



THREE VALLEY CONSERVATION TRUST

2021

ANNUAL REPORT



January 1, 2021 - December 31, 2021

2021 YEAR IN BRIEF

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to present Three Valley Conservation Trust's (3VCT) report of 2021 activities. As we all know, the past two years were uncharted territory in nonprofit management. While most things normal were cancelled, 3VCT cautiously offered our first in-person event and hosted and attended some in-person business meetings. Some of these meetings have resulted in tremendous milestones for 3VCT and our partner agencies, consultants, and landowners. In 2021, we protected many wonderful properties and expanded into new communities. Through grants and donations, we were able to establish a robust soil health outreach program, begin a comprehensive marketing campaign, complete an Indian Creek watershed study that added grant money to restore a large, forested wetland and reduce streambank erosion, and extended our Ruder Preserve boardwalk.

Because of these investments and advocacy from people like you, 3VCT is poised to meet the challenges ahead. In 2022, we anticipate continued progress toward our strategic goal (protect 30,000 acres by 2030). We will continue to explore ways to help address climate change, improve water quality, and expand or enhance habitat throughout our region. Our staff is as committed as ever to active stewardship of our easements; we are dedicated to helping our landowners meet their needs while protecting their resources for the common good. More than in any previous year, I cannot wait to work with all of you toward these goals and share the successes with each of you as the year progresses.

Three Valley was founded on a bold vision, and with your support, we will carry this legacy forward to unveil a new era of open space preservation and environmental advocacy. Our staff and board extend our deepest gratitude to all of you, our members & benefactors.

Deinceps una,

Randy



Randy Evans
Executive Director

"Conservation will ultimately boil down to rewarding the private landowner who conserves the public interest."

Aldo Leopold, from *The River of the Mother of God*

A WORD FROM THE CHAIR:



Friends and partners in conservation,

Thank you for helping the Three Valley Conservation Trust and our conservation community make so much progress this year. I have been reminded by the recent flooding in the hay field, and by the ditches running full and brown near the homestead, that old challenges remain and new ones will present themselves for everyone who is concerned about the health of our local soils and water. Based on the efforts and the accomplishments we have seen since our last report, I am confident of more and new progress in the coming year.

3VCT is made up of a professional staff, a dedicated board, and a diverse and motivated membership who in the last year have helped us adapt to a dynamic funding environment, singular opportunities to protect properties, and new threats to properties under our protection. The agility our trust has demonstrated is due in no small part to the diverse contribution of talents, experience, and resources of our staff and membership. Each person makes their own impact in their own way. Everyone is valuable.

I first encountered this trust as a volunteer knocking out some requirements for an academic program. Armed with my monitoring tote bag (remember those?), cameras, and archive reports, I'd hit the field to document that our property owners have committed to the pact we have made with the future. Most recently I have enjoyed the challenge of serving as a trustee and have learned so much beyond the tote bag. I have learned how a non-profit organization must work and have engaged in finding ways to make it work better. I am most proud of 3VCT's pivot to remote work and the professional improvement inspired by partners like the Ohio Association of Non-profit Organizations (OANO) and the Land Trust Alliance (LTA). With particular thanks to Mark Boardman, our governing documents continue to improve. It seems to me our trust has moved into a promising professional future.

If I mangle my next analogy to a conservation biology principle, I apologize in advance to Professor Berg. Organizations survive like a healthy population in a natural environment. We risk complacency and comfort like populations risk genetic drift; when the same folks in the same place do the same things, we may not be responsive to new challenges. We guard against random selection with healthy migration patterns and a level of diversity: in our case membership in-migration and board and committee service transition. Please know - you are welcome to participate in trust committee functions and board and trust operations. Your knowledge, experience, and fresh eyes can benefit this organization. Your example of loyal support and membership inspires others to join and to learn.

I have enjoyed the honor, challenge, and fellowship of serving as a trustee. I look forward to finding (like I encourage you to) a productive fit with 3VCT that complements my professional, academic, and family circumstances in the near future. Please join me in wishing our professional staff, stalwart committees, and dedicated board members the greatest good luck in the coming year.

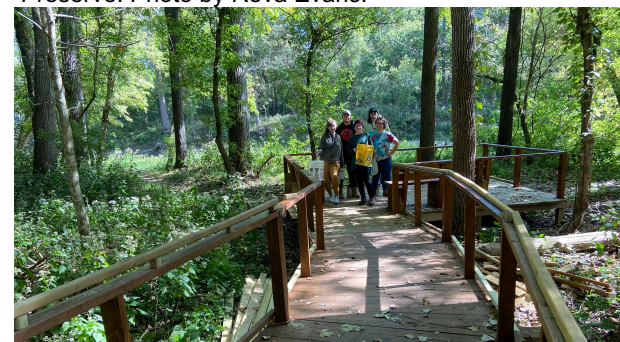
Yours, Daniel Cox

WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED IN 2021

- Permanently protected **7 properties totaling 542 acres**, bringing the total acres of property protected by 3VCT to **24,588 acres**
- Visited all **218 protected properties** to ensure each property meets the criteria outlined in its easement
- Completed (nearly) phase 2 **Ruder Preserve boardwalk** with resting platforms and ramp to hiking trail
- Received **H₂Ohio funding** to restore 600' of eroding streambank and a 12-acre wetland along **Indian Creek**
- At Fossil Creek Preserve, Hunters and Farmers Feeding the Hungry harvested two deer to provide **venison to local food charities**
- Secured a grant to establish a **soil health program** for our agricultural producers
- Organized **community work days at Ruder** for Boy Scouts, Miami students and classes
- **Monitored 15 Five Rivers Metroparks** easements (under contract)
- Participated in **18th annual Great Outdoor Week** and **Clean Sweep of Great Miami River** community events
- With the **Helen Angst** family and **Metroparks of Butler County**, helped establish the Angst Nature Preserve in Wayne Township
- Presentation to **Buckeye United Fly Fishers** about how 3VCT efforts contribute to better water quality



Renovated barn on newly created Angst Nature Preserve. Photo by Reva Evans.



Jacqueline Daugherty's Western Program service learning class helped construct the 2nd section of the Ruder boardwalk. Photo by Donna McCollum.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2021 EASEMENTS

3VCT closed on seven easements in three counties in 2021. Five were easements donated by the property owners while the remaining two were facilitated by other funding organizations. Each of the easement properties is unique, and each one brings 3VCT closer to our goal of protecting 30,000 acres by 2030. To owners and staff who made these easements happen, thank you!

Montgomery County - The Royer Family Farm

This 66.52 acre donated easement protects approximately 3,688 feet of stream, 39 acres of natural habitat and 24 acres of tillable land. It had been Judy Royer's dream to preserve her property, to protect the wildlife habitat, water resources, and prime soils.



Preble County - The Rodeffer Family Farm

Our final easement of 2021 was the Rodeffer family's 110 acre farm, which was funded through ODA's LAEPP program. The Rodeffers have been part of the 3VCT family since 2007 and have multiple farms protected by the Trust.



Ohio Department of Agriculture's Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (LAEPP)

The LAEPP allows local landowners to voluntarily sell property development rights via an agricultural easement to the State of Ohio. The easement limits the use of land to predominately agricultural activity. The land remains under private ownership and management, and stays on tax rolls under Current Agricultural Use Value (CAUV). The farmland can be sold or passed along as a gift to others at any time, but restrictions prohibiting non-agricultural development stay with the land in perpetuity. 3VCT is responsible for the long-term monitoring of these properties to ensure the easement terms are kept.

Butler County Easement Highlights

Shawn and Linda Casey Property



The 104.66-acre Casey property is comprised of tillable land, pasture, and forested areas. The Paddy's Run Conservation Project provided funding for this property, deeming necessary for the protection of water resources, wildlife habitat, prime soils, and other sensitive areas.

Angst Nature Preserve

This property consists of two separate conservation easements totaling 84.21 acres. Helen Angst donated this property to 3VCT in 2019 with the dream of turning the property into a nature preserve. In August of 2021, MetroParks



of Butler County purchased the property from 3VCT and the conservation easements were placed on the property. The Angst Nature Preserve, which is open to the public, features 32.64 acres of natural areas and 44.61 acres of tillable land.

Brian and Donna Wise Property

This 38.95 acre donated easement is a biodiversity hotspot, with over 50 identified tree species and nearly 100 identified plant species, including nine different species of native orchids. They have also found a large population of the endangered Unexpected Cynia Moth (*Cynia inopinatus*).



The Bittner and Wilson Farm

Karen Bittner and Barbara Wilson's 140.28-acre family farm, which was protected by a donated easement, consists of prime soils, with 92.81 acres of tillable land, has over 7,400 feet of streams running through the property and 37.66 acres of forest, providing an ideal habitat for a variety of species.



HELPING THE NEXT GENERATION PROTECT OUR LAND ...

Three Valley contributes to future preservation of land through formal and informal partnerships with community members and young people, such as with:



2021 summer interns Stephanie, Lauren, Emmanuel, and Autumn

Interns: 3VCT hosted seven Miami University interns in 2021. After graduating, two of them, Veronica Briggs and Aidan Das, applied their experience at TVCT to continue working in land protection. Veronica works with Pivot Bio as an Agronomic Data Engineer to promote sustainable farming methods. Aidan is now the Land Protection and GIS Specialist at the Lancaster Farmland Trust of Pennsylvania.



Aidan Das, former intern now Land Protection and GIS Specialist.

Volunteers: We were able to renew service group work at Ruder Preserve in the fall of 2021. Besides working hard and having some fun, each group of volunteers learns about 3VCT, invasive species, and the importance of restoring native plant communities for healthy ecosystems.



Former volunteer Noah Miller was so inspired by his work and association with 3VCT members he decided he wanted to get in into that field as a career. He now works with Appalachian Ohio Alliance (whose easement protects this giant sycamore tree!).

Students: Members of the Ruder management team, Donna McCollum and Stephen Gordon worked with both a team of students from a Western Program class and an individual student, Lauren Vajentic, every week this fall. The class (right) explored how nonprofits work with volunteers, as well as learning carpentry skills on the boardwalk, how to remove invasive species, and how and why to plant native species. Lauren plans to use her experience in identifying and curating trees as she begins teaching next fall.



APhiO service fraternity members clearing honeysuckle at Ruder Preserve.



FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Our total expenses for 2021 were \$365,423. The sources of our income to cover these expenses were:

- 1) Donations: \$81,919
- 2) Endowment: \$145,507
- 3) Contract income: \$24,333
- 4) Grants: \$113,664

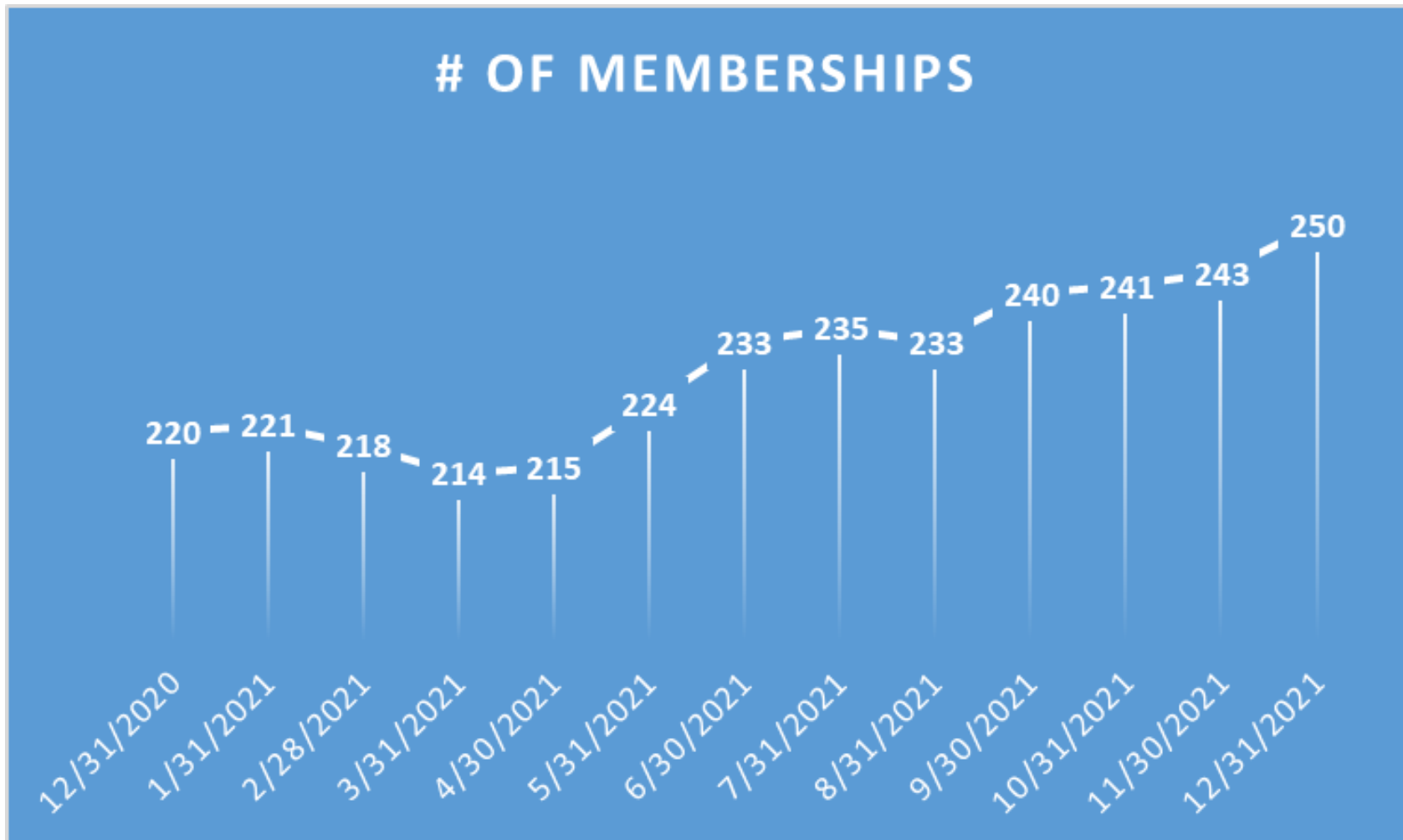
As with many non-profit organizations, Three Valley Conservation Trust continually struggles to meet budget needs. 2021 has not been an exception.

Due to the effects of Covid and the precautions needed, such as no large gatherings, our lack of funding activities has hurt our membership donations. We received \$81,919 in donations and needed at least \$122,000 to meet our budget goals. This shortfall was made up by funds from grants and by using funds from the outstanding growth and dividends of our endowment investments. Thus we have used 4.5% of our endowments (\$145,507) instead of the typical 4.0% to cover the cost of doing business in 2021.

Submitted by Ed Teets, Treasurer

MEMBERSHIP IS GROWING!

Three Valley staff worked hard this year on increasing membership. They secured a grant to help develop a marketing campaign, and have made countless calls to property owners, members and former members. Reva Evans has greatly expanded 3VCT's visibility on social media. And the efforts have paid off: membership has grown fairly steadily at a few new households per month! Although nonprofit organizations expect membership to wax and wane, we find it hopeful that the more we get the message out about the good things Three Valley is accomplishing, the more membership will trend upward.



OUR STAFF



Randy Evans
Executive
Director



Caitlin Brown
Land Protection
& GIS Specialist



Maria Fagin
Stewardship
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Steve Gordon
Paddy's Run
Project
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Reva Evans
Office and
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THANK YOU!

Three Valley Conservation Trust depends on the financial support of many people and organizations to fulfill our mission.

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