



CACAPON & LOST RIVERS
LAND TRUST

News from the Watershed

Summer 2023

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

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IT'S ALL ABOUT COMMUNITY

Community. It is evident in the gathering of plants in a meadow and cattlemen at a bull sale. It is in the coming together of four West Virginia land trusts to advocate for land conservation and in a floating meeting of the Cacapon Watershed Collaborative as we paddle together on our beautiful river. Community is expressed in a “your word is your bond” ethos, our donors’ gifts, in the land trust’s raising of grant funds to help our landowner partners, and ultimately in the gifts that those who protect their land give to their community and to future generations: clean air and water, blue forested ridges, and productive farms.

We hope you enjoy catching up on the following watershed news. As we venture into the summer, let us continue to think of ourselves, each other, and our landscape as members of the same community—the Cacapon & Lost Rivers community.

Emily Warner

Emily Warner, Executive Director

*Prize bulls on a
Capon Valley farm*



CLRLT & Landowners Aim to Protect 1,000 Acres by Year’s End

Land Trust staff and our landowner partners are currently working on two conservation easements* that will collectively protect almost 1,000 acres in Hampshire County. One is an 800+ acre hunt club spilling over three ridges and containing the headwaters of a native brook trout stream. The other is a 90+ acre parcel between Bloomery and Paw Paw with steep wooded slopes, a unique Cacapon River bottom meadow, and habitat for an endangered butterfly. Both landowners aim to complete their easements by the end of 2023.

Staff are also working with a Hardy County couple to protect a 200-acre sheep farm in the Lost River headwaters, a woman owning 200 acres of forest just south of Capon Bridge, and another hunt club along North River. Our watershed’s landowners have chosen the Trust to help them protect 14,000 acres so far. Let’s get to 15,000 by 2024!

**What is an easement again?*

A conservation easement is a permanent legal agreement that restricts some land uses in order to protect a property’s conservation values like agricultural soils, forest habitat, and streams.

SAVE THE DATE!

**Cacapon Celebration
2023 is on Saturday,
September 16. Expect
all the fun that makes
this event a favorite
on the watershed
calendar—and more!**

**Look out for your
invitation or contact
us to get your name
on the list.**



Keeping Up with the Cows

By Peter Wood



Hay, cattle, family, and the river—farming along the river is a balance.

Steve and Terry Lynn Bailes live and work on their farm on the banks of the North River in Hampshire County, WV. The river provides many opportunities to enjoy a peaceful paddle or a quick dip to cool off. It's also home to abundant wildlife. The perfect environment for families.

"This is where the family has always gathered," Steve said. "Aunts, uncles, cousins—everyone gathers here on the farm."



On the farm, Steve and Terry Lynn grow hay including orchard grass, fescue, clover mix and mulch hay along with their stock of black Angus cattle.

Steve and Terry know the farm and river provide a quality of life to be treasured.

"We mostly put our kids through college with their cows," Terry Lynn explained. "Each girl had their own cow to raise and sell."

Steve and Terry Lynn also take time to improve their riparian (streamside) buffers. They worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service

(NRCS) to fence off 500 yards of Hiatt Run and a wet weather stream in North River Mills. It was a 50/50 cost-share program. Through the program they also planted trees along the same streams.

Steve and Terry know the farm and river provide a quality of life to be treasured. Wanting to preserve that quality, they contacted the Cacapon & Lost Rivers Land Trust. Trust staff worked with the Bailes to draft protections that balanced their goals and protection for their land.

"It may be inappropriate to try to control things when you're gone, but it just felt good to think this could stay

a farm," Steve said. Steve and Terry Lynn placed 80 acres into conservation easement.

The Bailes family has passed the farm from one generation to the next along with the passion for keeping the land and river healthy. It's also the place for the family to gather.

The Cacapon & Lost Rivers Land Trust helps farmers like the Bailes permanently protect their lands, wildlife, and rivers for future generations.

Peter Wood is a board member of the Friends of the Cacapon River with a mission to preserve, protect, and promote the environmental health and scenic character of the Cacapon River and its watershed.

NEW GRANT HELPS LANDOWNERS OVERCOME COST BARRIERS

Cost is frequently a barrier to landowners wishing to establish conservation easements. Our newest grant—one of just 12 awarded from the Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (WILD) program—offers up to **\$8,000 per property to cover expenses** plus bonus payments for stronger stream protections. To take advantage of this opportunity, call Emily at 304-856-1188.



Land Conservation: It's About Communities

By Sarah Chayes

What passes for my lawn spends weeks every year submerged. Check a map of our curvy Cacapon and you'll see, two loops upstream from Largent, a bump. That's where I live, on 90 unruly acres. Sometimes, the river waxes mighty. Convoing tree trunks and the odd cow carcass, it blasts a shortcut. And every flat foot of my land goes under.

For years, I tried to pretty the place anyway. I tried to mark the property line with American filberts. They like swampy. I clambered up scree-clad slopes to plant redbuds. I ordered native grasses.

Native, don't you know it, is deer dinner. I confess: I'm not great at prettying. Whatever I plant dies or gets eaten. I got one of those push job mowers. The grass lay down, then sprang right back behind me. I gave up.

Last fall, my friend Owen came to visit. He runs meadowland restoration for a county parks department. He loved my flats, now shoulder-deep in grasses.

Wandering them with me, he'd stoop to expose some tiny leaves hugging a crack in a rock. I'd scribble as he reeled off names: "Big bluestem." "Purpletop." After a while, I could tell them apart. The asters I knew. There was St. John's Wort! "Arrowleaf Tearthumb." "Marsh Pepper." We kept seeing the same ones.

Suddenly I got it. These plants are not just random "natives." They *like* living together. They're a community. In fact, this neighborhood has a name. It's a Switchgrass—Big Bluestem Riverscour Prairie. And, like so many of the human communities around here, it is imperiled.

These discoveries helped me understand what I'm doing here. I'm part of a community—not just of people, but of plants and the animals that live here too. And what do you do when the community you love is in danger? You

defend it. Maybe that's really what I'm here for.

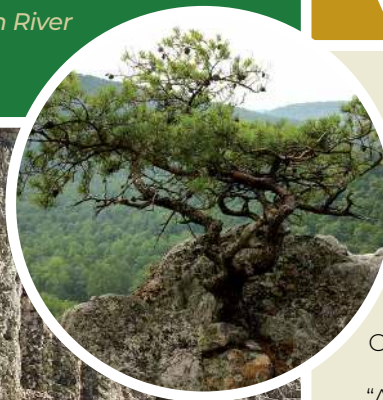
“These plants are not just random “natives.” They like living together. They’re a community.”

Sarah Chayes is a Hampshire County landowner who is in the process of protecting her land with an easement.

Floating the Cacapon

In early spring, members of the Cacapon Watershed Collaboration (CWC), which we facilitate, took a 9.5-mile paddle down the Cacapon River to see the lands and streams that we together work to protect. A glorious day with clear, clean water, breathtaking vistas, and wonderful company. Thanks to our partners from NRCS, The Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, and Friends of the Cacapon River for making it a day to remember!

Photo: Floating the beautiful Cacapon River with watershed partners.



VALLEY VIEW: YOUR WORD IS YOUR BOND

Excerpt from Listening to the Land, a book about the Cacapon Watershed's residents

Living side by side for generations, people in the Valley have come to know the measure of their neighbors as well as the measure of their fields. Over time, they have forged a set of values that define their community and their relations with one another.

One of these values has been holding true to your word.

"A handshake was as good as any contract. There was no question about it—a deal was a deal," recalls Steve Slonaker of Hampshire County. "If you didn't honor your word, that was a disgrace. You'd get shunned in the community, you really would."

Brown Hott, [a watershed resident], for decades did contracting work for folks in the Valley. "If you wanted something done, he would come out and meet you. He'd give you a price and shake your hand," explains his son Julian.

“A handshake was as good as any contract. There was no question about it—a deal was a deal.”

"If it went over, that was his problem. That's what he believed."

Even in the late 1970s, "we just didn't have contracts," recalls Jack Rudolph, who helps his brother Mike and son Jeremy raise cattle on the family farm. "We used to rent a place from Mrs. Wirtz, a fine old country lady.

She was part of the Warden family, a very old Valley family known for saying exactly what they thought." After agreeing on a price, Rudolph asked his new landlord if she wanted a contract. "I knew your granddaddy; I know your daddy; and I pretty well know you. I don't need a contract," she shot back. With that, the deal was done.

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CARS

Did you know your old car could help protect the Cacapon watershed? We now accept donated vehicles at careasy.org/nonprofit/cacapon or call 855-500-7433.



Check your Mailbox: Motivations & Barriers to Conservation Survey

CLRLT and local partners are seeking landowner input through a mail survey this Spring. We recognize that building successful programs to support landowners depends on direct input from those landowners.

If you receive a survey, we'd love for you to complete it. Questions will cover landowners' key motivations and barriers for entering into conservation easement agreements and engaging in land management practices like rotational grazing, fencing livestock from streams, and forest management. We want to understand what works well for landowners and what gets in the way.

Participation is voluntary and confidential, and we expect the survey to take about 10 minutes. CLRLT and our partners look forward to hearing from you, our watershed landowners.



GOING TO THE HILL

There's walking up the hill and then there's going to The Hill, as in "Capitol Hill." We recently joined two West Virginia delegations to ask lawmakers for continued support for programs and funding that support the farmers, landowners, forests, and streams of our beloved watershed.

In March, we took part in the Choose Clean Water Coalition's Chesapeake Bay Day on Capitol Hill, and in April, the Land Trust Alliance's Advocacy Days.

We enjoyed meeting our WV Congressional representatives and appreciate their interest in our work and willingness to come together to protect the rural way of life in our area.

Photo: Senator Shelley Moore Capito and our WV delegation

Species of Concern

Scores of species need our land stewardship to survive. Here are just a few:



Eastern Spadefoot
Scaphiopus holbrookii



Red-headed Woodpecker
Melanerpes erythrocephalus



Eastern Small-footed Bat
Myotis leibii



Eastern Spotted Skunk
Spilogale putorius



Red Cornsnake
Pantherophis guttatus

GUIDESTAR

The Trust is now on GuideStar and has earned a Gold Seal of Transparency! You can donate to us directly from their site:



www.guidestar.org/profile/55-0700086