THREE VALLEY CONSERVATION TRUST

2022 Annual Report

January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022

2022 Year in Brief

Dear Friends,

Thanks to your support, Three Valley continues to conserve the lands and waters that sustain us. Last year, you helped protect places that increase resilience to climate impacts for people, plants, and animals. You helped preserve healthy natural systems, connect & restore vital habitat, and protect working lands important to a sustainable economy. You also made it possible for people with limited mobility to connect to the natural world at Ruder Preserve and helped reestablish the Southwest Ohio Woodland Association.



Looking ahead, as our Conservation Trust nears its 30th year, our staff has taken on unprecedented roles leading innovative wetland restoration projects, conserving new lands through unique partnerships, and applying new stewardship approaches to care for our easements. To do all this, we engaged with more partners, communities, and supporters than ever. In 2023, we hope you will continue your support as we start the next phase of our accessible boardwalk, work to establish native wildflower seed libraries throughout Butler County, expand our soil health program, and engage with more landowners to protect their lands, thereby increasing the quality of our water, soils, and forests.

Thanks to you and your dedicated support, I know our future will be bright and we will succeed in meeting all these goals. Each time I speak with a donor, a volunteer, a partner or a landowner, I am energized by our shared commitment to conserving lands and protecting the places we love and cherish for future generations. As our work continues, I am optimistic that through these partnerships with our communities, we will continue to conserve and steward the lands and waters that sustain Southwest Ohio—human and natural—for all generations to come.

I am proud of all Three Valley has accomplished in 2022 and I am humbly honored by this opportunity to create a priceless legacy with each of you.

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

Where Do the Children Play?

One of my favorite musicians of all times is Cat Stevens, the British folk-rock songwriter from the early 1970s. I still enjoy his music today. In one of the most popular albums of its era, Tea for the Tillerman, Stevens presented the song, "Where Do the Children Play," which became a foundation for the land conservation movement of that period. When I think of our vision and mission of your Three Valley Conservation Trust, I cannot help but think of a key stanza from that song:

"I know we have come a long way; we are changing day-to-day. But, tell me, where do the children play?"

Our vision is for "southwest Ohio to be recognized for its permanently protected and conserved open space in woodlands, watersheds, and family farms."

Our mission is to "conserve natural habitats, waterways and agricultural lands in Southwestern Ohio, for the benefit of present and future generations, through partnerships with people and communities."

It brings me great joy and satisfaction, as the current Board Chair, that we are daily riveted to this vision, not only for our current generation, but for many generations to come. We are ensuring that indeed there will be open spaces where children can play, grow, and learn. This is something from which we have all benefited, and certainly is worthy to pass on to our children and their children. I know personally, having access to open spaces, both public and private, has provided me a love and appreciation for the land that continues to grow each day. Open spaces and all they provide – recreation, education, wildlife, and picturesque settings have molded who I am today. I have become a zealot for conserving our woodlands, wetlands, prairies, and farmland for children in future generations, so they can enjoy the benefits that these areas bring to our lives and our culture.

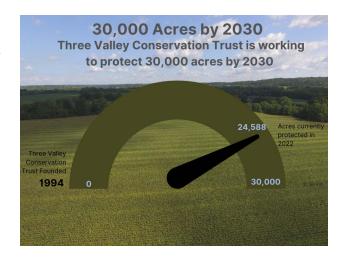
I could not be prouder to be a board member of your Trust, and even more so, to serve as your Chair...because I know that every board and staff member shares the same commitment to our vision and mission. We are providing the very areas where "children will play" in the future, and what could be more important than that?

Tom Vogel, Board of Trustees Chair

What We Accomplished in 2022

- Closed two easements increasing total area under 3VCT protection to over 24,500 acres
- Visited all 218 protected properties to ensure each property meets their stewardship and conservation goals. Monitored 15 Five Rivers MetroParks easements under contract
- Received funding from Ohio Environmental Protection Agency on behalf of the Fernald Natural Resource Damage Trustees to secure a 50-year parcel lease and install an 11.2-acre wetland on an existing Butler County 3VCT agricultural easement
- Our Land Protection Manager, Caitlin Brown, became the second Three Valley staff member to graduate from the Greater Dayton Environmental Leader Development Program
- Became the host organization for the Southwest Ohio Woodland Association

- Received a \$20,000 grant from the the Northern Cincinnati Foundation to establish native seed libraries throughout Butler County
- Received a grant from the Oxford Community Foundation of \$84,400 for Development, Stewardship, and GIS support
- Secured grants to complete two
 9-Element Nonpoint Source Implementation
 Strategy plans for the Paddys Run and
 Howards Creek-Dry Fork watersheds. These
 plans help prioritize projects and are often
 required to receive state and federal
 restoration grant funding
- Received a \$10,000 grant from the Land Trust Alliance to continue our Soil Health Program, which was developed with a \$10,000 grant from American Farmland Trust in 2021







Fish Survey - Indian Creek; Hoffmann H2Ohio Project

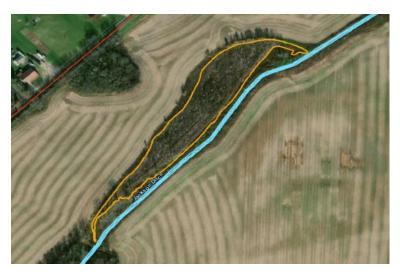
Right: 3VCT Board Chair, Tom Vogel, awards the first of two \$1000 scholarships to Talawanda FFA Seniors

Highlights of 2022: Easements and Properties

In 2022, 3VCT submitted nine applications to the National Resource Conservation Service's Agricultural Conservation Program (ACEP) and received funding for two easements totaling 370 acres in Butler County. 3VCT also submitted eleven applications to Ohio Department of Agriculture's (ODA) Local Agricultural Program (LAEPP) and received funding for two easements, one in Butler County and one in Preble County, totaling 154 acres.

Molson Coors Trenton Brewery Wetland (Butler County)

This conservation easement protects a 3.04-acre mitigation wetland located at the Molson Coors Trenton Brewery. The mitigation funding originated from wetland impacts during the installation of the Rockies Express (REX) pipeline. The entire site is hydrologically connected to the Jackson Ditch.



Sunnymede Farms (Preble County)

Our first easement of 2022 was Sunnymede Farm, an 89.25-acre farm in Washington Township owned by Jason Miller. This easement was funded through the 2020 funding round of ODA's LAEPP. Jason is the second generation of the Miller family to protect their farm with an agricultural easement with 3VCT.



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.

Wetlands and Woodlands Stewardship Redefined

Each year our staff at 3VCT dedicates extra time learning what "stewardship" means to our easement landowners, conservation partner organizations and our greater community. Our mission is not to just hold an easement on the properties, but to help our owners leave their land better than when they got it. These conversations often result in wonderful new projects.

Hoffmann and Henshaw Wetlands

Three Valley now has two wetland projects in Butler County.

Hoffmann Wetland and Stream project will restore a 12–acre wooded wetland using grant money secured through ODNR's H2Ohio program. That funding was awarded in late 2021 and the official groundbreaking was held April 21, 2022. Currently, the construction is on hold until an archeological survey determines if any cultural resources would be impacted.

Henshaw Corner Wetland project, funded by a grant from the Ohio EPA and Fernald Trustees, will create a 7.2-acre wetland on the Henshaw easement 11.2-acre parcel at the corner of Morgan-Ross Rd and OH-126. Three Valley and the Henshaw family agreed to a 50-year lease of the parcel. Construction is scheduled to start in Mach or April 2023 and an official groundbreaking with the family and partner organizations will take place in early May. This wetland will expand vital amphibian breeding habitat in the area and reduce nonpoint source pollution in Paddys Run.





On July 30, 2022, Three Valley hosted the first meeting of the reorganized Southwest Ohio Woodland Association (**SWOWA**). The primary goal of this group is to learn how to manage our woodlands by networking with professionals, stakeholders, and woodland owners. Regular association meetings are quarterly in January, April, July, and October. If you would like to join the association, contact Randy Evans at director@3vct.org or call 513-524-2150.

Special thank you to Three Valley easement property owners, Jon and Amy Costanzo, who first suggested the idea to Randy and help guide the association meetings and workshops.

Ruder Preserve Stewardship In Action - Three Valley Volunteers

Habitat enhancement, boardwalk construction and upkeep, and the initiation of new projects kept Trust volunteers, Miami students, Boy Scouts and community members very busy. In the spring and fall, Donna McCollum scheduled and supervised work efforts with Miami University classes, service organizations and social clubs, as well as with Butler Soil and Water Conservation District's BEST volunteers. These volunteers donated over 500 hours of restoration work to clear honeysuckle on the east side of Four-Mile Creek and Asian-bittersweet from areas on the west side.



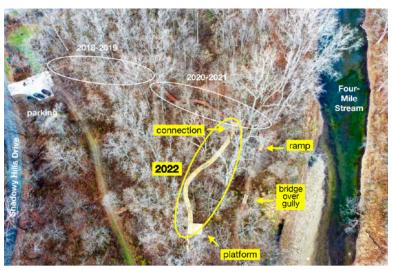




Volunteers under the guidance of Mark Boardman and Ed Teets added 250 more feet of boardwalk along with a ramp and bridge to better connect the unimproved trail with the boardwalk.

This year, funding was provided by the Dayton Foundation (\$5,000), the Elizabeth Wakeman Henderson Foundation (\$3,800) and the Boy Scouts (\$1,286).





Highlights of 2022: Outreach and Education



Conservation Connections

Three Valley Conservation Trust

Efforts to communicate with members include a monthly email about local conservation happenings. Mark Boardman has collected items of interest to send to about 750 email addresses.



The Outreach Committee also puts together the biennial newsletter. We appreciate articles contributed by staff and members. If you'd like to help with writing, editing or creating, contact Teri at office@3VCT.org or 513-524-2150

Nearly 75 people helped 3VCT clean up along Four Mile Creek and parts of the OATS trail during this joint community effort.





Three Valley's Book Club

Six great books were discussed with topics ranging from a comedic look at when animals break the law in <u>Fuzz</u>, to honoring Alexander von Humbolt in <u>The Invention of Nature</u>, to uplifting reads like <u>Gaia's Garden</u> and <u>Bright Green Future</u>. The book club meets bimonthly on the second

Thursday of each month. If you would like to join the lively discussions, contact our organizer Ben Mattox benmattox50@yahoo.com or see the Events and Activities page at www.3VCT.org.

Milkweeds 4 Monarchs



In the spring of 2022, 3VCT partnered with Riverside Native Trees & Nursery for the sale of Milkweed plants. We hope all the 400+ plants sold are thriving!

Little Mudders

TITLE MUDDEPS

This program was a big hit in 2022. Thirteen families joined 3VCT in exploring the Oxford area, playing "I Spy" wildflowers in Slivoor Biological Sanctuary, learning where our food comes from at the Miami Institute for Food, and finding critters in Hueston Woods and Indian Creek Park.

Tabling

3VCT volunteers work at various local events to inform people about Three Valley and provide activities for children. We were at Oxford's EarthFest in the spring and the Hike-a-thon in the fall.



Hike for Acres

We did four guided hikes at area easements (a new outreach activity) in the fall of 2022.



WANT TO PARTICIPATE?

Visit the website: office@3VCT.org

or call Teri at 513-524-2150

Soil Health Initiative

3VCT used the \$10,000 grant from the American Farmland Trust (AFT) to develop our Crop and Soil Health (CASH) Program. In March, we hosted a Soil Health Day Event where guest speaker, Dave Brandt, detailed how he incorporated regenerative agricultural practices into his farming business

Three Valley partnered with MetroParks of Butler County in July to host the "Calling all Farm Hands, a Farmer Appreciation Day" at Chrisholm Historic Farmstead in Trenton, Ohio. 3VCT sponsored and participated in an afternoon of farm fun, offering guests the opportunity to explore and experience life on the farm through games and activities.

A portion of the grant also paid for soil sampling by Integrated Ag Services on Fred Voge's 83-acre farm in Preble County. which will be Three Valley's very first regenerative agriculture case study site.





Membership Meetings and Fundraisers

Annual Meeting

Our March 13, 2022 meeting was a hybrid event held at OCAC. Generous guests donated \$20,000 for the *Save an Acre* challenge!



Annual Summer Picnic

On June 26, members enjoyed themselves with pot luck food, music by John Kogge, fishing in the pond and four-wheel driving tours of Al and Mary Bruns' farm in Preble County.



Farm-to-Table Evening

It was a delightful drizzly evening on September 3, when 60 people enjoyed the culinary feast prepared by Celebrity Chef Courtney Brown. Hosted at Ann Geddes's Indian Creek Preserve, the food was locally sourced and donated by Ann Geddes, Frank House, James and Amy Leedy, and Tom and Maria Rodeffer.



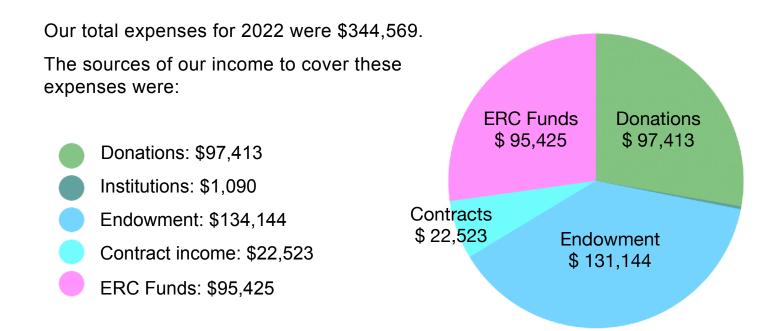
Nearly \$20,000 was raised to help 3VCT continue to fulfill their mission to conserve land. Thanks to all who donated, helped, and/or participated!

Fall Wine Tasting

On Dec 3, we held the final fundraiser of 2022 at Cru Gastro Lounge in Oxford. Guests enjoyed four wines, tasty finger foods and, best of all, fun with friends and colleagues!



Financial Statement



In 2022, Three Valley Conservation Trust received \$95,425 under the Employee Retention Credit (ERC). The Employee Retention Credit under the CARES Act provided a refundable tax credit is 50% of up to \$10,000 in wages paid to an eligible employer whose business has been financially impacted by COVID-19 but kept employees on their payroll. Although we were able to resume large gatherings and we enjoyed a wonderful farm-to-table dinner, our annual donations fell short of our needs by \$37,587. This shortfall was made up by funds from the CARES ACT, grants, and by using funds from the growth and dividends of our endowment investments. Thus we were able to meet our budget needs using only 3.5% of our endowments (\$134,144) instead of the typical 4.0% to cover the cost of doing business in 2022. While our 2023 budget needs remain stable, we will not have the additional funding from the CARES Act to offset shrinking donation levels.

Submitted by Ed Teets, Treasurer

When land is protected, nature thrives. When nature thrives, we thrive.



Joni Mitchell's message in 1970

Three Valley Conservation Trust's message today

They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot
With a pink hotel, a boutique
And a swinging hot spot

Land needs to be protected or else Without the protection of a conservation easement, properties are at the mercy of "them" – people trying to make a profit. But land has more value than just for development.

They took all the trees
Put'em in a tree museum
And they charged the people
A dollar and half just to see'em

protecting land enables habitats to survive

Habitat can be lost if it's not specifically protected by a monitored conservation easement. Nature needs to be seen "naturally", and all people should be able to enjoy it.

Hey farmer farmer
Put away that DDT *now
Give me spots on my apples
But leave me the birds and the bees
Please!

protecting land is a first step to stewardship of the land

Land protection is a vital first step towards stewardship of the Earth that provides clean air, clean water, and abundant clean food. We need to take care of our "home." Three Valley's mission doesn't stop with land protection.

Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
Till it's gone
They paved paradise.
And put up a parking lot.

protecting land depends on your engagement today

Good words are not enough. Three Valley Conservation Trust needs your financial support to steward our world. And we need the support before we've lose our earthly inheritance.

Add Three Valley Conservation Trust to your estate planning

Our Staff



Randy Evans
Executive Director



Caitlin Brown Land Protection & GIS Specialist



Maria Fagin Stewardship Manager



Steve Gordon
Paddy's Run Project
Subcontractor



Teri WickhamOffice
Coordinator



April Hamlin Grant Writer

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Thank You Retiring From the Board



Sandi Woy-Hazleton served more than a decade on the board in several capacities. We are especially grateful for her success in organizing membership roles and policies, and service in outreach and development efforts. She was one of the three "incorporators" forming

the Trust in 1994. (The other two were Dwight Baldwin and Wally Edwards.) She will continue serving on committees.



Barbara Hamilton served on the board for three years. We are especially grateful for her superb coordination of outreach events and thoughtful (and forthright) leadership in areas of strategic vision and on the Ruder Management Team. She will continue supporting the Trust by serving on committees.

THANK YOU!

Three Valley Conservation Trust depends on the financial support of many people and organizations.

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