



THREE VALLEY

CONSERVATION TRUST

3VCT.ORG

ANNUAL REPORT

5995 Fairfield Road
Oxford, Ohio, 45056
513.524.2150



2023

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The Three Valley Conservation Trust is pleased to present the following report, filled with good news and highlights of our greatest accomplishments this past fiscal year. We hope it will bring you joy to read about the many conservation successes you helped make possible. With the help of dedicated partners, members, and volunteers, our team now stewards over 25,000 acres of prime agricultural land and greenspace. This year our team led an effort to restore or create nearly 20 acres of critical wetland habitat. Our all-volunteer construction crew extended the Ruder Preserve boardwalk with the help of nearly \$50,000 in grant funding. We added two new conservation easements and began a shift to an innovative and mobile property database for monitoring. These are just a small sample of all we accomplished in 2023 with your support. We are immensely grateful for our members and grantors who have given generously and invested in our mission so we can protect more of the lands and waters we all love. We know this work is more important now than ever before, and with your continued support, we see a bright future ahead for generations to come.

RANDY EVANS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FROM THE CHAIR

First, I would like to thank you for giving me the extreme privilege to serve as your Board Chair for the last two years. This coming year will be my sixth year with the Board of Trustees of your Three Valley Conservation Trust. I cannot tell you how fulfilling it has been in both my roles as Board member and Board Chair. Your vote of confidence in me has been the culmination of my life's infatuation with land conservation. Next, I would like to inform you that your staff is top-notch and is recognized across the region for being so. I also want to thank you the members; for without you, Three Valley Conservation Trust would be mere words. But that is not the case now. We are a thriving professional group of like-minded conservationists entering our 30th year of successful establishment and monitoring of conservation easements in southwestern Ohio.

Just listen to what you and your generosity have created over the last 30 years. We have 221 conservation easements comprising nearly 25,000 acres. That is nearly 12 times the size of the Miami University campus. We added 146 acres of easements in 2023 and have been granted funding for an additional 644 acres this year. Additionally, due to the ambition and expertise of our Staff, we monitor an additional 775 acres of open space for local park districts. Nearly 20,000 acres of our easements is prime farmland, the very land that feeds and fuels the world.

Yes, we have added acreage in 2023 and will continue to do so in 2024. But your Trust is more than that today, as the Board and Staff have begun working with landowners on improving the quality of their easements. Two significant improvements were made at the Hoffmann easement and the Henshaw easement. The Hoffmann easement includes a major improvement of 13 acres of restored wetlands, erosion control, vernal pool creation, and overall water quality improvement in the Indian Creek watershed. The Henshaw wetland project includes restoration of a wetland supporting a myriad of amphibians. Although planning, designing, and creating these wetlands have taxed the Staff's time and energy this year, everyone is excited about the outcome - a dramatic improvement in water quality and wildlife habitat.

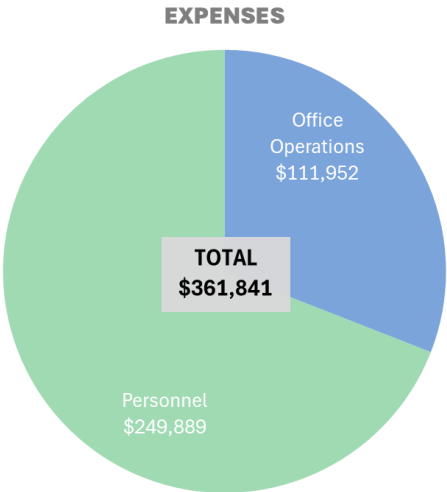
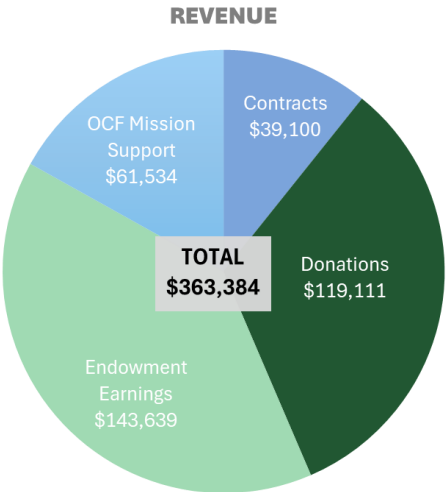
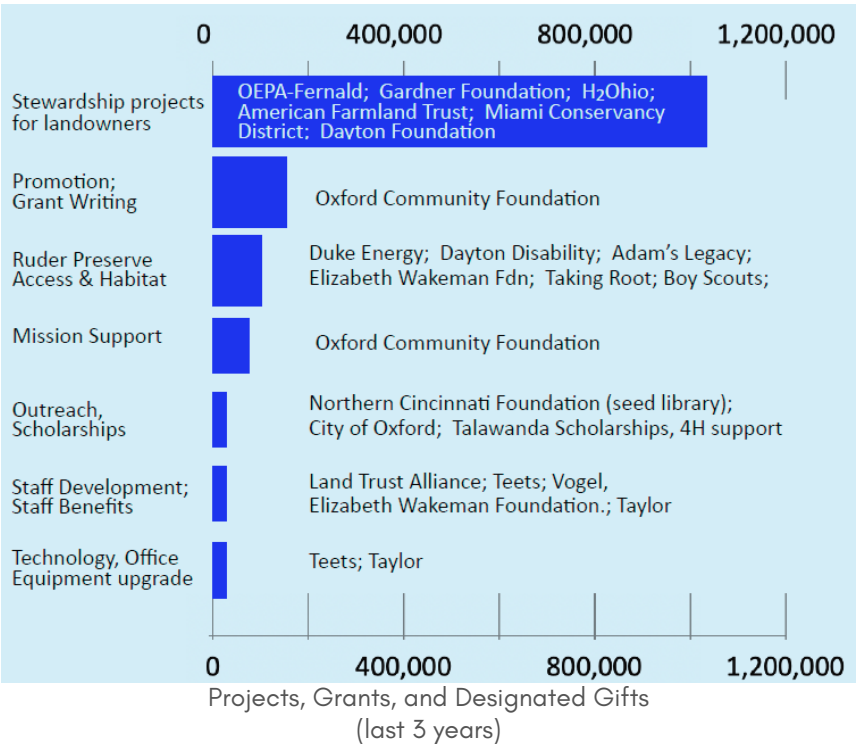
We often hear about people who are world-changers. Oh, and certainly we have had world-changers, such as Louis Pasteur, Jonas Salk and Albert Sabin, Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King, and others. I don't necessarily believe that anyone here has changed THE WORLD, but you as members, Staff, and Board have certainly changed OUR WORLD. I cannot wait to see what the next decade of growth at your Trust brings, but with your continued involvement and generosity, I see nothing but great things ahead for Three Valley Conservation Trust...our mutual legacy of land conservation in southwestern Ohio. Thank you.

TOM VOGEL
BOARD CHAIR

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

In January, 2023, the board approved a budget that included expenses of \$ 351,865 and planned to meet these expenses with income from donations, contract income, and earnings from our endowment. End-of-year expenses totaled \$ 361,841 - 2.8% higher expenses than expected. Thanks to grants from the Oxford Community Foundation, we were able to meet all of our important expenses.

ED TEETS
TREASURER



EASEMENTS



Rebecca Evans protected her 75 acre family farm located in Oxford, Ohio. Rebecca grew up on the property, which she has named Daffodil Hill Farm and Preserve due to the abundance of daffodils that can be found throughout the property. The property is composed of 24 acres of tillable land and 47 acres of forested/natural areas. There are roughly 15,000 feet of blueline streams found on the property, which is a tributary of Coulters Run. Rebecca has truly created a sanctuary for wildlife and TVCT is grateful for the opportunity to preserve her beautiful property.

The Truster family also protected their 71 acre family farm located in Hamilton, Ohio. Jeff and Mary Truster take pride in their regenerative agricultural practices on the many properties that they farm. Their home farm is composed of 42 acres of tillable land and 26 acres of pasture and natural areas. With the property consisting of 96% prime soils and over 4,000 feet of blue-line streams, we are excited to welcome the Trusters to the TVCT family.

MISSION

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.

VISION

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

SPECIAL PROJECTS



Hoffmann Indian Creek Construction

HOFFMANN WETLAND

Completed construction of the Indian Creek Stream and Wetland Restoration project. 1200 linear feet of stream bank stabilization to reduce sediment loads in Indian Creek. Restored stream connectivity with the 12-acre wooded wetland and enhanced or created eight vernal pools to help filter nutrient loads. Planted nearly 900 native trees and shrubs to expand the riparian zone and increase diversity. Total cost: \$527,185. Partners and funders: Environmental Solutions AQ, LLC; Oxford Community Foundation; Ohio EPA; Ohio DNR (H2Ohio Program); Miami Conservancy District; Wright State University. Construction by the Davey Resource Group.

HENSHAW WETLAND

Completed construction of the Henshaw Corner Wetland project. Retired 11.4 acres of tillable land. Twelve vernal pools of varied acreage and depth were graded, seeded, and planted with wetland plugs. Extensive planting of native trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants ensures the establishment of functional & diverse plant communities. Thirty species of shrubs and trees planted and protected from browse. Invasive species removed and riparian buffer expanded to reduce nutrient and sediment loads in Paddys Run. Total cost: \$446,743. Partners and funders: Fernald Trustees; Ohio EPA; Jeff Davis (Herpetologist); Environmental Solutions AQ, LLC; Butler Soil and Water Conservation District; USDA/NRCS; James J. and Joan A. Gardner Family Foundation. Construction by the Davey Resource Group.



Seed Library at Cherokee Park

SEED LIBRARIES

The first seed libraries were installed at Ruder Preserve, Cherokee Park, Timberman Ridge and VOA Park. Eagle Scout candidate Benjamin Dudley, Boy Scout Troop 930, constructed the initial 4 libraries. Each seed library is stocked with native seeds to increase pollinator habitats. This project was funded by a grant from the Christine Humphreys Fund at the Northern Cincinnati Foundation.



Henshaw Wetland Under Construction

SPECIAL PROJECTS

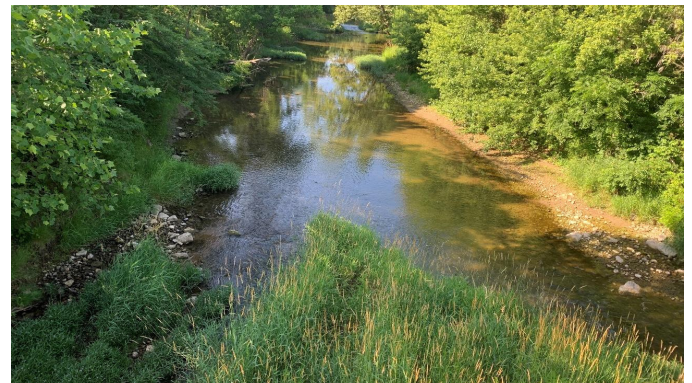
SW OHIO WOODLAND ASSOCIATION



Our membership is growing (143 members) along with robust participation at our workshops. In 2023, we hosted 4 quarterly meetings held in Preble and Butler Counties. Members attended workshops that focused on invasive species eradication tools and techniques, forest management best practices, timber sales, American Tree Farm System membership, and reforestation funding sources. Many more unique and interesting workshops are planned for 2024.

FOCUS ON WATER QUALITY

In 2023, Three Valley, in partnership with Environmental Solutions AQ, LLC and funding/support from the Fernald Trustees, Ohio EPA, Miami Conservancy District, County Soil and Water Districts, County Health Departments, and the Nature Conservancy, completed five watershed management plans in Butler, Hamilton, Preble, Darke, and Montgomery counties. These plans help identify significant sources of sediment and nutrient loads into our surface waters and support funding in grant funding to complete management plans and develop project proposals for these watersheds with a goal to increase water quality in Southwest Ohio.



BIODIVERSITY CAMPAIGN

Three Valley partnered with conservation educators, Amanda Bentley-Brymer and Carla Blackmar, to launch the Oxford Biodiversity Education initiative. Amanda provided a summer long series of articles coinciding with local observable biodiversity events and action items residents could do to promote regional biodiversity. Carla is working with local conservation partner organizations to design residential signs so landowners can identify spaces where they are promoting biodiversity. The final design should be ready for production in early 2024. This campaign was funded through a generous grant from the City of Oxford.



SPECIAL PROJECTS

RUDER PRESERVE

Ruder Preserve is a showcase of the values and mission of Three Valley Conservation Trust. Through the efforts of the board, staff and volunteers a second boardwalk was established, invasives were removed, and new plants were added.

Mark Boardman, Tom Farmer, and Steve Nimis were the spotlighted builders of about 600' of all-access boardwalk to the east side of Four Mile Creek, connecting to the newly paved portion of the City of Oxford's OATS trail. The City of Oxford permitted the boardwalk to cross its property and city staff provided advice and cooperation to directly connect to the OATS trail. This all-access walkway includes benches and provides an extensive section of walkway through the riparian forest and overlooks Four Mile Creek. Ed Teets led deck staining on the earlier constructed boardwalk on the west side of Four Mile Creek.

Donna McCollum is leading the effort to remove invasive plants and add native plants. She continues to attract volunteer Miami student groups to work, with supervision assistance from Steve Gordon and Mark Boardman. Honeysuckle is successfully being managed, and about 100 new plants (all native species) were added. Thanks to the Ruder Management Team (Mark, Donna, Steve, Ed, and Randy) other harmful invasive plants (e.g., Asian Bittersweet and Lesser Celandine) are identified and their removal will be addressed in 2024.

Ruder Preserve is increasingly an educational resource. Groups from the Knolls, Miami university classes, and Audubon have benefited from the enhanced habitat and accessibility of Ruder. In late December, Steve Gordon led a 30-person exploration of Ruder as part of the Hike-for-Acres. In addition to hikes, Donna McCollum always blends habitat enhancement activities with explanations about the negative impacts of invasive plants and the importance of preserving oases of native habitats.

Preserving land is fundamental for all conservation efforts. Ruder Preserve is a showplace of land conservation and stewardship.



THANK YOU!

Our work would not be possible without the generous support of our members, sponsors, and funders. We would like to thank our **members** for their continued support. Your annual memberships and donations protect the spaces you love. Our **sponsors** provide financial support and in-kind donations of goods and services. These contributions help us make each event special. A special thank you to each of the **funders** who have believed in the work we do and awarded grants.

Together, we are protecting this land for generations to come. They too will be nourished from the food that is produced on this same soil, splash in the creeks, and be filled with wonder as they gaze upon the beauty that surrounds us. **Thank you** for your past support, and your consideration for further support of this significant work.

ANNUAL MEETING SPONSORS

VOGEL FARM ENTERPRISES

THE AMES FAMILY &



JOIN TODAY

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Cathryn Loucas

Meg Maloney

Donna McCollum

Julie Primack

Mark Rentschler

Ryan Schwegman

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City of Oxford

Dayton Disability Foundation

Duke Energy Foundation

ODNR H2Ohio

Miami Conservancy District

Greater Oxford Community Foundation

Taking Root

The James J. & Joan A. Gardner Family
Foundation

Ohio EPA on behalf of the Fernald

Natural Resource Damage Trustees

FOUNDERS

The Four Mile Valley Conservation Trust, Founded 1994
Renamed Three Valley Conservation Trust, 2001



Wallace I. Edwards (1925–2003)



A native of Cleveland, Wallace Edwards grew up in Springfield, Ohio. After serving in the U.S. Army in Europe during WW II, Edwards received his bachelor's degree in business from Miami and master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Wisconsin. In 1950, Edwards married Marilyn Jacoby, and they moved to Oxford in 1953 where he taught economics at Miami until his retirement in 1984. At Miami, Edwards also served as the first University Secretary and the second Director of the Honors Program. He volunteered in various capacities with local organizations and was named an Oxford Citizen of the Years in 1999, reflecting the community's appreciation for his work to establish the Three Valley Conservation Trust. He and Marilyn had four children and two grandsons, all of whom enjoyed many family hikes along the Four Mile Creek and its tributaries.

Jim Reid (1936–

Jim Reid has devoted much of his life as an advocate and supporter of conservation. In addition to being a founding member of the Trust, he has served as Board Chair and holds the distinction of donating the Trust's first easement. Significantly, he collaborated on transitioning the Trust from an all-volunteer organization to one employing an Executive Director. Jim attended public schools in Hamilton and graduated from Miami University majoring in Economics. After serving as a Captain in the US Air Force, Reid was employed at Beckett Paper Co. (International Paper) for 35 years where he served as Vice-President, Marketing. From 2000–2020 Reid worked as the Field Manager of Miami University's Natural Areas. Jim has served on numerous boards that include ILR, Audubon Miami Valley, American Cancer Society, Ohio Audubon Society, and volunteer work on the Milford Township Land Use Planning Committee. Jim's passion for nature and recreation has taken him to hikes on the Appalachian Trail, photography, woodworking, birding, fishing and most-recently, pickleball. With his late wife Barbara, Jim raised three children and nurtured four grandchildren. In 2023, Jim married Beth Polanka. They reside on a wooded property in Milford Township.



Orie Loucks (1931-2016)



An internationally noted ecologist and environmentalist, Orie Loucks had a distinguished academic career spanning six decades. He was born on a farm in Ontario and received his B. Sc. F. and M. Sc. F. in Forestry from the University of Toronto. While at Toronto, Loucks became Managing Editor of the university paper, where he met Elinor Bernstein, his beloved partner for the next 60 years. Loucks took his Ph. D. in Botany and Soils from the University of Wisconsin. In 1969, his efforts led to the banning of DDT in Wisconsin. In 1989, Loucks joined Miami's Department of Zoology, as the university's first Ohio Eminent Scholar. In conjunction with his academic commitments, Loucks served on the Nature Conservancy's National Board of Governors as well as open space advocacy around Oxford and the Miami Valley. He served as the first editor of Valley Trust News.

A. Dwight Baldwin (1938-

Holding degrees from Bowdoin College, the University of Kansas and Stanford, Baldwin came to Miami in 1966 with his wife Barbara and their young family. He began his long and productive career as an assistant professor in the Department of Geology, and during the next several decades, his multifaceted professional achievements and passion centered on social impacts on landscapes and water quality. In 1970, Baldwin collaborated with Gary Barrett (Zoology), Roger Wilson (Botany) and John Dolibois (then Director of Miami's Alumni Office) in creating the Institute of Environmental Sciences (IES) where he served as the first Deputy Director. Since 1969, IES has trained over 800 professionals and over 1400 alumni have been involved. In 1976, he was awarded a Fulbright to examine agricultural methods in Malaysia. From 1977-1985 Dwight was Chair of the Department of Geology. Baldwin authored *Beyond Preservation: Restoring and Inventing Landscapes* (1993), with contributions from both natural and social scientists and co-edited with Judith DeLuce and Carl Pletsch. In 2002, the Dept. of Geology inaugurated the Baldwin Frontiers in Geology Lecture Series. Dwight retired from Miami in 2001 and he and Barbara moved to New Hampshire where he continues his passion and service to land conservation by engagement with Chocorua Lake Conservancy, located near the White Mountains.



Thomas Wissing (1940-2022)



It was perhaps inevitable that Tom Wissing would become involved in what would become Three Valley Conservation Trust. Born in Milwaukee, he received undergraduate and master's degrees in biology from Marquette University and a doctorate in limnology (the study of fresh-water ecosystems) from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where one of his professors was Orie Loucks. Their paths would cross again at Miami University when both were involved in the formation of what initially was the Four Mile Valley Conservation Trust. As an ecology student at UW, conservationist Aldo Leopold's call to see land not as a commodity but as a community to which we all belong was part of the cultural heritage. In 1969, Tom married Holly, accepted a faculty position at Miami, and moved to Oxford. They soon bought 11 acres of woods, fields, and a creek in Reily Township and began stewardship efforts that continued throughout Tom's life, including putting their land, which by this point had become a wildflower preserve, in a conservation easement with the Trust in 2008.