

# FIELD NOTES

CONNECTED TO THE LAND. COMMITTED TO CONSERVATION.

FALL/WINTER 2022



WHAT DOES  
16 YEARS OF  
CONSERVATION  
LOOK LIKE?  
PG 06



A FORGOTTEN  
SOUND,  
REMINISCENT  
OF DAYS PAST  
PG 20



# The Cycle of Conservation

The tagline, “Connected to the Land. Committed to Conservation.” is not just a catchy phrase, it is central to the mission of Three Rivers Land Trust. Since 1995, Three Rivers Land Trust has worked diligently to achieve that mission in its now 15-county region, conserving over 46,000 acres to date. This is an incredible feat, the dedication and commitment to conservation take place because of our collective connection to the land.

Each person has their own conservation story, whether it was fishing with family, cycling through rural farmlands, or hiking through forests. These unforgettable moments spent with loved ones or simply taking in the fresh air are inspiring—they are the ones that plant the seed to become involved with conservation. Conservation can be broken down into many technical terms, but at its essence, conservation is making sure the land, water, farms, forests, and wildlife that live in these habitats are around for future generations to love and steward through the cycle of conservation.

By supporting Three Rivers Land Trust, you can help continue the cycle, allowing future generations the opportunity to experience the land we call home, from the farms to the forests in the Piedmont and Sandhills of North Carolina. Continuing the cycle of conservation is easy, all you have to do to help plant the seed for the love of the land in someone else is experience the outdoors with them by paddling the Cape Fear River, hiking the Uwharrie Trail, or hunting on Sportsman Access Program lands.

The love of the land comes first, which is what Three Rivers Land Trust depends on for their work. Without that love, the projects that save family farms, conserve natural areas, provide public access, and protect local waters would not happen. Help share your love and connection to the land with future generations by showing your support of Three Rivers Land Trust, giving them the means to continue their conservation mission.

Mike Mabry  
TRLT Board President



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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



I am frequently asked “What does Three Rivers Land Trust do?” My usual response included our traditional mission statement. This was often met with a slightly confused look by the person asking the question, which required further clarification, making what could have been a quick answer into a much longer explanation. In preparing advertisements for our conservation raffle this year, we looked for an easier way to explain what TRLT does. Out of that effort came the initials “E-S-P”. Many of you are likely thinking what does “Extra Sensory Perception” have to do with the Land Trust? Well to clarify, it’s not that type of E-S-P. **Our E-S-P stands for Expanding Public Lands, Saving Local Farms, and Protecting Local Waters.**

**Expanding Public Lands:** The expansion of public lands has been a hallmark of this organization from its earliest days. Visionary board members and donors saw the importance of adding land for the public to enjoy and for the permanent conservation of natural resources. Through your generous support, this organization has transferred over 8,000 acres of land into the public trust. Those transfers come in many different forms, like local parks (Dunn’s Mountain, Fred and Alice Stanback Educational Forest, and Forks of the Little River), state parks (Morrow Mountain State Park expansions), National Forest (Uwharrie National Forest/Uwharrie National Recreation Trail), and Game Lands (Uwharrie River Game lands and the Yadkin River Game Lands). Expanding our public lands is not only great for protecting our natural resources and increasing habitat for our native wildlife, but also for providing recreational opportunities for our growing population.

**Saving Local Farms:** Another foundational belief of TRLT is in the importance of conserving local family farms. To date we’ve conserved over 17,000 acres of local

farmland. Those farms are not only important for what they produce, but also because they enrich all of us by their genuine beauty which largely comprises our regions rural character. Farms in our area are under immense development pressure. From 2001-2016, NC lost or compromised over 732,000 acres of agricultural lands. A recent study by the American Farmland Trust noted that NC could lose an additional 1.1M acres of farmland by 2040. This hits our region especially hard, considering that **Iredell County is ranked in the top 40 counties in the nation for likely farmland conversion by 2040.**

The soils that make this region so rich from an agricultural perspective also make them attractive from a development perspective. According to the American Farmland Trust, 59% of Agricultural Lands are nationally significant, meaning that it takes 2-3 times as many acres of marginal soil to produce the same yield on “nationally significant” soils. Once farms are developed, those important soils are covered over with roads, driveways, and houses. The rich soils will lie dormant growing little of value except a fescue lawn. If there is one take away from the pandemic and the supply chain shortages, it is that we all should learn that having important commodities manufactured or grown close to home is important.

**Protecting Local Waters:** TRLT has permanently protected over 300 miles of stream corridors throughout the region. To give you some sense of the scale, 300 miles would be the equivalent of driving from Charlotte to Atlanta. These riparian corridors are required to remain wooded and undisturbed thereby acting as a natural filter for our region’s beautiful rivers and lakes. This natural filtration system enhances the water quality of our region’s important drinking water sources. Many of these conservation projects were funded with grants from the NC Land and Water Fund (formerly Clean Water Management Trust Fund).

In conclusion, our work impacts everything from the water you drink, to the food you eat, to the outdoor place you enjoy. E-S-P comprises everything this organization seeks to accomplish from a conservation perspective. I hope that the next time someone sees the sticker on your car or asked you why you support Three Rivers Land Trust, you can remember **E-S-P: Expand Public Lands, Save Local Farms and Protect Local Waters.**

Travis Morehead  
TRLT Executive Director

THREE RIVERS LAND TRUST

UPCOMING

EVENTS

Check Out Some of Our Upcoming Events in 2023



January

01

New Years Day Hike

08

Archery Shoot (Tentative)

28

Pee Dee Bird Walk

February

11

Hike on SAP Property

19

Archery Shoot (Tentative)

25

TRLT Shed Hunt

March

05

Archery Shoot (Tentative)

18

Falls Reservoir Paddle

25

Big Tree Hike

April

14

Sunset Paddle

27

Spring Thru Hike

For registration and the full list of events, visit: trlt.org/events



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# What Does 16 Years of Conservation Look Like?

By Crystal Cockman, TRLT Associate Director

This year, on July 10, 2022 marked 16 years I've worked with Three Rivers Land Trust. I've seen a lot of changes in that time frame, and a lot of really special properties be protected. It sounds simple to say we've protected over 46,000 acres, but each and every project took time, had its own challenges and obstacles to overcome, and was a result of a caring landowner who wanted more for their property than simply to let it be developed. I'd like to pause for a moment and reflect on some of the most memorable projects I've worked on in my tenure here.

I'd certainly be remiss if I didn't mention the very first easement project I shepherded here at the land trust – 3 Eagles Preserve, back in 2006. This beautiful 170-acre farm in Stanly County belongs to Ron and Nancy Bryant, who searched for this site for a long time before finding it. They visited several properties but knew they'd found their home when they saw first one eagle fly upstream, one fly downstream, and one fly straight down to the Pee Dee River, making the sign of the cross. This beautiful farm is permanently protected and has visitors such as anhingas and wood storks, and lots of interesting features for wildlife and agriculture, thanks to the Bryants.

I can't mention projects that are important to me without mentioning our Low Water Bridge Preserve, also known as the Bingham property. This is a signature project of ours, now totaling nearly 1400 acres on the Uwharrie River on Low Water Bridge Road. This site has mature hardwood forest, native white pines, yellow lady slipper, protects 5 miles of riverfrontage, and is home to a host of neotropical migratory birds every spring. We host our annual Naturalist Day here to spot these birds in the trees and along the river. My project as an intern with the Land Trust was doing a conservation plan on the Uwharrie River, and this site showed up as the single most significant

site along the river. I came back from my last year of graduate school, and soon thereafter the Land Trust purchased the tract.

Another property that sticks out in my mind as significant early on in my career is our very first Richmond County project – a portion of the Webb Farm, which closed in 2008. This is a quail hunting preserve in Ellerbe, and a truly unique and beautiful spot. I got the call from the owner, Bill Webb, in a time when we did not have a lot of other projects going on, and I was very excited to work with him to protect a portion of this farm. Bob Timberlake did a painting a few years ago of the farm with snow on the ground and flying quail in the foreground, and I was fortunate enough to get a copy of this print – which now hangs in my living room.

I also cannot talk about noteworthy conservation projects without mentioning the Uwharrie Trail. Filling various gaps in this trail has taken a lot of effort over the years, including such sites as King Mountain, Little Long Mountain, Walkers Creek (or the McArthur Property), Dark Mountain, and the Dassow property. Reconnecting the trail such that it can now be hiked in its entirety (with a short roadwalk as we are one property away from it being fully reconnected), is a huge accomplishment and the effort of not only myself but many other conservation partners. It will always be something I've been proud to have played a role in its restoration.

Another small but important project also on the Uwharrie River was the Newport property conservation easement. This was a truly neat site, only just shy of 40 acres, but possessing a lot of riverfrontage on both the Uwharrie River and Cabin Creek, with high wildflower diversity. The previous landowner called me as he was wanting to sell the property, and I fell in love with the place when I visited it. After our visit, he called me back saying he had a buyer in place, and I was devastated. Then just about 10 minutes later, I got a call from the new buyer telling me he was acquiring a place that he wanted to protect, and it was this site. With help from a Land and Water Fund minigrant for transactional costs, that donated easement happened in 2012.

Something else I've been really proud of while at the Land Trust was working with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission to develop 3 new access points on the Uwharrie River – one at Low Water Bridge, one at Highway 109, and one at another property we protected and transferred to NCWRC – the Capel tract, on Dennis Road. When I first started with the Land Trust there were no formal access points on the river, you simply parked on the side of the road at a bridge and did the best you could getting in and out. These formal access areas have opened up the river to a large number of new paddlers and fishermen and women, and we're working now on a 4th access point on Highway 49.

Another really key aspect of our work that we've turned our focus on even more in recent years is farmland preservation. This past March, 2022, I was able to help an 8th generation farmer in Iredell County protect his 410-acre organic dairy and organic beef cattle farm. This was a project that took more than 4 years to complete and involved both federal and state funding, was extremely complicated, but it was an amazing accomplishment to see it permanently protected. Farmland is being developed at such a rapid pace in our state, that it is more important than ever to conserve what we can while we can.

There are so many other properties and so many other stories of conservation successes that I could probably write a book about them all. I could talk about the 300-year-old longleaf saved on the Nichols Preserve, the Forks of the Little River passive park now owned by the Town of Star, three important tracts on Mountain Creek transferred to Morrow Mountain State Park, a 600-acre preserve on a different Mountain Creek in Richmond County, working with a very special conservation buyer to protect nearly 1000 acres in the Uwharries that then was transferred to TRLT to own and rolling those funds into protecting more land on the Little River, protecting the only private land left on Panther Branch, an outstanding resource water, and so much more.

But the single most important thing that stands out to me about all of these projects is the people. In order for any acre of land to be conserved, you need a willing landowner with a vision of creating a legacy. I always say that I work with the best people on earth, and it really is true. I hope that I have the opportunity to work with many more wonderful landowners to protect many more special places in the Piedmont and Sandhills of North Carolina, a place I'm proud to call my home.







# THREE RIVERS LAND TRUST

Since 1995, TRLT has worked diligently in their mission to protect and conserve land, natural areas, rural landscapes, family farms, and historic places within North Carolina's central Piedmont and Sandhills.



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the mission of  
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Land Trust  
by visiting  
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"I've been a supporting member of TRLT for 5 years. At first they were a smaller organization, but over the past few years I've seen TRLT grow into a robust, impactful and incredibly passionate conservation group. I'm happy to support and be a part of TRLT."

-Deirdre "Dee" Russell

Dee pictured  
on left with her  
daughter, Molly  
Jane, at the 2022  
TRLT Spring Thru Hike



## Expanding public lands.

We believe it is essential to connect people to the land, which is why TRLT has worked hard to provide public access by transferring

**over 8,100 acres**

to the public for recreation.



## Saving family farms.

According to the NC Department of Agriculture, agriculture and agribusiness provide 772,000 jobs, or 17.5 percent of total jobs, for N.C. residents and have an overall economic impact of \$92.7 billion.

Because we know the value of farmland, TRLT has conserved

**over 17,000 acres**

of farmland in NC, protecting the places that feed and clothe us.



## Protecting local waters.

Ensuring water quality by conserving

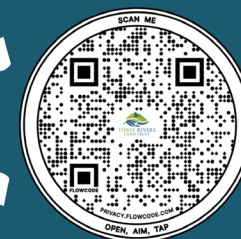
**over 300 miles**

of river & stream frontage conserved.

*That is the same as driving from  
Boone, NC to Wilmington, NC.*



Learn more about our mission, interest groups, events, volunteer opportunities, and more by visiting our website at [trlt.org](http://trlt.org)





# A Week of Fun at the Fur, Fish, and Game Rendezvous

By Emily Callicutt, Land Protection Specialist

In July of 2022, Three Rivers Land Trust had the opportunity to sponsor 11 campers at Millstone 4-H Camp's 38th annual Fur, Fish, and Game Rendezvous. Millstone 4-H Camp is located in Ellerbe, NC and has been in operation since 1938. They host a wide range of week-long residential camps, including traditional 4-H, horsemanship, and the Fur, Fish, and Game Rendezvous. Sponsorship funds were made available by the Susan Sharpe Memorial FFG Fund. The purpose of this fund is to promote youth conservation and outdoor related activities.

The week-long Fur, Fish, and Game Rendezvous is designed to introduce campers to conservation, hunting, fishing, and a number of other outdoor activities. The camp is divided in two groups- beginner and advanced camp.

Beginner campers focus the first part of the week on completing the NC Wildlife Resource Commission's hunter education course and, after passing the exam, leave camp with their hunter's safety certificate. Campers also participate in canoeing, riflery, archery, snake ID, fishing, orienteering and much more! Beginner's camp is designed to introduce campers to the outdoors and give them the basic skills to continue these activities at home. Thanks to instructors from NC State University, The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Wake County Wildlife Club, NC 4-H, and the North Carolina Forestry Service, campers are exposed to a wide range of topics in the conservation field and learn more about careers in conservation.

Advanced campers come to camp having already completed their hunter safety certificate, and get to focus more on putting those skills to work. Campers are taught about trapping, tracking, prescribed burning, wilderness survival, and participate in a crow hunt. A highlight of the week for most campers is the crow hunt that takes place Wednesday morning.

I was able to join the hunt as a guide for campers on Wednesday. I arrived at camp at 5:30am and we loaded groups of three campers



and three guides into vans, we drove to different locations around the Sandhills Gamelands hoping for a successful hunt. Campers were excited for the opportunity to put some of the shooting sports skills they learned that week to the test. After a morning of hunting where campers were able to harvest a few crows, we returned to Terry Sharpe's house for a lunch of deer burgers and vegetables, and campers tried their hand at fishing with homemade cane poles in the creek.

When talking to campers about their time at camp, for many in the beginner camp, this was the first time they learned about conservation and how it connects to the things they enjoy doing. They were excited by all the opportunities to be outdoors and learn about careers in the conservation field. There are no electronics allowed at Millstone, and many campers expressed how nice it was to be able to have fun with others and not have to worry about checking social media and text messages. One advanced camper I spoke to said, "I'm so happy I was able to come to camp, I can't wait to start hunting and fishing and being outdoors more when I get home." I think that proves that Millstone is helping create the next generation of conservationists, and I hope they continue for many more years to come.

If you would like to help send a kid to camp next year, please contact [emily@trlt.org](mailto:emily@trlt.org) for more information!





# New Faces at TRLT

## Matthew Williams Stewardship Associate

**Where are you from?** I am originally from Kings Mountain, North Carolina. I have lived in several different parts of the state all the way from the central piedmont to areas in the eastern part of the state in Halifax County, North Carolina.

**Educational Background?** I graduated from Gaston Early College High School in Dallas, North Carolina where I gained my associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees. From there I went on to pursue my goals of becoming a Wildlife professional with a Bachelor of Science in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology at North Carolina State University.

**What is your role at TRLT?** My role at Three Rivers Land Trust is the Stewardship Associate. The primary purpose of my position is to make annual contact with landowners that are enrolled in Three Rivers Conservation Easement Programs to make sure there are no easement violations. I have the awesome opportunity to meet with all of the landowners that make Three Rivers Land Trust an incredible organization that allows us to conserve land for our future generations. I also am the contact for landowners that may have questions about enrolling their properties in the Conservation Easement Program. While on monitoring site visits, I hope to be able to provide landowners with insight to the Habitat Enhancement Lands Program on how they can better manage their properties for the benefit of natural resources and wildlife.

**What qualifications do you have that may be most beneficial?**

I have worked in the wildlife management industries for two years. I have extensive equipment operating experience along with an understanding of land management best practices that can give landowners insight into what they could potentially need to achieve their land management goals. I also like to establish and maintain long lasting relationships with landowners to promote a quality collaborative experience so that they may be able to achieve their management goals.

**What are you most excited about with this position?** The part of this position that I am most excited about is being able to meet the many landowners that support Three Rivers Land Trust and share in their passion for land conservation. I have been passionate about the outdoors from a very young age and would like to be able to contribute to others by making sure that future generations have the opportunity to enjoy that same passion that I developed when I was a kid.



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**Congratulations  
to Steve Fisher!**

*A Tradition for Life*



Steve Fisher and Lori Huie at the Boys & Girls Club of Cabarrus County Pancake Day, a fundraising tradition in Concord for over 60 years.



**fmbnc.com**

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# Protecting More in Moore County

Located in Moore County is a 168 acre project known as the McLendons Creek Bottomlands, a significant project for Three Rivers Land Trust in their mission to conserve local lands. This property possesses over 10,000 feet of stream frontage on McLendons Creek and other tributaries. Of the 168 acres, 78.8 acres are designated as wetlands by the National Wetlands Inventory. With the natural significance of this property, Three Rivers Land Trust has put forth efforts to raise funds for the conservation of the property. Recently, with the generous grant award of \$100,000 from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), TRLT is one step closer to completing the project.

From the stream frontage to the wetlands on the property, the potential loss of these ecosystems has a direct impact on both migratory species and resident populations of wildlife. With current fundraising efforts, and this grant award from NAWCA and other organizations, TRLT aims to do their part in reversing habitat loss by permanently conserving this property. Some key species that would be protected here include the federally listed as endangered Cape Fear Shiner, the vulnerable Carolina Creekshell, American Black Duck, Mallard Duck, Wood Duck, Bald Eagle, American Woodcock, as well as white-tailed deer, wild turkey, and river otters.

“We are so grateful for this grant funding from USFWS,” states Travis Morehead, TRLT Executive Director. “This is a major project that would not be possible without funding from grants like this as well as from other generous supporters of the Land Trust. This grant is nationally competitive, we are proud and thankful to be the only recipient from North Carolina.”

Crystal Cockman, TRLT Associate Director comments, “The McLendons Creek Bottomlands is a unique location, with diverse species across its entirety. This region is a focal area for protecting water quality, and this project will help carry that out as McLendons Creek is a tributary of the Deep River which is designated as a High Quality Watershed by the state of North Carolina. We are elated to receive this grant from NAWCA to help fund this project and protect the habitat through its conservation.”

# Recognizing Local Leaders in Conservation



On June 10, 2022, Three Rivers Land Trust recognized three outgoing board members during its regular Board of Directors meeting. The three outgoing board members served a combined total of 9 years and helped Three Rivers Land Trust in their conservation efforts in a 15-county region. Three Rivers Land Trust is appreciative of the efforts displayed by each outgoing board member and is thankful for their work supporting the organization.

Anslo Fowler, an avid outdoorsman from Davie County, served on the Board of Directors from 2019-2022. Anslo participated in various programs and outdoor events at Three Rivers Land Trust. He is an active Sportsman Access Program Member and attendee of the TRLT 3D Archery Tournaments, where he helped promote Land Trust events to newcomers.

Savannah Heath is the Economic Development Director in Montgomery County, and served on the Board of Directors from 2019-2022. Savannah remained engaged with the Land Trust in many ways, always being a familiar face at ribbon cuttings in the region. During her time on the Board of Directors, Savannah played an active role in the Jazz on the Rails event and has been an advocate for the Land Trust in Montgomery County.

Tommy Porter is the President of Porter Farms, Inc. in Cabarrus County. He served on the TRLT Board of Directors from 2019-2022. Tommy is a Cabarrus Soil & Water Conservation District Board Supervisor, and will continue to remain involved with Three Rivers Land Trust as an advocate for farmland conservation.

“We are incredibly thankful to each of the outgoing Board Members that have volunteered their time to helping direct the Land Trust in our mission,” stated TRLT Executive Director Travis Morehead. “Anslo, Savannah, and Tommy are all excellent people that we [TRLT] were lucky to have as leaders and advocates for conservation in our region.”



# Board Member Spotlight

Featuring Dr. John Monroe  
*TRLT Board Member since 2019*



When it comes to TRLT's distinguished Board of Directors, each member is nothing short of extraordinary and Dr. John Monroe is no exception. Three Rivers Land Trust was lucky enough to bring Dr. Monroe onto the TRLT Board of Directors after merging with the Sandhills Area Land Trust (SALT) back in 2019, and he has remained on the board ever since. In fact, John was one of the select few to sign the charter for SALT back in 1991, knowing that the organization would go on to serve a great cause for the Sandhills of North Carolina. Dr. Monroe lives with his wife, Evelyn, in West End and is father to four sons: John, Clement, Fred, and Edward. He is the proud grandfather of nine grandkids, with whom he enjoys spending his free time fishing, walking, and riding the family farms.

Dr. John Monroe was born and raised on a farm near West End, NC. His conservation story began as a young adult when he decided that he wanted to go to medical school. To finance this endeavor, his father looked to the land to help and decided to cut timber off of their property to pay John's way through medical school. John and his father returned the favor to the land by replanting longleaf pines across the property that was harvested to pay for his medical education. This is where John's connection to the land began, and would continue for years to come.

With the financial backing he needed to go to medical school, he continued his education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where he began working towards his career as an Otolaryngologist (head and neck surgeon). In addition to his medical career in the United States, Dr. Monroe also served in the United States Air Force as a Captain and Flight Surgeon based at the Rhine Main Air Base in Frankfurt, Germany. Since then, Dr. Monroe's career accolades are about a mile long and nearly impossible to read without a doctorate, including but not limited to, working as an Otolaryngologist and eventually Clinic President at Pinehurst Surgical Clinic, acting as a consultant for numerous hospitals in NC, and being the first Otolaryngologist on the staff at First Health.

Dr. Monroe continued to reinvest in the land by purchasing property to plant more pine trees and even acquired property that was intended for development, transitioning it into a tree farm. This is not where Dr. Monroe's connection to the land ends. He is also an avid outdoorsman and enjoys fishing, hunting, traveling, and is even a certified prescribed burner. He spends his remaining free time with family, and is active in his community through his interest and support of his church, local schools, the Kiwanis Club, the NC Wildlife Federation, the NC Zoological Society, Three Rivers Land Trust, and many others.

To this day, Dr. Monroe continues to harvest and replant pine trees to support the education of his grandchildren, just as he did for his children, and was able to experience himself. He values the outdoor experience, and even had his grandchildren participate in "forestry camps" where they built tree stands, hunted, fished, and taught them the importance of being a good steward of the land they had grown to love. This cycle of giving back to the land is an absolute necessity to Dr. Monroe because he knows the importance of sustainability. He stays true to his word and proclaims that we have to take care of the land we love in order for it to remain fruitful for years to come.

Seeing how the land can provide for both him and his family, Dr. Monroe encourages people to become educated on sustainable practices, because there is only one earth and it must be taken care of if we want to remain here. Becoming educated is the first step, but you can learn more about conservation and show your support by becoming involved with Three Rivers Land Trust. Through involvement with Three Rivers Land Trust and simply educating others on the value of conservation, each and every person will understand the importance of stewarding the land, and ensuring its longevity for future generations to enjoy.







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# CAMPFIRE CONVERSATIONS

EST. 2018

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# A Forgotten Sound, Reminiscent of Days Past

By Katie Stovall  
Conservation Lands Manager



There are not many things that warm my heart more, and gives me more appreciation for the natural world, than hearing the sharp whistle of a bobwhite quail sounding off. If you have ever had the pleasure of experiencing a covey call exchange before daylight or a quail rooster boldly announcing his presence from a hedgerow perch, consider yourself lucky. The lonesome call of Gentleman Bob is an echo from days past during present times.

My appreciation for this bird isn't simply the tradition of a trembling bird dog locked on point nor the regal-like posture the bird holds while proclaiming his gentleman-like whistle. Although my appreciation for this bird includes the aforementioned examples, it is the nostalgia of a time and place when quail were as common as a northern cardinal that truly captivates me.

When I close my eyes and picture the nostalgia of quail, I imagine a lean man with a wrinkled face, leaned back in a wooden chair on a small wooden front porch. The old-timer is peeling an apple with a pocket knife he just slid out of the pocket of his thick denim jeans. The scenery around this man doesn't include manicured fence lines nor a newly installed subdivision over fertile farmland. Instead, this man is

slowly crunching the apple slices he just cut while overlooking a fence line overrun by blackberries, sumac, and plants many folks consider weeds. Those blackberry bushes are the same plants he picks fruit off of when he walks by for a mid-day snack, and the same bushes that so many summertime cobblers were derived from.

Although this nostalgia emanates when I hear a bobwhite whistle, it is also a call to action for me. Just like many folks today do not take the time to "chew the fat" or tell stories on the front porch with their neighbors, many other traditions have changed over the years. This change of society standards and agriculture practices has greatly impacted many wildlife communities, with bobwhite quail being one of the most noteworthy examples.

Bobwhite thrived on North Carolina farms throughout the 1950s and 1960s. However, by the 1980s quail populations were experiencing declines as fields reverted to forests, and urban development converted old farms to new subdivisions. Similarly, the innovation and efficiency of farming practices was counterproductive to quail populations. Herbicides became exceptional at killing weeds that previously were excellent food and cover resources. Improved harvest equipment reduced the amount of

waste grain that was left following harvest which was also a food source for the bird.

Today, quail remain present within localized islands of appropriate vegetation types. However, current quail populations are a mere fraction of yesteryears. Birding surveys have shown that quail populations have experienced at least a 5% decline each year! The current population is less than 7% of the original numbers that were surveyed in the 1960s.

We must first understand the habitat requirements of quail before we can begin to understand why quail populations are experiencing declines. Habitat requirements include all the resources that an animal needs to survive. A few key elements of bobwhite habitat include food, water, cover, and space. An appropriate vegetation community can provide all of the requirements, but appropriate vegetation types are uncommon in today's times.

A forest will not sustain populations of quail unless the forests are managed with low basal areas (e.g., limited tree cover allowing 50-75% to reach the ground) to allow an understory dominated by forbs and grasses to develop. Quail need "open areas" or old-fields to thrive. However, all open areas are not created equal and do not hold the

same wildlife value. A mowed fescue field does not produce the seed abundance or insect availability to sustain healthy populations of quail. Similarly, the structure of these mowed fields, or even the structure of monocultures of grass, do not provide high-quality habitat. The open areas that support quail in large numbers are those that contain high quality early succession. High quality early succession includes open areas that are dominated by a diverse plant community of annual forbs and grasses. The diversity of plants provide a plethora of feeding opportunities and the appropriate structure that allows quail to easily move around while also being protected from predators.

Bobwhites are relatively unique in that they require all of their habitat requirements in close proximity. The bobwhite's need for food and cover in close proximity is the reason I coin bobwhite as a disheveled bird. High-quality habitat for this bird does not contain one contiguous vegetation type that is "neat and clean." Instead, prime bobwhite habitat includes a matrix of vegetation types created by different management techniques on various timelines. Frequent management,

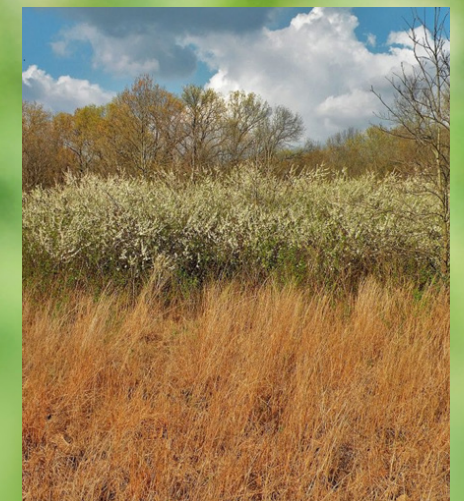
such as prescribed burning, disking, mechanical treatments, and/or herbicide application, occurring over various time intervals can create a diversity of vegetation types that provide the necessary resources to meet and exceed the biological requirements for quail. Quail feed on plant seeds, insects, soft mast, and tender leaves. Therefore, a property that includes a diversity of plants, that flower and seed at different times, will ensure quail have access to seeding plants and insects throughout the year.

Brooding cover, loafing cover, and escape cover should all be close together and within 40-80 acres. Early succession areas that are dominated by forb and grass coverage with scattered shrubs provide high quality habitat for bobwhite. Quail should have access to some sort of shrub cover within 50-100 yards of their location amongst a matrix of forbs with "umbrella" cover. Umbrella cover includes forbs that provide protection from the top, but allow birds to move freely to forage under the canopy of the forbs.

Quail nesting cover consists of forbs and grasses that are about 12" tall. Nesting cover is ideally

comprised of clumps of grass in a matrix of various bunch grasses that allow chicks to move around after hatching. Nesting cover should be disturbed every 2-3 years. Brooding cover should be umbrella cover with plenty of bare ground available underneath the canopy of forbs. Lastly, small thickets provide winter cover and escape cover for quail, in addition to thermal refuge during summer months.

The good news is, quail are known as the least mobile North American game species. The small home range size of quail can be very conducive to habitat improvement on small tracts, however, it takes landowners that are passionate about protecting and promoting wildlife populations. Quail habitat management is a labor of love. As much as I would love to say quail management is fast and easy, it isn't- the management needed is time and labor intensive. However, anything worth doing is worth doing correctly; and I think that statement has never been truer than with quail. Increasing the quail occupancy on your property is a deed that is unmatched in its reward for the future, and if you need H.E.L.P., contact TRLT for your customized management plan to improve quail habitat.



**Photos that are representative of quail habitat requirements. Nesting cover (manipulated on a 2-3-yr interval), brooding cover (manipulated on a 1-2-yr interval), and winter/escape cover (manipulated on a 3-5-yr interval) are shown from left to right.**





# This Project is “for the Birds”

Three Rivers Land Trust has remained committed to conserving land in their 15-county region in the Piedmont and Sandhills of North Carolina. TRLT aims to take their conservation efforts to the next level by astutely managing their own lands for wildlife habitat. Recently, TRLT received a \$25,000 grant from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to facilitate a habitat improvement project. The Creating and Improving Avian Habitat Quality along Critical Corridors in Central North Carolina restoration project will improve habitat quality for numerous songbirds and declining species like northern bobwhite.

This grant funding will broaden TRLT’s capability to create and manage habitat for species that have declining population trends. This project will directly restore and enhance over 300 acres by creating and maintaining critical acres that provide crucial food and cover resources for birds. This project will improve habitat quality for target songbirds through land management practices that include prescribed fire, snag and canopy gap creation, invasive plant control, and ecosystem restoration. Restoration work will occur on oak hickory forests, bottomland hardwood forests, pine woodlands, and old fields.

Katie Stovall, TRLT Conservation Lands Manager, said “This grant funding is instrumental to the stewardship of our lands and provides an opportunity to create and maintain plant communities that support avian species that have declined precipitously in our region within the past 50 years.” It is TRLT’s hope that this grant funding will impact many more acres, in addition to their own, on adjoining lands or from private landowners that see the results of their management work.



Three Rivers Land Trust has been awarded almost \$1.6 million from the N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund (NCADFP) for local farmland conservation. This funding will benefit current farmland conservation projects in Davie, Iredell, and Robeson counties. Three Rivers Land Trust places an importance on farmland conservation and this funding from N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust will aid in completing four more farmland conservation projects totaling 1,589 acres.



With the constant threat from development, Three Rivers Land Trust launched the “Save the Farm” campaign in 2021 to generate funding for local farmland conservation projects. The American Farmland Trust projects from 2016 to 2040, NC could lose over 1.1 million acres of farmland if more is not done to reduce sprawl. With staggering projections such as this, Three Rivers Land Trust is acting with a renewed effort to conserve North Carolina’s largest industry, agriculture.

“Farmland conservation has always been a priority of Three Rivers Land Trust,” states TRLT Executive Director Travis Morehead. “With recent studies showing just how much of an impact that farmland loss can create, we

knew we had to do more, which is why we introduced the “Save the Farm” campaign in 2021. We hope that with funding from organizations like the N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust that we can continue to make a difference in the lives of local farmers. Whether we realize it or not, we are all connected to the farms that provide so much for our daily lives.”







*Pictured above: Crystal with Shumard oak*



*Pictured above: Florida maple*

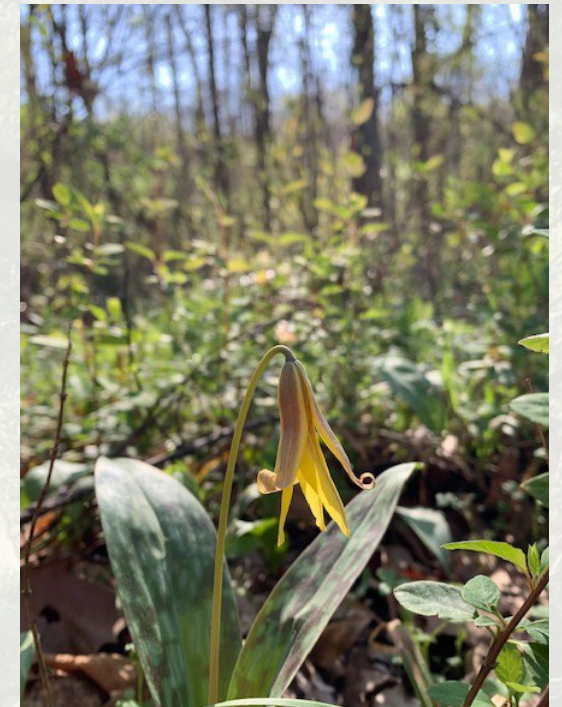
# Big Tree Hike

By Crystal Cockman  
TRLT Associate Director

On Saturday, March 26th, Three Rivers Land Trust (TRLT), in partnership with the Sandhills Natural History Society, led a nature walk on a TRLT owned property along the Deep River in Moore County. This property is located near the House and the Horseshoe, north of Carthage. This property has a lot of really old and large trees down near the Deep River, including two trees that are state champions, a Shumard oak and a Florida maple. Bruce Sorrie, an expert botanist, joined us for this trip.

The hike began at 9am with a group of about 20 participants and we started our walk down to the river bottom. There were some ephemeral pools along the way with salamander egg masses, and we stopped to take a look at those. Most likely they were spotted salamander eggs, encased in a gelatinous goo. The larvae emerge from their eggs, and grow into adult salamanders when they develop lungs and lose their external gills and become terrestrial.

Further down in the floodplain, we began to spot a wide variety of wildflowers in bloom, including a lot of painted buckeyes, trout lilies, Carolina spring beauties, purple violets, yellow violets, jack-in-the-pulpits, and more. There were some really large trees along the river bottom, including species like hackberry, sugarberry, black walnut, swamp chestnut oak



(also known as basket oak), bitternut hickory, and more. We made our way out to where we could see the Deep River. Bruce pointed out that the river bottom had such a diversity of plant life because of the rich sediment deposited here by the river over thousands of years.

Bruce found a rare plant in bloom, Colville's phacelia, also known as buttercup scorpionweed. This plant has a very disjunct distribution in the eastern United States, being found in Maryland, and North Carolina where it is listed as S1 endangered (and Bruce said was only found in about 6 counties in the Piedmont of NC), and then in Indiana, Ohio, Virginia and West Virginia. It also occurs in Washington DC, Illinois and Missouri. It has pretty little blue-violet flowers and is very delicate looking with lacy lobed green leaves.

The group made its way back up along the river to the huge Shumard oak, which we measured at over 6 feet in diameter. Truly an ancient giant, participants enjoyed taking their picture beside this massive tree by which they looked tiny in comparison. A short walk away from there was the other champion, the Florida maple, which was not a huge tree but a very large tree for its species. Many of the participants said how much they liked the walk and getting to see these large old trees and the blooming wildflowers of early springtime in central North Carolina.

Please visit our website at [trlt.org](http://trlt.org) to register for another one of our upcoming hike or paddle trips to see more conserved properties and the work that TRLT is doing in our region.

*Pictured clockwise from top: spring beauty, yellow violet, trout lily, painted buckeye, Coville's phacelia*



# TRLT is here to H.E.L.P.!

Three Rivers Land Trust is excited to get the Habitat Enhancement Lands Program (H.E.L.P.) off the ground. H.E.L.P. is a for-fee service that is designed to assist landowners in meeting their conservation goals by providing technical advice and guidance that is specific to individual landowners and their property.

Despite living in the world of technology where information is at our fingertips, it can be tough for landowners to get sound management advice. A quick internet search can yield a plethora of results, however, the quality of the information provided can be hit-or-miss. Moreover, even if the information a landowner gathers themselves is solid advice, it is simply impossible to use a cookbook recipe for every property.

Every property is different. Every property has differing prior land uses, with different plant communities, different topographic features, different resource concerns, and most importantly- different landowner goals and priorities! These reasons provide a great example of why it can be critically important to seek the skills and services of someone who has knowledge in each of these areas and can blend them all to best suit your property while best meeting your goals.

We understand that getting sound management advice, cost-share assistance, or implementation of desired practices can be a tough process to navigate on your own. We are here to help streamline those processes and provide dedicated and customizable services to truly meet your objectives. Our Habitat Enhancement Lands Program offers customizable land management services through a one-on-one consultation with our Conservation Lands Manager.

## A FEW OF THE PROVIDED SERVICES INCLUDE:

**WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLANS - FORESTRY MANAGEMENT PLANS  
- GEOSPATIAL SERVICES AND MAPPING - FOOD PLOT DESIGN AND  
DEVELOPMENT - NON-NATIVE PLANT CONTROL - PRESCRIBED FIRE  
RECCOMENTATIONS - ASSISTANCE WITH TREE PLANTING - TIMBER  
HARVEST GUIDANCE - POLLINATOR HABITAT - COST-SHARE PRACTICES**

**EMAIL [KATIE@TRLT.ORG](mailto:KATIE@TRLT.ORG) OR CALL OUR OFFICE  
FOR MORE INFORMATION**



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# LAST CHILD IN THE WOODS

By Andrew Younger, Director of Development

We've all read books that leave a mark on our soul. These books touch our quintessential core beliefs and make us examine how we're living our lives. We remember these books forever and deep down we hope they elicit a positive reaction or influence future behavior. For me, "Last Child in the Woods" by Richard Louv was one of those books.

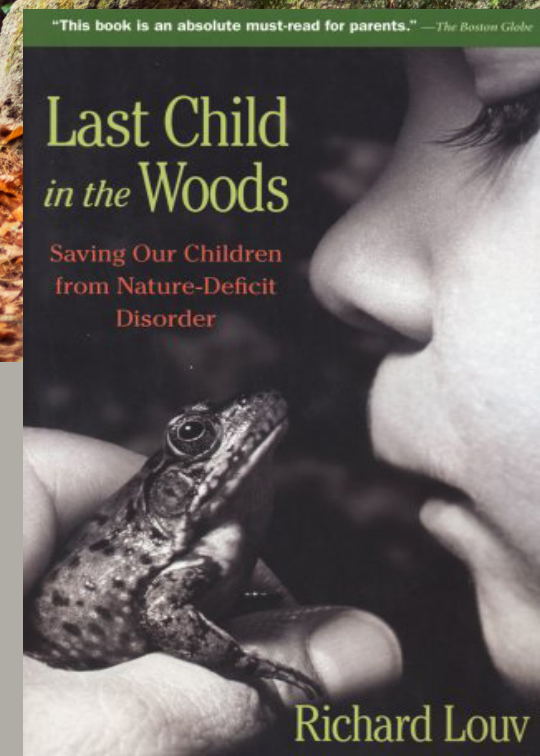
I grew up like a normal pre-internet kid. My parents would kick me outside and tell me to be home by dinner. I'd run free around the neighborhood and parks, ride my bike through the woods, make tree forts and have dirt clod wars. Little did I know I was living the healthiest life I could. As my generation grew up our lives transitioned inside the home (partly due to the technological advancements of the late 90s-2000s) and unbeknown to us, we slowly started to decay from something Richard Louv calls the "Nature Deficit Disorder". The truly sad part about this is that it's not only my generation that's feeling the pain.... our kids and society are taking the lion's share of the problems.

As Richard describes in his book, more and more children are focusing on indoor play and spending less time getting their hands dirty. As you look at neighborhoods and communities there is a dramatic reduction in the amount of time a society spends outside, thus neighbors don't know each other, and the identity of their community is lost. Not to mention the increased obesity and mental health issues that seem to be running wild through our country. Richard explores this "Nature Deficit Disorder" phenomenon and conducts a scientific deep dive into his theory.

The style of the book is a beautiful blend of scientific research and storytelling. Richard uses his own childhood, as well as that of his two sons, as an example of the challenges facing people all over the world. He interviews world renowned experts and mixes in quantifiable statistics to back up his point. I'll have to admit that the book does become a bit dry at times but as I read his book, I couldn't help but reflect on my own childhood.

I grew up in the suburbs of Portland Oregon, a city that is jam-packed with wild green spaces and an urban growth boundary that restricts urban sprawl while allowing quick access to the untouched wilderness. I didn't realize how good I had it at the time, as a young child I assumed it would be this way forever. Sadly, as we grow, things change and not always for the better.... but there is hope.

Richard Louv describes how multiple groups and organizations are focused on protecting our natural landscape and educating our youth about the importance of spending time in nature.. He points out that the answer isn't manicured parks and playgrounds but rather untamed wilderness. People need a place and space to explore. They need to let their imagination run wild while observing the natural scientific wonder that is Mother Nature.



My greatest takeaway from this book was easy for me. I want to be a better parent, encourage my children to spend more time outside away from the digital world and the blue hue of the computer screen. The opposite side to this argument is that most of their friends and a world of knowledge is available to them online. So how do I encourage them to experience the beauty of a natural landscape? I guess it's my job to find that balance. Wish me luck.



# Taking on the Uwharrie Trail



This past spring, Three Rivers Land Trust held their 11th Uwharrie Trail Thru Hike. The hike began on Thursday, April 28 and was completed on Sunday, May 1st. The TRLT Thru Hike has become a staple event for the Land Trust, celebrating public access in the Uwharries. This was also the first time TRLT Director of Development, Andrew Younger, participated in the hike. When asked about his experience, this is what Andrew had to say:

“Backpack camping (backpacking) is a unique endeavor. It requires detailed planning and preparation for an extended physical excursion into the unknown. It’s not easy, but the TRLT Thru Hike does a pretty good job of making it so. This 4 day, 40 mile hike is probably one of the most enjoyable backpacking trips I’ve even taken and I highly recommend it.

The TRLT Spring 2022 Thru Hike was my first overnight trip into the Uwharrie National Forest and like most hikers, I grossly over packed. I did not need binoculars, I did not need to bring my own camping chair, and I most definitely did not need my hatchet. All a person really needs is sleeping accommodations and a few provisions and that is it- TRLT provides everything else. I vividly remember ending the first day’s hike, turning that final corner and seeing our campground with chairs already set up and hot food waiting for me and I thought to myself, “Why did I carry all this crap?”

An added bonus to the TRLT Thru Hike is the amazing people you meet along the way. Of course you’ll be blessed by the natural beauty of the Uwharrie National Forest and the serenity only found when you’re miles deep in the woods, but what I didn’t expect was the awesome people you meet along the way. These fellow hikers provide much needed conversation during the difficult sections of trail and shared funny stories when sitting around the fire at night. They quickly become your close friends and add to an already fun-filled experience.

I’m grateful for the friends I made during those 4 days and I look forward to seeing them again (as well as meeting new friends) this fall. If you would like to join us on a future hike, visit our website at [trlt.org/events](https://trlt.org/events) to check out the upcoming hikes, paddles, and more!”



# Providing Public Access for Paddlers

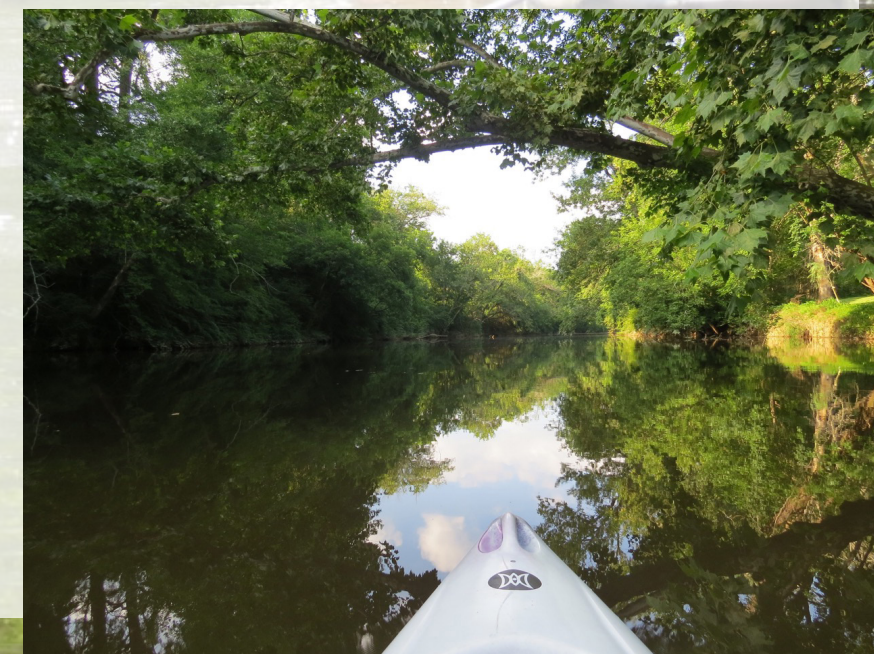


Providing public access has always been a key component of the work that Three Rivers Land Trust does, and with the generous gift of \$15,000 from an anonymous donor, there will be more areas for the public to recreate. This particular donation will go directly towards the construction of a canoe and kayak launch on the Uwharrie River on NC Highway 49. With no existing access in the area, this donation will be a stepping stone to providing outdoor enthusiasts with a new area to explore.

The construction of this access will provide paddlers with a place to put in their canoe or kayak and travel approximately 4 miles downstream to a popular informal access off of Waynick Meadows Road in Asheboro, or they can continue further down river to three additional access points created by TRLT in Montgomery County. With this new access on Highway 49, paddlers can travel all the way to Morrow Mountain State Park on the Uwharrie River and across the Yadkin Pee Dee River. Adding this access will give paddlers approximately 32 miles of stream to navigate.

“We [TRLT] are extremely appreciative of this generous donation to fund the design and construction of the canoe and kayak launch. This funding will help up get the project going in the right direction, and eventually provide the public with a nice place to access the Uwharrie River”, comments Travis Morehead, TRLT Executive Director. “Public access is essential to helping form the connection of people to the land that we work so diligently to conserve, which is why projects like this mean so much to Three Rivers Land Trust.”

If you would like to help Three Rivers Land Trust in their mission to connect people to the land through the construction of this project on Highway 49, donations will be gratefully accepted. You can donate online at [trlt.org/donate](https://trlt.org/donate), and cash or checks can be mailed to the TRLT office at 204 East Innes St, Suite 120, Salisbury, NC 28144.





# Getting Hooked on the Hunt

By Addison Watson, Media and Communications Associate

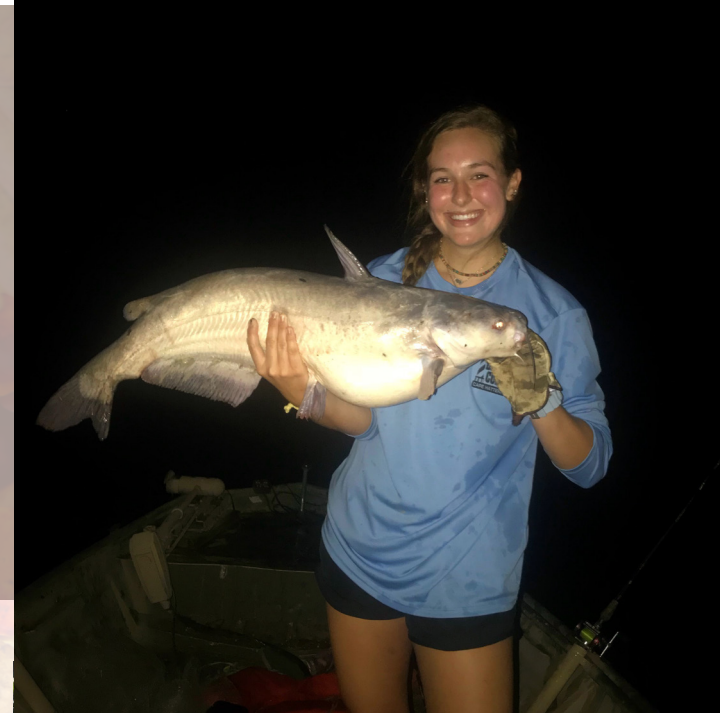
From the day I was born to now, I have always spent a lot of my time outdoors. Whether it was playing outside in the backyard with my younger brother, to running around with my cousins in our great-grandparent's garden, to being on the soccer field for a majority of my school years, I was often outside. Although I always had an appreciation for the fresh cut grass on the field, the blueberries in the garden, and running laps around the flowerbeds with my brother, I never would consider myself a "sportswoman" or "outdoorswoman" until now.



*Pictured above: My first ever duck hunt on my birthday last year with Gunner, my best 4-legged friend that retrieved my first duck*

In college, I was introduced to the world of hunting, catfishing, and flounder gigging...and I have yet to look back. Taken under the wing of an experienced sportsman and outdoorsman, I was shown the ropes in a way that I will be eternally grateful for. For the first year, I was pretty much a shadow, following in the footsteps of my mentor- literally stepping in his tracks in fear of crunching an extra leaf or twig. He showed me tricks on how to locate game sign, track deer, cover your scent, and more. Most importantly, he showed me how spiritual the hunt could be. Now, I am convinced that you truly do not know peace until you are sitting in the woods at sunrise, hearing the quiet sounds of the morning, with only your thoughts and nature around you. Within the next year and a half, I harvested my first deer, fell in love with dove hunting, am eager to hear the sound of beagles running a rabbit, and now crave the crisp fall air- not because it means a break from the thick summer heat, but because it is a sign that hunting season is underway.

In addition to learning about hunting, I was able to dive deeper into the world of fishing. Growing up, my family always spent time fishing at local ponds as well as surf fishing on the coast (which is still one of my favorite things to do), but we never got into catfishing, and I had surely never heard of flounder gigging. After being introduced to those activities, I was hooked. There is nothing that beats hearing a catfish line take off close to midnight on High Rock Lake, or seeing the sunrise after a full night of flounder gigging off the shores of Cape Lookout. Those



moments have been imprinted in my brain as some of the best moments of my life- true adrenaline rushes.

Since being introduced to another side of the great outdoors, I have never felt more connected to the land. I have seen the hard work that it takes to plant a food plot, the sweat it takes to reel in and clean a fish, the patience it takes to track a deer, and the satisfaction of claiming your harvest. Knowing where your food comes from and being able to appreciate the hard work that was put into being able to have the opportunity to harvest the fish or animal is a feeling like no other. I am forever grateful for that first trip into the woods where I stepped right in the tracks of my mentor, that first set hook on the banks of High Rock Lake, and the first trip to the coast where I begged to have a light to see if I could locate a flounder in the pitch black ocean, because those moments are the ones that forever changed my perspective on what it means to love the outdoors.

The land provides for us in so many ways. It feeds us, clothes us, and gives us a means to recreate- but in essence, we cannot survive without it. This is why we must protect and conserve the land we love. Three Rivers Land Trust is already working to do that, but we need your support. Show how much you love the land by becoming involved, whether participating in events, becoming a Sportsman Access Program Member, volunteering, or providing a donation- it all matters. Do your part in staying connected to the land so TRLT can remain committed to conservation.

*Top picture: The first catfish I ever caught on my own. This took place on High Rock Lake, probably sometime close to midnight.*

*Middle picture: The third, and most exciting dove hunt I have ever been on. This was the first year that Gunner was around to retrieve doves and he did not disappoint.*

*Bottom picture: There is nothing else in the world like rabbit hunting. Being able to observe a multigeneration family take part in this tradition has been an incredible experience...and the beagles are great too!*





# Having a Time Learning Hardaway History

By Natalie Paparone, TRLT Summer Intern

On May 12, 2022, Three Rivers Land Trust staff and board members traveled to the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill for a private tour of a collection of ancient Native American artifacts discovered at the Hardaway site in Badin, North Carolina. TRLT staff spent the afternoon meeting with Dr. Vincas Steponaitis, a distinguished professor of Archaeology and Anthropology at UNC-Chapel Hill who focuses much of his work on studying ancient complex societies, ceramics, historic style trends, and iconography. The start of the tour began with Dr. Steponaitis recapping a brief history of the Hardaway site and the ancient civilizations that once inhabited the area.

The Hardaway site, located in Stanly County, is the oldest excavated site in the state. Dr. Steponaitis explained how the site's geography and geology likely attributed to its frequent use within ancient civilizations. The Hardaway site exists on top of a ridge about 150 feet in elevation near Badin Lake within the Uwharrie Mountains. The geology of the site is composed primarily of rhyolite, which allowed the ancient people of North Carolina to find great success in harvesting rock from nearby ridges to construct spear points, shaping tools, and other utensils. The Hardaway site was first excavated in 1948 by Joffre Coe and Henry Doershuk and continued to be professionally excavated by professors and graduate

students for the next thirty years. In total, thousands of ancient Native American artifacts have been discovered including pottery with detailed patterns and style markings, spear points and other projectile tips, smooth and jagged rocks that were used to craft stone into any desired shape, and hundreds of other utensils commonly used by the people that lived in this region so long ago.

After this brief lecture, TRLT members were escorted across the UNC campus to an underground storage site where the artifacts are housed in climate-controlled spaces in secure storage containers to preserve their historical accuracy. There, staff we able to examine a wide variety of spear points found at the Hardaway site dating as far back as 12,500 years ago. Seeing collections of spear points on display, it was apparent how the style of spear points seemed to shift over time. Dr. Steponaitis likened this observation to the ways in which clothing or hairstyles in the modern world change across decades. TRLT staff were also shown pottery over thousands of years where the textures and patterns pressed into the clay reflect a similar change in styles over times. Andrew Younger, Director of Development at TRLT, reflected on his experience saying, "It was absolutely mind-blowing! Some of those projectile points were over eleven thousand years old. I left feeling amazed by what I saw, and grateful that TRLT is here to help conserve areas of historic significance".

Many thanks are extended to Dr. Steponaitis for leading the event and Joyce Fitzpatrick, on behalf of Alcoa, for organizing and inviting Three Rivers Land Trust staff and board members to attend. Beyond the incredible history of these artifacts, Three Rivers Land Trust is dedicated to preserving the unique natural areas within this and surrounding counties. In November 2021, TRLT was able to permanently conserve 215 acres of unique forest and rare plants only one half-mile away from the Hardaway site. Alcoa, a power generation company who formally owned much of the land in this area including the Hardaway site, entered into an agreement with North Carolina State Parks to donate roughly 1,400 acres, including the Hardaway site, to the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation in 2007. Since the 1980s, Alcoa has overseen management of the area and provided security and restricted access to ensure any historic findings are left to be found by archaeological professionals. The conservation of this property and other properties within this region is likely to preserve priceless historical artifacts, in addition to natural areas, for future generations.



## TRLT Intern Spotlight

### Maggie Pipkin (Summer 2022, pictured left)

Maggie recently graduated from Appalachian State University with a Bachelor's degree in Biology with a concentration in Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Studies in August 2022. Maggie hopes to attend grad school to get her master's degree in the fall of 2023 to further her education in the conservation field. Her favorite things about her internship at Three Rivers Land Trust were being able to meet new people and organizations that were interested in conservation, paddling at Crystal Lake, and learning new things every day.

### Natalie Paparone (Summer 2022, pictured right)

Natalie spent this past summer as our Baseline Inventory Specialist through Duke University's Stanback Fellowship Program. Natalie is actively pursuing a Master of Environmental Management with a focus on ecosystem science and conservation. She has a specific interest in wetland ecology and will be using her capstone project to identify isolated depressional wetlands in the Sandhills Camelands. Natalie loved spending much of her time in the field this summer, and she even had the opportunity to catch, document, and identify salamanders with Maggie, our other summer intern. After completing her master's degree, Natalie hopes to secure a career monitoring and preserving aquatic ecosystems in either the non-profit or



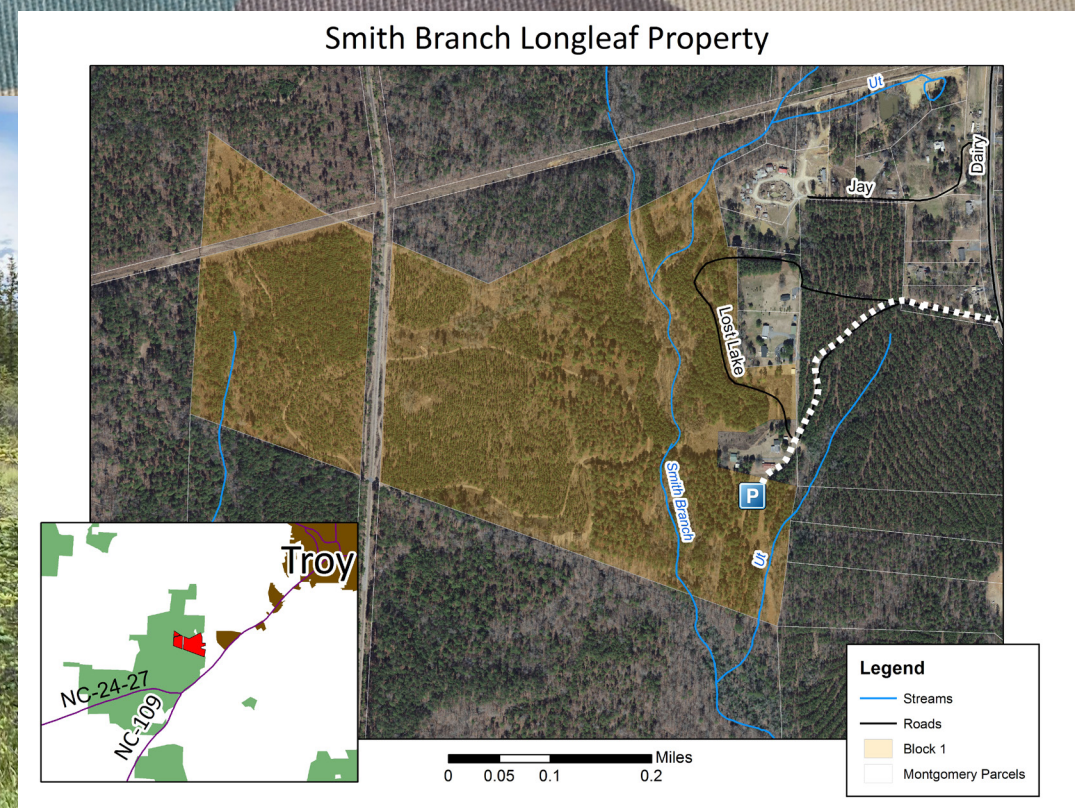
# SPORTSMAN SPOTLIGHT

By Mark Dye, SAP Member

We humans love secrets. There is a certain sense of smug satisfaction that comes with thinking that we know something that other folks don't know. This is especially true of hunters. I am 100% certain that cave dwelling hunters sat around a fire after a successful hunt telling wild tales about their exploits but leaving the location of their favorite spot a little vague. Modern hunters haven't changed much. We avoid at all cost telling others about our "secret" spot for fear of finding it occupied when we go there for our next hunt. That's why I'm a little hesitant to put what I'm about to say in print. I sure hope all of you readers are good at keeping secrets!

I've been a Sportsman Access Program member through Three

Rivers Land Trust since 2018, the second year of the program. This has become one of my go-to ways to access quality hunting property. I found out about the organization after seeing their signs on trees along the road near Low Water Bridge in Montgomery County. A quick Google search took me to their website and to the Sportsman Access Program. I immediately saw the value in what they were offering. TRLT's mission of conservation is an important one. I was also happy to learn that not only were they friendly to hunters, but most of the staff are hunters as well. The Sportsman Access Program is pretty unique: A small donation puts you in the running for an opportunity to have exclusive access to one of several



well-managed hunting properties for a week through a lottery draw system. I am not aware of a similar program being offered anywhere within easy driving distance. Quite simply, it is the best value around.

Hunting is about far more than the harvesting of an animal. Seeing new terrain, spending time in the outdoors, viewing wildlife, and sharing the experience with others all combine to make memories that last far longer than venison in the freezer. Over the last four years of hunting SAP properties, I've been fortunate enough to harvest a few animals. More rewarding though, last year I was able to assist a friend in harvesting his first ever deer by applying to hunt an SAP property together as a party. I even borrowed another friend's son to mentor during youth week of last turkey season after I accidentally applied for a draw during youth season. We called in two gobblers, but just couldn't get one in range for him to

connect. Needless to say, a young hunter is now thoroughly hooked on spring turkey hunting.

Since I live in southern Randolph County, the two SAP properties nearest to me are ones I've concentrated on so far: Low Water Bridge and Smith Branch Longleaf. Low Water Bridge is a fantastic place most known to locals as a fishing and canoe/kayak launching spot on the Uwharrie River. It reminds me a bit of hunting in West Virginia, where I grew up. Split by the Uwharrie River, the five separate blocks on the property offer a lot of good hardwoods with relatively steep terrain for central NC. To add to the allure, there are abandoned pit gold mines and even a family cemetery from the early 1800s. TRLT's management of the property includes regular burns of alternating blocks, removal of invasive and undesirable vegetation, and wildlife plantings. This coupled with low hunting

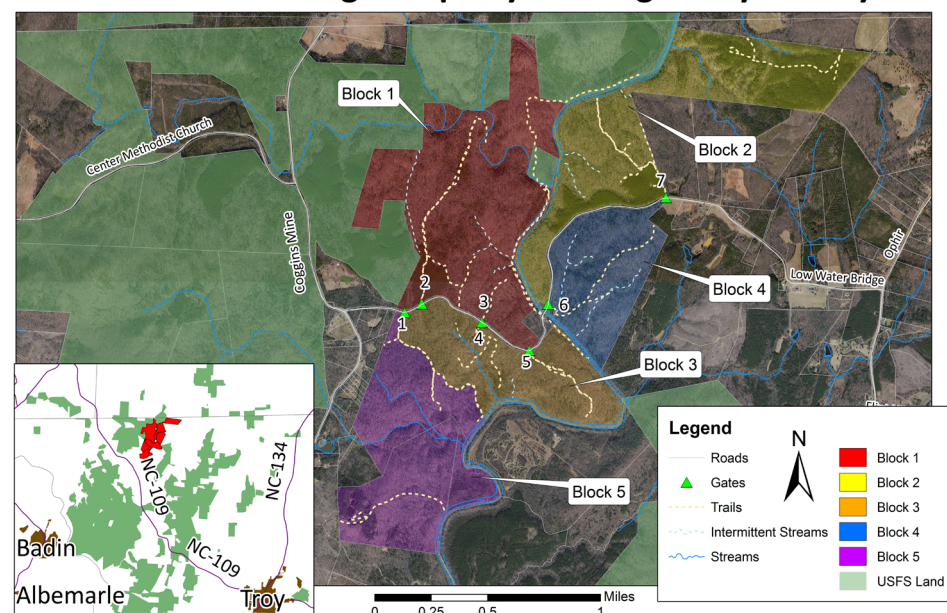
pressure means that there are some truly big bucks haunting the Low Water Bridge property. While I have not connected with one of the big bucks yet, I have had successful hunts there and have seen a lot of wildlife. The turkey hunting and squirrel potential are truly excellent as well. On my to-do list for Low-Water Bridge is to access the lower ends of blocks 2 or 3 by kayak to avoid spooking animals by tromping through the woods on my way in.

Smith Branch Longleaf is another very interesting SAP property that I have had the good fortune to hunt on. Located just outside of the town of Troy, this property has been actively managed for many years by its former owner. As the name implies, there are native longleaf pines as well as stands of loblolly pine, nice hardwoods, some open grassy areas, and a wide power line cutover. Some portions have been burned within the last few years, with good early succession plants. This patchwork of habitat

types serves to support a healthy wildlife population and yields excellent deer and turkey hunting. If anyone happens to have a few good beagles, keep me in mind for putting in for a party hunt for rabbits on Smith Branch in January! Another bonus is that the property is mostly bordered by public land, meaning that a lot of wildlife gets pushed onto it during hunting seasons by public land hunters.

If you haven't taken a shot at the lottery draws available through the Sportsman Access Program, I highly recommend it. While I have only mentioned two of the SAP properties here, they all represent an excellent opportunity to hunt productive properties. This might be the best kept hunting secret in NC! Although if the word gets out and SAP draws become more difficult to attain, I may have to get my smug sense of satisfaction from knowing that I am aiding the cause of conservation rather than from just having a secret hunting spot.

## Low Water Bridge Property - Montgomery County





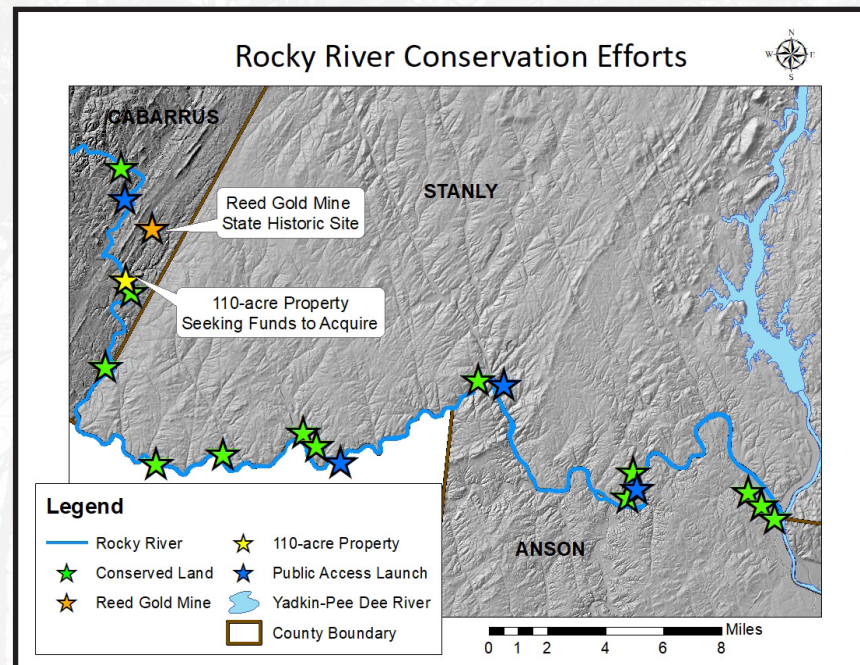
# Conservation Efforts Along the ROCKY

Three Rivers Land Trust (TRLT) has focused efforts on protecting land on important waterways since our organization was established, and the Rocky River is no exception. TRLT has worked with willing landowners to conserve a number of properties along the river, including several large farms and natural areas. There is renewed interest from TRLT in concentrating on protecting land along the Rocky River, while there are still undeveloped tracts available.

“The Rocky River is an incredible resource for our area,” states conservation easement donor Leon Huneycutt. “That’s why I knew it was important to conserve my family land along the Rocky for future generations. Keeping this river pristine and protecting farmland and forestland along it are important to ensure continued good water quality and recreational features for our local community.”

The Rocky River is a beautiful free-flowing river that starts with its headwaters in Iredell County and flows as the boundary of Cabarrus, Union, Stanly, and Anson Counties before emptying into the Pee Dee River. There are a number of public access points along the Rocky River, and it is a great river for kayaking and canoeing, as well as fishing. Lots of neat critters call this river home, including Gulf Coast Spiny Softshell Turtles, Bald Eagles, River Otters, and Swainson’s Warblers.

Reed Gold Mine State Historic Site is located near the Rocky River and is a significant site to the gold mining heritage of our state. America’s first gold rush began in North Carolina when a 22-pound nugget was found near this location on Little Meadow Creek, a tributary to the Rocky River. More gold was found in and along the creek, and news of gold in Cabarrus County spread quickly. Soon gold was being found in neighboring counties – Montgomery, Stanly, Mecklenburg, Rowan, and Union – and people anxious to find gold of their own began moving into the area. For 50 years, North Carolina led the nation in gold production and gave a young country a new kind of wealth.



TRLT now has the opportunity to acquire a tract just across the Rocky River from the creek that started America’s first gold rush. This effort will help to preserve an additional piece of history and natural beauty along the Rocky River. This 110-acre property we are working to protect has a purchase price of \$2,000,000, and we have raised half of this cost through a grant from the NC Land and Water Fund. We are seeking additional funds for the remainder of this acquisition cost to make the protection of this site a reality. Every dollar counts, so each and every contribution will help us reach our goal of the funds needed to purchase this property. We hope you will consider contributing to this worthwhile project and help expand protection efforts along the Rocky River.

# Fighting for the Future of North Carolina Farmland

Three Rivers Land Trust has always recognized the importance of protecting farmland. Since the organization started in 1995, over 17,000 acres of farmland have been permanently conserved across our 15-county footprint. These farms vary in scale and production, but each one plays a role in providing food and fiber resources to our local economy. Protecting family farms has always been at the forefront of TRLT’s mission, but recent statistics on the status of farmland across America has made a worthy cause all the more urgent.

In July, the American Farmland Trust released its latest report on the status of farmland across the country. The nationwide statistics are worrying—18.4 million acres of farmland are projected to be lost by 2040—but for North Carolina the outlook is especially grim. Our state ranks second in potential agricultural land lost by 2040. Iredell County, which falls in TRLT’s footprint, ranks in the top 40 counties across the state in projected acres to be converted by 2040.

To combat the loss of farmland, TRLT is working harder than ever to protect family farms by placing conservation easements on the properties. By applying to state and federal funding sources, farmers are compensated for the development rights that they are giving up to protect their farms in perpetuity.

Currently, TRLT has eight farmland projects that have been partially funded at 25% by the NC Agriculture Development & Farmland Preservation Trust Fund. Only two of these projects received federal funding from the USDA, a sign of just how competitive these grant programs are. TRLT can still re-apply for funding from the federal government. However, there’s no guarantee that the money will be awarded.

As these grants become even more competitive, land costs continue to increase, and the amount of state and federal funding available remains uncertain, TRLT needs the support of our members now more than ever. If you value the cropland and pastures that produce valuable resources, the growing agritourism industry that supports local economies, or the scenic viewsheds that come from rolling fields that are free of development, we need your support. Every donation helps ensure the lasting protection of family farms, while there are still farms left to protect.

**“18.4 million acres of farmland are projected to be lost by 2040—but for North Carolina the outlook is especially grim. Our state ranks second in potential agricultural land lost by 2040. To combat the loss of farmland, TRLT is working harder than ever to protect family farms by placing conservation easements on the properties.”**





# Chocolate Pecan Pie

Recipe by Tiffany Dorn, Administrative Associate

## Ingredients

2-3 pie shells  
1 stick butter, melted  
3 cup sugar  
7 tablespoon cocoa  
1 – 12 oz. can evaporated milk  
1 tablespoon vanilla extract  
4 eggs  
2 cup flaked coconut  
1 cup chopped pecans  
Pinch of salt



## Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F
2. Mix butter, sugar, cocoa, milk, vanilla, eggs, and salt with an electric mixer on low
3. Stir in coconut and pecans
4. Divide mixture among 2-3 pie shells (8 or 9 inch)
5. Bake for 45 minutes or until set
6. Enjoy!



Thank you for supporting local conservation! This list recognizes members that are current as of August 31, 2022. Donations after that may not be included in this edition but will be in our fall newsletter. Every effort has been made to ensure these are correct, we apologize if anything is inaccurately represented. Should there be an error, or if you have any questions or comments, please contact us at (704) 647-0302.

### Three Rivers Society: \$10,000+

David C. Bryan • Alton Louis Eubanks • Mike & Kat Mabry • Bradford & Shelli Stanback • Fred & Alice Stanback • Lowell Strine

### Three Rivers Society \$5,000-\$9,999

Mary Pride Ariail • Leon Huneycutt • Tim Peppe • Jane & Mark Ritchie

### Three Rivers Society: \$1,000-\$4,999

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# Be a Champion for Conservation with Unique Planned Giving Options

## CREATE TOMORROW'S LEGACY...*Today*

While many planned giving options are gifts that are meant for the future, there are several options that allow you to make an immediate impact in conservation in your community. Unlike other legacy giving vehicles, the options below are two types of gifts that you can achieve online in a few clicks, without the expense of an attorney. These approaches to philanthropy will enable you to immediately see the impact of your generosity, making you a champion for conservation both today, and for generations to come.

### ***Commit to Conservation Through Your IRA***

If you are 70½ or older with a traditional IRA, you are eligible to make a tax-free gift to Three Rivers Land Trust called a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). Because you are not receiving the money yourself, you will not pay taxes on the transfer, so this is a very tax-smart way to make a gift even if you don't itemize deductions on your tax return. By making a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) to Three Rivers Land Trust from your IRA, you are making an immediate difference and commitment to conserving our lands, in a tax-savvy way that will enable you to create a lasting legacy for future generations through your generosity.

### ***Make an Immediate Impact Through Your DAF***

Donor Advised Funds (DAFs) have always been a smart way to support the conservation work TRLT does, but they've become an even more effective tool in the current economic conditions of COVID-19. For those who aren't familiar with DAFs, it is a philanthropic vehicle which allows you to thoughtfully set aside money for charity giving, obtaining a tax deduction on that money at the time you establish or contribute to the fund. Funds are even flexible in the amounts that can be donated, making it a philanthropic tool that is perfect for anyone.

In essence, a donor-advised fund (DAF) is an opportunity to put your charitable dollars to work on your own terms, giving you the flexibility to tailor your philanthropic giving in easy, cost-effective ways. You can initiate a grant directly from your DAF by using our convenient DAF Direct Widget on our website: [threeriverslandtrust.org/todays-gifts/](https://threeriverslandtrust.org/todays-gifts/).

If you would like to learn more about planned giving options, we would be happy to answer any questions you have. Please consult your attorney and your tax or financial advisors as well. Your attorney or financial advisor can also get in touch with us. All information regarding your charitable contribution will be held in the strictest of confidence.

The information on this page is for educational purposes and not considered tax or legal advice. *Please consult with your professional advisor while making charitable plans. Three Rivers Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.*





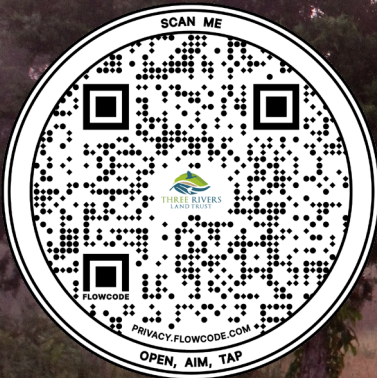
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To protect and conserve the best natural areas, rural landscapes, family farms, and historic places within North Carolina's Piedmont and Sandhills.

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