“We think of giving importance to history, but it is the individual who is interesting...” said Raymond Queneau, a French poet.

The Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy was one of the partners who worked to develop and write the Pine Creek Watershed Rivers Conservation Plan. One of the early implementation projects that came out of that plan is an effort to record the stories and memories of people who grew up in the watershed, lived in the watershed, or spent a lot of time visiting the watershed. A couple summers ago, on camera interviews were conducted with over 30 people who represented various areas and interests in the watershed. Last year Jason Weigle, a graduate student at Penn State, recorded audio interviews with many more individuals about the watershed and how it has changed during their lifetime. Now, funding is in place for more on-camera interviews to be done this summer.

The Endless Mountains RC&D has a grant from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to conduct the on-camera interviews and develop a plan for how they can be used as part of a public education program. The Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy is a partner on the project and received \$1,000 from Dominion Watershed Mini-Grant through a program administered by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. These funds will be used to help edit the materials and get it ready for posting to the Pine Creek Watershed Rivers Conservation Plan website.

Plans are underway for some Fall events that will highlight the stories already collected and the work that is underway to restore and improve the Pine Creek watershed. Keep an eye out for more information!!

NPC Partnering on Stream Improvement Grant

The Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy is partnering with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to plan, design, obtain permits, and oversee construction of in-stream structures to improve stream stability and increase aquatic habitat. The goal is to work at 66 project sites and get 660 structures in the stream.

Monitoring will be done at the sites before installation and after installation to document the actual impact the structures have. This information will help the Fish and Boat Commission and the Department of Environmental Protection with their analysis of the structures effectiveness.

Another component of the grant is education. Training workshops for people such as County watershed specialists will be held at locations through the region. The workshops will provide information on the various types of structures being used, the purpose they serve, and the stream characteristics that determine if a site is appropriate.

More information will be shared in upcoming NPC newsletters!!

Celebrity Waiter Success

On March 14 the Peter Herdic House once again open their doors and welcomed in the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy and our celebrity waiters!! Nearly 100 people joined us for an evening of great food and entertaining service. Rick Mason serenaded several tables and Gary Hutchinson provided attendees with info on Lycoming County’s flood warning website, as well as a few jokes.

All the tips the waiters earned were donated to NPC as well as the proceeds from a jewelry raffle, and the proceeds from a silent auction of special Dinner Events. If you missed this year’s event, it’s an annual event. Join us next year. It’s always in March and always a good time!

Thank You To...

Gary Hutchinson • Oscar Knade • Shirley Knade
Jack Kramer • Rick Mason • Doug Shangraw
Mark Shuman • Bob Walker • Jerry Walls

...for donating their time and waiting tables

Gloria and Marcia Miele

...for the beautiful pendant and hosting the event

Bill & Sam Judson • Ted & Judee Lyon

...for donating the Silent Auction Dinner Events

MEMBERSHIP ACTIVITY • January 1, 2008 to March 31, 2008

CORPORATE MEMBERS

Many thanks to our corporate members. Please show your support of those businesses which have shown they care about the future of our communities.

Alpine Club of Williamsport
DCNR-Bureau of Forestry
JBH3 & Associates, Inc.
Jersey Shore Hospital
Lycoming Co. Planning Commission
Parente Randolph LLC

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Susquehanna Chapter Trout Unlimited
Wheeland Lumber Co. Inc.
Woodlands Bank
Woolrich Inc.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP

BLACK BEAR (\$500- \$999)

Tom Corbett
Dr. John & Jean Burks
J. Robert & Nancy Bower
Ann & John Case
Dr. & Mrs. Daniel R. Gandy
Rich & Beth Schluter
Wayne H. Scott, Sr.
Gordon & Margie Shaw

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Stephen & Terri Deitrick
Martin & Jean Doughty
Gary & Susan Harris
Charles D. Lamade

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Pine Creek Preservation Association
Slate Run Sportsmen's Association
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Josephine Lewis
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Robert & Joanne Wise
John E. Young

RED OAK (\$50- \$99)

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Drs. Thomas & Suzan Aufiero
E. Lee Bellingier, MD
Dr. Colson Blakeslee
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Deborah Reeder
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Joseph & Margaretta Stewart
Charles & Margaret Wettling
Dan & Margery Wurster
Dorothy Yannaccone

SUGAR MAPLE (\$35- \$49)

Thomas Duck
Annie Sanders
Paul W. Duck
Eila & Jack Campbell
Gregory Dwalet
Joseph & Ginny English
George E. Farley
Leah & A. Roy Flanigan III
Dr. Lester G. Kleckner
Mr. & Mrs. James R. Parsons
Darrel & Elaine Reibson

WHITE PINE (\$25- \$34)

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Nancy Pfeiffer
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Clifford A. Rieders
Bill & Mary Jo Saxe
John A. Troisi
Grethel Vinup
Rev. & Mrs. Larry Waltz

GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

Mark & Wanda Heim
from Mary Cosgrove

John & Karen Machamer
from Mary Cosgrove

Charlotte Mengel
from Cindy Bower

GENERAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Tiadaghton Audubon Society

MEMORIALS

Lyle McKean
by Bald Eagle Township

Bernette Kathryn Fitzgerald
by Lori, Mark & Sam Romanias

YEAR END APPEAL DONATIONS

(after 12/31/07)

Virginia Borek
Frank Brennan
Gerald Bride
Alfred Buck
Lynne Coolidge
Katherine & Sean Erno
Eberhard & Mary Passarge
Annie Sanders
Chalmer & Ruth Ann Van Horn
Alex & Tracie Witter

***Thank You...to all of those who continue to support the work of
the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy***

Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy

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Mark Your Calendar for the Annual Dinner

Our Annual Membership Dinner is set for May 22 at the Holiday Inn in downtown Williamsport. The cash bar will begin at 6:00 PM, and dinner will get underway at 6:30 PM. The cost is \$25 per person and reservations are due by May 15. You can fax the form below or call with your credit card information.

As in the past couple of years, NPC staff will provide an update on the projects we're working on, and we'll hold the election of directors. So, there will be plenty of time to socialize at the event.

The Silent Auction is shaping up to be a great one. Ron Beach has donated a print, "Winter Whites." The Barvarian Barbarian Brewing Company has donated a pilsner glass, a growler, and a coupon you can use to fill up that growler. Those are just a couple of the great things you'll find at NPC's Silent Auction this year!!

Places We've Been...

...telling people about NPC

- Tiadaghton Audubon
- Susquehanna Chapter of Trout Unlimited Trout Kick-off
- Caring for Communities hosted by the Merrill Linn Conservancy

If a group you belong to is looking for a speaker, keep NPC in mind!! To schedule a presentation, call the office, 570-323-6222.

NPC's Annual Dinner & Meeting



May 22, 2008
6:00 PM Cash Bar
6:30 PM Dinner

Name(s) for
Nametags _____

Day Phone _____

_____ People Attending X \$25.00 Per Person = _____

_____ I am unable to attend. However, please accept this donation.

If you would prefer to pay for your reservation
by Visa or Mastercard,
please contact the NPC office
Monday thru Friday 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Please fax this form to 570-321-1697
and then mail your check made payable to:

NORTHCENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA CONSERVANCY
PO BOX 2083
WILLIAMSPORT, PA 17703

DEADLINE FOR RESERVATIONS
MAY 15, 2008

REFUNDS WILL NOT BE GIVEN AFTER MAY 15, 2008