



WESTMORELAND CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

www.westmorelandconservancy.org

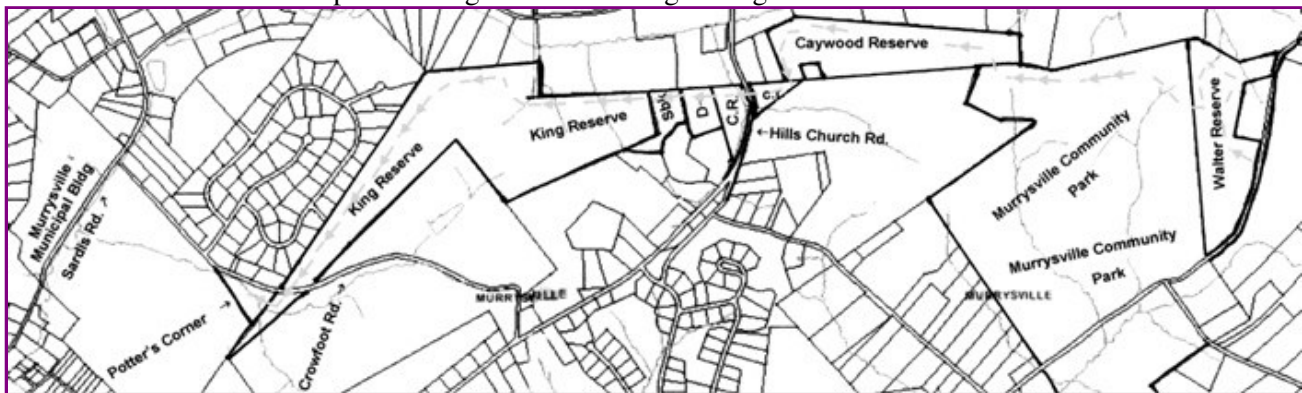
January 2009

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Friend-and-Fund Raising

Picture this: Park your car in the lot at the Walter Nature Reserve on Weistertown Rd. Follow the trail up and around to the meadow, then along the spur that connects to the MCP Trail in Murrysville Community Park. That trail will link to one taking you across the top of the Caywood Reserve, crossing Hills Church Road and passing through property owned by Dominion Gas. Follow the trail along the Shagbark right-of-way and into the King Reserve. Crossing Crowfoot Road takes you to the parking lot joining the King Reserve to Potter's Corner. You have just traveled from the eastern edge of Murrysville to within a stone's throw of Sardis Road and the Municipal Building without walking the high-traffic roads.



The Westmoreland Conservancy stands poised to make some pretty amazing strides as we enter 2009. We are going public with a key acquisition completing our first green corridor. The Caywood Property has been several years in planning (see [Caywood article, pg. 2](#)) and has opened wonderful possibilities for us. Included among them: a site-to-site trail proposed cooperatively through Conservancy and Municipal properties along this green corridor.

Along with property acquisition comes responsibility for creating safe trails, maintaining those trails and

being good stewards of our properties. There are also many new expenses like surveying costs, subdivision costs, the expenses of creating parking areas as well as signs marking the property boundaries at proper intervals. We need to replenish our General Fund to accomplish these new tasks.

The work force has always been made up of volunteers from within the Conservancy. That's one of the great things about being an organization with strong community ties. But as we grow, we need our active membership to grow as well. We are preserving the land you love, the land where your families grow and play. We need you to help us do that. To help us reach our goals we are having a **FRIEND-AND-FUNDRAISING DRIVE** beginning now, January 2009. The simple truth is that we need active members, we need new members, and we need money.

Introducing:

The Westmoreland Conservancy

The Westmoreland Conservancy will be hosting a series of "Meet & Greet" gatherings to introduce community organizations to our properties and programs. This will be part of our Friend-Raising effort. The goal is to plan one of these gatherings quarterly. Bringing in people from your "Circle of Friends" is another welcome way to grow our membership.

We will be sending out postcards to our membership asking for donations to replenish our General Fund. The Westmoreland Conservancy is making a difference, protecting land and wildlife habitat in your community. Please make us one of your priorities.

April 2009 Elections Meeting

Our regularly scheduled April 2009 meeting will include the election of our board of governors. This election is by the general membership, so please attend if you can. After the general membership elects the new governors, the governors will then elect the 2009 officers.

Remember - Annual Elections Meeting on April 22, 2009 at 7:30 pm, in the conference room next to the Library. Please plan to attend!

CAYWOOD:

A LINK BETWEEN MCP AND KING

By Don Harrison

In the fall of 1995, John Oliver, President of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy called Fred Shirland, Westmoreland Conservancy President, asking if we had any interest in two parcels of land in Murrysville that had been offered to WPC. Patricia Walter of Wilkins Township wanted to gift 29 acres of the family farm on Wiestertown Road as a nature reserve open to the public. Likewise, Marjorie Saco of Bethesda, MD wanted to insure that her 95 acre parcel of land between Murry Woods and the Crowfoot Gun Club was protected from development. We hiked around these properties for a few hours before deciding that we really ought to have an aerial over view. Fortunately, Fred had a friend in Delmont who owned an airplane. Our fly over revealed how undeveloped the land was between Hilty Road on the east and Townsend Park on the west. We noticed too how well the Walter and Saco properties lined up on an east/west axis with lots of open areas in between.

Although Westmoreland Conservancy's stated purpose is to acquire and preserve rural and rustic lands for the public good, some board members questioned the wisdom of shouldering the responsibilities of ownership and maintenance of land freely open to the public. After all, the conservancy had turned over its interest in the Kellman Nature Reserve to the municipality on the premise that it was better equipped to operate a public facility. In the end a motion passed unanimously to accept fee simple title to suitable land.

Walter Nature Reserve was our first and by far the easiest acquisition. Before the Westmoreland Conservancy became involved, William and Patricia Walter had an approved sub-division of their grandparent's farm. All we had to do was accept title to her gift. The Saco acquisition was another story.

Marjorie and her nephew had acquired all of the fractional shares in the farm property dating back several generations. Originally surveyed in 1879 and known as the South farm and later as the King farm, it had escaped subdivision probably because there were too many fractional owners to ever reach an agreement to sell. A title search established that Marjorie and her nephew were the sole owners of the 95 acre parcel. And a new survey showed that with some adjustment the boundary closed. Now the only problem was money. Marjorie felt she couldn't afford to gift her property out right but would sell it to us at a bargain price. We agreed on a sale price of \$120,000 for property that was appraised at \$240,000. With a grant from DCNR, the financial support of the community and the willingness of Scott Conservancy to be our strawman until our provisional 501(c)(3) status became permanent, we assumed ownership of the King Reserve.

Opportunities to acquire the Tomer, Flinn and McGinnis Reserves shifted attention away from the King/Walter axis for a few years. Acquisition of Potter's Corner comprising three buildable one-acre lots adjacent to the King Reserve on Crowfoot Road, rekindled our interest in the green corridor. As a young woman, Cary Bohl had ridden horse back on the Caywood property. She knew Jane Caywood and was comfortable in discussing our desire to acquire some of her property. Jane owned two parcels: a 35 acre plot containing her house and an adjacent 102 acre parcel located between King on the west and Walter Reserve on the east. Our interest in Caywood intensified with the acquisition of the Cline property for a Municipal Community Park. Suddenly a link up between Townsend Park to the west and Walter Nature Reserve to the east became achievable. We began negotiating with Jane in earnest. Then without warning, she died on April 13, 2005. Seemingly our case had failed before it had begun. But to our delight and surprise Jane had devised us a 34 acre plot from the 102 acre parcel. Now that she no longer needed her house on the 35 acre plot, we had an opportunity to switch it with the devise. This switch would give us a land bridge from MCP to within about 1600 feet of King. Acquisition of eight acres on the western end of the 102 acre parcel would give us access a public road and place us within 700 feet of the King Reserve. The court and the heirs approved the land switch and the heirs agreed to our acquisition of eight acres on the west end of the 102 acre parcel. And the municipality approved a three lot subdivision of the 102 acre parcel. Dominion Gas gave us permission to cross their property. Shagbark Grove Real Estate deeded us a right of way along the northern boundary of lot 10, finally closing the 700 foot gap between MCP and King.



Spruce Flats Bog/Laurel Summit

An Autumn Color Walk was held at Laurel Summit Trails on Saturday, October 11th, 2008. Some met at the Panera Bread in Murrysville at 9AM, while the rest of the group met at Laurel Summit. This will probably be the last time we schedule our Autumn outing to coincide with Ligonier Days, as the roads were backed up for miles in every direction

Located via the parking area in Laurel Summit State Park, a boardwalk beckons visitors from the forest right into the heart of the Bog.

Originally misnamed for the virgin stand of Hemlocks that covered this volcanic [or glacial depression] mountaintop, this 28 acre area boasts a most unusual ecosystem for this area. Back in the early 20th century, the hemlocks were lumbered out, followed by devastating fires, burning away the upper layers of organic matter leaving no vegetation to soak up the plentiful rainfall. The area is believed to be nestled in a bowl of volcanic rock, allowing years of vegetation to compost, promoting unusual species of plants to establish.

As this was my first visit, I can only share my observations without the seasonal comparisons. However, I can't imagine a more colorful and unique display.

As I soaked up the serenity of the Fall colors...earthy tan of the swamp grass and the greens of the evergreens surrounding the area... my eyes were directed to the subtle yet striking points of red dotting the landscape. Clumps of scarlet pitcher plants are many, as are blueberry bushes, which by the way, were loaded with the sweetest berries I've ever tasted. Large patches of sphagnum moss support cotton grass and tiny sundew and cranberry plants. These, as well as other species are more typically grown farther north.



If one is still long enough, the shy cedar waxwing can be observed swooping by to feed on swamp insects.



I have read that it is slowly evolving back to a mature forest, although I only observed a half dozen or so red cedars standing stoically in the mud.

There was evidence of human activity recently, as the area surrounding the boardwalk was quite disturbed. One has to wonder what is to be gained in disrupting the beauty and delicate nature of such an area.

It is, without a doubt, a must-see for anyone interested in yet another unique natural feature of this great state.

The original plan was to finish the excursion at Ligonier Days, however it was terribly crowded. Instead, several of our group headed down into Jennerstown and had a memorable lunch at The Green Gables Restaurant. The unique structure provided for interesting photos and the fare was top-notch. A walk on the grounds afterward allowed a glimpse of a kingfisher along the water's edge.



Kate Blackmore

Submit Your E-Mail Address To Have Event Updates & Information Delivered

Be more closely informed about events, walks and excursions. Provide your E-mail address on the attached form and mail it to the address provided. You can also E-mail it to the Conservancy website at contact@westmorelandconservancy.org

2008 Board of Governors/Officers

Officers: President – Shelly Tichy

Vice President – Katie Blackmore

Secretary – Joanne Kendall

Treasurer - Bjoerg Granger

Governors: Mount Fitzpatrick, Doug Bauman,

Cary Bohl, Charles Conway,

Richard Wagner, Mark Emerson,

Betsy Aiken

The meetings are open, and we look forward to seeing you there. Meetings are held the 4th Wednesday of each month at the Murrysville Library at 7:30 pm.

January 28th

February 25th**

March 25th**

The next Newsletter is scheduled for **April 2009**

Westmoreland Conservancy

An all volunteer, non-profit, 501c-3 Corporation dedicated to acquiring and preserving rural and rustic lands for the public good.

Westmoreland Conservancy

P.O. Box 446

Murrysville, PA 15668

contact@westmorelandconservancy.org

Schedule of Upcoming Events



Please respond if attending an outing to: wcnewsletter@comcast.net

Saturday, January 10th : Sign Posting Party: 1pm at McGinnis Reserve parking lot. GPS boundary marking and placing new signs around perimeter.

Wednesday, January 28th : Monthly meeting 7:30 PM at the Murrysville Library Municipal Room.

Saturday, February 7th : next Sign Posting Party: 1pm at McGinnis Reserve parking lot. GPS boundary marking and placing new signs around perimeter.

Wednesday, February 25th: Monthly meeting 7:30 PM at the Murrysville Library Municipal Room.

Saturday, March 14th : another Sign Posting Party: 1pm at Walter Reserve parking lot. GPS boundary marking and placing new signs around perimeter.

Wednesday, March 25th : Monthly Meeting, 7:30 PM at the Murrysville Library Municipal Room.

Wednesday, April 22nd : Annual Elections/Monthly Meeting, 7:30 PM at the Murrysville Library Municipal Room.

Westmoreland Conservancy

Membership Application

P.O. Box 446

Murrysville, PA 15668

Membership Levels

Individual.....\$15.00

Family.....20.00

Business membership.....40.00

Additional Donation.....\$_____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

e-mail _____

For your convenience, you may also renew your membership or give donations through our website at www.westmorelandconservancy.org

Here are four (4) quick and easy bird feeders to make to feed your winter birds. Most items are found around the house, so they don't cost much, either!

The following tools are not required for every project, but will come in handy for most: pliers, wire cutters, 1/4" dowling rod and scissors. You need to make sure the feeders you create are safe and sturdy.



Plastic Milk Jug Feeder: For this feeder you will need a plastic milk jug. Any size will work. Cut an opening on the side of the jug opposite the handle a couple inches up from the bottom. You need to preserve the handle of the jug for hanging the finished feeder. Wrap wire around the jug's handle to make a hanger, or hang directly by the handle. You can also drill a small hole in the front of the jug at the feeder's opening and insert a small piece of doweling for birds to perch on as they eat. Fill the inside of the jug with seed and hang!

Mesh Tube Feeder: This is another easy feeder. Using 1/4" hardware cloth (which is actually a wire mesh) make a tube and fasten it closed with lightweight wire. The tube can be any size, so be creative! Close the bottom of the tube by nailing or stapling it to a small piece of wood, the lid of a jar, heavy cardboard, or anything else you think have around that would work. Use more wire to create a hanger for your feeder.

Popcorn String Feeders: This is a fun, traditional way to feed the birds, especially around the holidays. Using heavy weight upholstery thread or fine twine (so your line doesn't break) and a large eyed carpet needle string popcorn (unsalted and unbuttered), dried fruit and nuts into long lines. Hang on trees, [fences](#), etc for the wildlife to enjoy. This resembles the popcorn garland you make for the tree!

Simple Plastic Jar Feeder: This feeder is simple and easy to clean. To create this feeder you will need a clean plastic jar with a lid and a small piece of dowel rod. This is a great



way to recycle plastic mayonnaise or peanut butter jars! You will also need a wire [hanger](#), a pair of pliers and wire cutters. Open up the wire hanger and make a bend in the hanger towards one end. Make a small hole in the center of the lid and thread the hanger wire through the hole. Secure the wire inside the lid by wrapping it through a washer or nut to keep it from pulling through the hole. Use the rest of the hanger to form a hook to hang the feeder from. Trim of any excess wire with the wire cutters. Cut a hole about 2" up from the bottom for the birds to reach the food and a small hole for a 1/4" dowel perch an inch below the hole. Fill the jar to the bottom of the feeder opening. Replace the lid and hang your feeder in a sheltered spot for the birds to enjoy.

WESTERN PA BIRDS OF PREY



T K B N K W A H D E G N I W D A O R B R
 V W Y A O B M L O N G E A R E D O W L L
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 T S H A R P S H I N N E D H A W K W O D
 D G R E A T H O R N E D O W L J W P L L

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bald eagle

kestrel

red tailed hawk

barn owl

long eared owl

rough legged hawk

barred owl

merlin

sawwhet owl

broad winged hawk

northern harrier

screech owl

coopers hawk

osprey

sharp shinned hawk

golden eagle

peregrine falcon

short eared owl

great horned owl

red shouldered hawk

turkey vulture

