



30 YEARS OF PROTECTING
WHAT YOU LOVE

CACAPON & LOST
RIVERS LAND TRUST

News from the Watershed

June 2020

Protecting the forests, farms, rural heritage and water quality of the Cacapon and Lost Rivers Watershed

SEE INSIDE:

2 Meet an
Easement
Owner



What I enjoy as much as working with new landowners on conservation easements to protect the land they love, is listening to family stories of landowners who already have easements. On page 2, you will hear from Jack Hodges, who grew up going to his family land on the Cacapon River where he learned to appreciate the "incomprehensible" wildness of this area of West Virginia. Quite a legend in his own right, Jack's contributions to the field of wildlife biology are more than impressive. I have a hunch his experiences in the "wildness" of the Cacapon had something to do with his life's journey. Lacey Smith, Partner Biologist with West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service is an enthusiastic expert on pollinators and shares tips on how to grow a pollinator garden (page 2). On page 3, you can read about wood turtles, among one of the more than 50 species of greatest conservation need in the Cacapon watershed.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust and I'm honored to continue to uphold the values and mission of this organization. On page 4, you can learn about the Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust's new five-year Strategic Plan to continue to protect farms, forests, wildlife, and water quality in the Cacapon and Lost Rivers watershed. Our goal of protecting 8,000 more acres by 2025 is ambitious and urgent. There is much work to be done and we welcome your support.

2 The
Power of
Pollinators



3 Wonders
of Wood
Turtles



Jennifer

Interested in protecting your land?

Conservation easements are flexible tools that meet the needs of landowners and protect land forever. Working in partnership with landowners, the Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust listens carefully and ensures the goals of landowners are supported and the conservation values of the land are protected. Conservation easements offer peace of mind and through donated easements, tax deduction benefits. For more information contact Jennifer at jennifer@cacapon.org.

Top of the List

For any organization to be effective, it must have people like Berni Olson. Berni is one of those people who knows what to do before something needs doing. When another priority, another timeline, another something would come up — with a wink of an eye and a finger in the air, Berni would say, "Top of the List!" well appreciating all the other demands on her with a needed dose of good humor.

The Board and I are going to miss Berni's people skills and willingness to find ways to improve our processes, data base, record keeping, etc., etc. And we will also miss her caring nature, love for the outdoors and commitment to land protection. Berni accepted a new position with the Rappahannock Benevolent Fund in Washington, Virginia this past March. She now is in service to many in need and making a difference yet again. Top of my list is "Thank You Berni!"



THE RIVER WAS A BETTER ROAD



In 1966 when Jack Hodges was 15, he was canoeing down the Cacapon River with his father, John Hodges Sr., and his trombone teacher, Keig Garvin, an avid canoeist. They pulled off to have lunch and soon were having a conversation with an older man who had come down to the river's edge. "Dad thought the area was beautiful and asked this man if there was any possibility of buying some of his land." The 70-year old man told him, "Maybe. Let's stay in touch." About a year later, the Hodges, together with another family, purchased the entire 525-acre parcel for \$7.60 an acre from the man they met on their first canoe trip down the Cacapon.

"Most of the time when we came to our place, which we affectionately call Seldom Seen, we drove through several properties then canoed across the river. The river was a better road," said Jack. He fondly talks about how "incomprehensible" it was to him as a young boy to hike for miles on their property, especially since he grew up in Arlington, surrounded by houses and pavement. "I understood the absolute wildness of the Cacapon, and I developed a real concern for animals and natural areas. I wrote to the editor of *The Washington Post*, imploring humans not to eliminate the species in this world. I was disappointed they didn't print it," recalled Jack.

"My Dad was a fisheries biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and he really wanted to put a conservation easement on the property. He saw it as the only way to keep the whole character of it, to be sure it didn't change. My sister and I agreed it made a lot of sense," said Jack.

Despite living in Juneau, Alaska, Jack still comes to the land to camp and marvel at its wildness. "When I'm in some areas of the panhandle of Alaska, I'm reminded of hiking our property. The Cacapon is a special interior Appalachian mountain type — it's still wild. Our conservation easement with the Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust is our way of saying, we need to keep it that way. There's always going to be pressure to carve pristine areas into smaller and smaller parcels. But we humans have control over how we live and treat the Earth. That's why it is

Continued to page 4



The Power of Pollinators

Lacey Smith, DNR-NRCS Partner Biologist, was slated to give a landowner workshop on pollinator gardens that had to be cancelled this spring. We decided to do the next best thing and share Lacey's expertise in our newsletter through this Q&A.

Photos by Lacey Smith; Donna Smith



Let's start with the basics – why is a pollinator garden so important?

Pollinators provide irreplaceable economic service, pollinating approximately 35% of our crops. Just think of this: one in three bites of food is the product of pollination! A pollinator garden can be a sanctuary for butterflies, bees, moths, and other beneficial pollinators. And nearly 90% of plants require help from pollinators for successful reproduction. Worldwide, pollinators are declining due to habitat loss, pollution, disease, and climate change. By providing a rich, diverse pollinator garden, we can make a positive impact on our native pollinators. Because native bees help with crop pollination, farmers can also benefit by not mowing small patches of unusable agriculture land.



Are there specific plants you should have in a pollinator garden?

Gardeners should select native plant species that correspond with the amount of light and soil moisture available. Native plants have adapted to West Virginia's conditions and soils, so maintenance will be lower and survival typically higher. It's best to select at least 12-20 species of flowering plants and have at least 3 species blooming in any given time (spring, midsummer, and late summer into fall). Selecting plants that have various flower shapes, sizes, colors, and bloom time will attract a variety of pollinators. If possible, include at least one species of native grass or sedge (little bluestem, fall panicum, tall dropseed, or Virginia wild rye). Grasses and sedges provide potential nesting and overwintering sites for bees.



Are there any pollinators that could really use the help of pollinator gardens?

Some pollinators are specialists that can only feed on certain plant species. The monarch butterfly is a prime example of a specialist that could use our help. Eastern monarch butterfly populations have suffered declines of 80-90% over the past two decades. Monarchs depend on milkweed to successfully reproduce. Since monarch caterpillars can only feed on milkweed, I always recommend adding milkweed and here in West Virginia, common milkweed, butterfly weed, swamp milkweed, whorled milkweed, or green comet milkweed are good choices. If you worry about the milkweed spreading, select butterfly weed or green comet. These species have taproots and do not spread as easily. Avoid planting milkweed near fields that will be harvested for hay. While fresh milkweed has a bitter taste, dried milkweed is more palatable.



pre-treatment to germinate. The seeds will need moisture to germinate and establish, so water the site regularly.

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|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Showy Tick Trefoil | 6. Little Bluestem |
| 2. Purple Coneflower | 7. Smooth Blue Aster |
| 3. Sneezeweed | 8. Heath Aster |
| 4. Wild Bergamot | 9. Calico Aster |
| 5. Mountain Mint | 10. Culvers Root |

What's your favorite pollinator plant?

Wild bergamot. I absolutely love the smell and the pom-pom appearance!

For more information on pollinator gardens, including the Five Most Essential Steps, go to www.cacapon.org/pollinators. Thank you, Lacey!

Any plants that are also deer resistant?

We all know that deer can be quite the challenge with any garden, and a flower garden is no different. While the flowers in this list are deer resistant, they are NOT deer proof.

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| 1. Button Blazing Star | 6. Great Blue Lobelia | 11. Joe Pye Weed |
| 2. Purple Coneflower | 7. Stiff Goldenrod | 12. Sneezeweed |
| 3. Foxglove Beardtongue | 8. Ohio Spiderwort | 13. Cardinal Flower |
| 4. Wild Bergamot | 9. Lance-leaf Coreopsis | 14. Butterfly Weed |
| 5. Anise Hyssop | 10. Blue Vervain | 15. Green Comet Milkweed |

Do you have a go-to list of plants to start a pollinator garden with? Any must-have plants?

Here's my go-to list of plants for a pollinator habitat. These plants have a soil preference that ranges from moist to dry and prefer full to partial sunlight. This mix can attract a wide range of pollinators, from bees to hummingbirds. If starting from seed, I add a few annuals to the mix so I will get a few flowers the first year. Remember, when starting from seed, perennials can take up to three years to bloom. While it may look like they are not doing much the first few years, they are developing a strong root system below ground.

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| 1. Black Eyed Susan | 8. Early Sunflower | 15. Ohio Spiderwort |
| 2. Blue Wild Indigo | 9. Foxglove Beardtongue | 16. Partridge Pea |
| 3. Butterfly Weed | 10. Great Blue Lobelia | 17. Purple Coneflower |
| 4. Cardinal Flower | 11. Hairy Beardtongue | 18. Mountain Mint |
| 5. Columbine | 12. Joe Pye Weed | 19. Showy Goldenrod |
| 6. Common Milkweed | 13. Mistflower | 20. Wild Bergamot |
| 7. Dense Blazing Star | 14. New England Aster | |

What can people do now to create a pollinator garden?

While fall is the best time to sow seeds, summer is a great time for site preparation which is crucial for a successful pollinator garden. If the site is already prepared (competing plants removed), start adding native seedlings and "no pre-treatment" seeds. In the fall, add more seeds to the pollinator garden. Below is a list of seeds that do not require



The Cacapon and Lost Rivers Watershed is a West Virginia Conservation Focus Area (CFA) as noted in West Virginia's State Wildlife Action Plan. This CFA includes more than 50 Species of Greatest Conservation Need. A CFA identifies the best areas in the state for conservation, restoration and protection of these species, including the Wood Turtle.

Wood turtles live in and around cool, clean, and slow-moving streams and rivers, making the Cacapon watershed an ideal habitat. While they mate in streams, they are roamers of the landscape much of the summer. During the active period for wood turtles (April -October), they travel to find suitable nesting areas near streams. From July through September, they are typically on land that is close to the streams where they have nested. By October, they return to the streams.

If you find a Wood Turtle, please take a photo, take note of the location, and share the information with Kevin Oxenrider, Amphibian and Reptile Program Leader, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (Kevin.J.Oxendrider@wv.gov). Any traveling turtle found on the road should be moved and released in the same direction it was headed. If the turtle is not in any danger, it is best to leave it be. Thank you!

Adapted from "Management Guidelines for Wood Turtles." For more information go to www.americanturtles.org and www.parcplace.org

Photos by Colin Osborn USFWS; Grayson Smith USFWS; Paul MacFawn Photography



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WHAT YOU LOVE

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Help Protect What you Love

Please consider a tax-deductible contribution to help protect what you love about the Cacapon and Lost Rivers watershed. Go to www.cacapon.org/donate or mail your generous contribution to Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust, PO Box 58, Wardensville, WV 26851. Thank you!



LAND PROTECTION GOALS

In May, the Board of Directors of the Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust approved the organization's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan that outlines our strategy for protecting high conservation value land in the Cacapon and Lost Rivers watershed.

The plan has three overarching goals:

Goal I: Proactively grow a connected network of protected land hubs and corridors that link private and public land throughout the watershed.

Goal II: Protect and enhance the resiliency of the watershed and the organization.

Goal III: Increase awareness about the importance of land conservation and stewardship to protecting the natural resources and economic vitality of the Cacapon watershed.

Over the next five years, our plan is to continue to work closely with landowners to protect an additional 8,000 acres through voluntary conservation easements. "It's an ambitious goal but our mission and successful history require us to do as much as we can to protect this beautiful watershed," Mark Haynes, the Board President said.

For more info on the plan, go to www.cacapon.org/ProtectPlan

Species of Concern in Our Watershed

There are scores of species that need our land stewardship to survive. Here's just a few:



Golden Winged Warbler



Harperella



Bobolink

Photos by Dennis Cooke; Hugh and Carol Nourse USFWS; Jim Hudgins USFWS

THE RIVER WAS A BETTER ROAD *cont. from page 2.*

so important to protect places like this with conservation easements," said Jack.

"It's really amazing how wild it is there in West Virginia. The Cacapon is a beautiful river. If you're going to be in the lower 48, especially in the East, this is as close as you can get to being in Alaska."

To learn more about Jack Hodges' Alaska adventures, including surveying thousands of bald eagle nests throughout the North Pacific coast and pedaling on a Waterbike 1200 miles from Seattle to Juneau, check out his book, Above and Beyond.



WOW Photo Contest

Help celebrate the Wonders of our Watershed and enter your photo in the Cacapon and Lost Rivers 30th Anniversary photo contest. www.cacapon.org

Photos in *The River Was a Better Road*: Page 1, John Hodges Sr., Page 2 Jack Hodges top; Jack Hodges and daughter, Jennifer. Page 4: Jack Hodges and daughter Jennifer.