

LOVE FOR OUR LANDSCAPES

Just when everyone else is wrapping up the year, there is often a burst of activity in the Conservancy's land protection program, when many long-term projects come to fruition. The Conservancy would not be able to conserve the land that we do — protecting forests, watersheds, plants and animals and the beautiful scenery of our region — without the generosity and intent of private landowners.

Land often carries deep personal meaning, providing lessons about nature, hard work and change. It is sometimes part of a family's identity, engrained in their memories. We value the weight of these decisions and appreciate the trust that has been placed in our organization. We are so grateful to the landowners who have grown to love their properties and choose to protect and share these landscapes beyond their own lifetimes.

This December, WPC protected four properties totaling nearly 490 acres. The properties all have important conservation value, and they also protect beloved scenic views, something that is often taken for granted until they are permanently lost.



This easement protects Allegheny River shoreline and part of the Allegheny Forest.

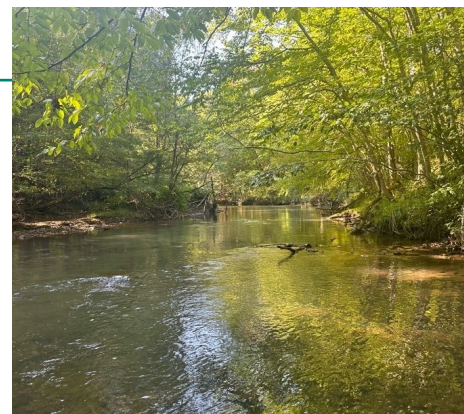
Randy Gustafson grew up along the Allegheny River learning about nature, fishing and outdoor life from his father. He generously donated a conservation easement, a deed restriction that will ensure its permanent protection, on his family's 28-acre property in Pleasant and Watson townships, Warren County.

This forested property has about 2,200 feet of river frontage along the Allegheny to the west, with the Allegheny National Forest (ANF) to the east. This section of the river is a Pennsylvania water trail and is federally designated as a Wild and Scenic River. Thompson Island, an island in the Allegheny Islands Wilderness that WPC helped the ANF acquire in 1966, is directly upstream of the property. The easement will protect the forest and river ecology and its scenic views.

Bear Run Nature Reserve, WPC's flagship nature preserve, is located on the western flank of Laurel Hill in the Laurel Highlands. The Conservancy expanded the reserve, which surrounds Fallingwater, with the purchase of a 44-acre forested property in Stewart Township, Fayette County. The property has been identified as a top priority for conservation and is important for forest connectivity and species diversity in the Laurel Highlands region.

The largest of the December property acquisitions will become the Conservancy's first nature preserve in Cambria County, and will allow for the first designated public fishing access along the West Branch Susquehanna River in the county.

Named "Basking Ridge Nature Reserve," the 364-acre property in Susquehanna Township protects a 1.5-mile corridor of the West Branch. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission re-designated the West Branch as a Class A Wild Trout stream, as it can host a stable, naturally



A scene from the first designated public fishing access along the West Branch Susquehanna River

reproducing population of wild trout. This is especially significant because the water quality improved to achieve this status thanks to the benefits from an abandoned mine drainage treatment plant upstream.

The property has 100 acres of forested floodplain, considered to be one of the most intact in the county. The remaining 264 acres are upland forest and reclaimed mine land.

The last property expanded Ohiopyle State Park in Fayette County, a popular outdoor destination and an ecologically important area. The Conservancy helped establish this park, which has grown to more than 20,500 acres, and continues to preserve its natural beauty and biodiversity. In December, WPC purchased a 52.55-acre property in Stewart Township that is surrounded by the park on three sides, and conveyed it to the Commonwealth. This parcel preserves the viewshed from the Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail, a 70-mile route that runs along Laurel Ridge. Rock Springs Run flows along the western boundary of the property shared with the state park and then flows into the Youghiogheny River.

The property contains habitat important for several Sensitive Species and Species of Greatest Conservation Need, including many bird species. 🌿

Legacies to make a difference

Each year we are amazed by the generosity of those who have included the Conservancy in their estate plans. In most cases, these people were members for years or decades; however, we are also always pleasantly surprised to receive bequests from donors who never donated to WPC during their lifetimes.

We truly enjoy getting to know our donors, their interests and stories, and are honored to make their legacies live on through our work. Last year, we received bequests from 15 people — a record in recent years. These legacy gifts will provide much-needed support of WPC's work.

Two of the donors we knew fairly well will have impacts on Western Pennsylvania for many years to come, and we are pleased to share a little about their backgrounds with you. One grew up in Pennsylvania, but lived most of his life away from the area, and the other adopted Pennsylvania as his home later in life. Both loved the woods, streams and natural places of our region. Their bequests will provide support for land and water protection similar to the properties that were protected in December.

Michael Butler had a distinguished career in law. Raised and educated in the Pittsburgh area, he became a partner at Kirkpatrick & Lockhart and then Reed Smith before accepting a U.S. Commerce Department position under President Nixon and rising through the ranks in the Ford administration. After serving in government, he went into private practice as a partner until his retirement in the 1990s.

Although he lived in Washington, D.C., Michael valued the landscapes of Western Pennsylvania and loyally supported the Conservancy since 1965. He was familiar with the Laurel Highlands region and visited frequently from Washington. On a couple of these visits, he drove around with WPC staff and was delighted to rediscover vistas and landscape features like waterfalls from his youth. For a few summers during childhood, he and his brother had attended Camp Carmel, an old YMCA camp along the Youghiogheny River. He recalled taking the train from their home in Pleasant Hills, and then taking a ferry boat suspended along a cable from the station to the camp. Can you imagine traveling like that now?

Michael passed away last March, but his connection to the places that he valued will endure through his generous bequest to support WPC's land conservation work.

Another generous planned giving benefactor, Clarence Klaus, wasn't born in Pennsylvania, but made it his home. He was an architect who designed projects in more than 30 states, Canada and Spain over his 50-year career. Among his local designs are the renovation of the William Penn Hotel in Pittsburgh, the Fox Chapel Golf Club and the transformation of Fallingwater's carport into the membership theater in 1976.

He grew up in southern Illinois, spending childhood summers at his grandparents' farm, where he developed "an appreciation for work and a love of nature" that guided his values throughout his life. He learned about the Conservancy from friends shortly after moving to Pittsburgh in 1968, and became a member in 1974. Each time someone from the Conservancy visited with Clarence, they hiked in the woods of his Butler County property with a pack of his beloved black labs (he once owned seven at the same time). He enjoyed training the dogs to compete in American Kennel Club hunt competitions.

Conservation was important to him, and his bequest will support WPC's land and watershed conservation programs. Clarence passed away in 2023, but the legacy of his love of the outdoors and nature will be honored well into the future through the protection of Pennsylvania's landscapes and watersheds. 🌿

Do you have a vision for the future of our region?

If you would like to protect our exceptional natural places, green our communities or help preserve Fallingwater for future generations, please consider including WPC in your estate plans. Contact Julie Holmes, senior director of development, at **412-586-2312** or **jholmes@paconserve.org** for more information.

With Gratitude for Our Heritage Circle Members

We are so fortunate to have 235 Heritage Circle Members who have informed us that the Conservancy is in their estate plans through their will, trust, life insurance policy or retirement account.

We're grateful to all of the Heritage Circle Members listed below, and extend a special welcome to our newest members *(indicated by an asterisk)*.

Joan Adibi	Christine Gregory	Rich and Bette Rodibaugh
Saralynn and Alan Allaire	Lisa E. Griffin	Sandra L. Romesburg
Diana Austin	Herbert K. Sacks and Mary Ann Gross	Robert A. Rzepka
Fran Balog and Paula Bonino	Patricia E. Guempel*	John T. Sabo and Alan J. Harmon
Francis J. Barilar	Randall D. Gustafson	Marla A. Sabo for the Joseph and Angeline Land Conservation Fund
Kenneth A. and Jennie H. Barker*	Dennis Hamm	Allan Scaggs and Beth Fabiani Scaggs
Mr. and Mrs. Brooks M. Bartlett	Nancy A. Hart	Robert F. Schiff
Richard N. Bartlett	Masataka Hatae	Christina Schmidlapp
Jeffrey Bergman	Arthur D. Hellman	Gary L. Schnelle and Denise L. Schnelle
Franklin and Bonnie Blackstone	Carolyn Bennett Hendricks	Gary and Janet SeGall
James W. and Cynthia Mengel Bower	Mrs. Cynthia A. Hockenberry	J Edmund Shott III
Peter E. Brook	Elizabeth B. Hoeldtke	Dr. Charles H. Shultz
Joseph M. and Antoinette Brueggman	Thomas F. and Karen J. Hoffman*	Paul Skuta
Anita M. Buckeye	Laura L. and Michael B. Jackson	Joel Smalley
Dr. Patricia H. Canfield and Mr. Thomas N. Canfield	Marjorie Johnston	Christopher WB Smith
Cynthia Carrow and James Kyper	Barbara Johnstone*	Marisa Smith
Ms. Kathleen Cecil	Jackie and Ley Jones	Amy M. Solomon
Barbara A. Chambers, Ed.D.	Jeanne G. Kaufmann	William A. Stevens
Audrey R. Clement, Ph.D.	Patricia Kelley	John Tautin, Jr. and Joan M. Galli
Benjamin L. and Barbara Jan Costello	Robert B. Knutson	Glenn Texeira
Patrick S. Costello	Cynthia L. Kramer	Carolyn S. Thyreen
Mr. Paul A. Costo, Jr.	Cynthia Kreider	Jim Tokar
Steven L. Cox	Karen L. LeMasters, Ph.D.	Neal D. Traven, Ph. D.
Nelson and Carol Craige	Thomas M. Leschine and Kathleen O'Neill	Dr. and Mrs. Richard C. Ulsh
Ann and Marc Davis	Nancy Levine	Lynda S. and Thomas R. Waggoner
Barbara C. Davis	Doris L. Litman	Jeffrey D. Wagner*
Scott D. Davison	Mr. and Mrs. Joseph F. Matchey	Issy Wallace
The Late Ronald and Karen Delmonico	James and Rebecca Mauch	Patricia Mauro Warrick and John C. Warrick
David G. DeLong	Cynthia A. McClain	Don Weyel, Jr.
Douglas S. Deremer	Edward J. McCrea	Rick Williams
Joyce Lewis DeYoung and Larry A. DeYoung	Dr. Pamela Meadowcroft	Emily and Seth Wilmore
Margaret M. Dudash	Ms. Melissa C. Mencotti	Mark M. Wilson and Mary Hart Wilson
Deborah L. Edwards	Jack H. Millstein, Jr.	Gregory and Kathleen Wright
Ms. Marigold A. Edwards and Ms. N. B. Runsdorf	Anne M. Mooney and Paul J. Mooney	Helen R. Yeisley
Ralph J. Egerman	Mr. and Mrs. H. Alan Mooney	The Quentin Zambano Family Fund
Beverlynn and Steven G. Elliott	Moore Family Trust Fund	Burton L. Ziskind
George Erny	Kenneth and Mary E. Neustel	S. J. Zoerb
Frederick L. and Joan E. Fidler	Thomas E. Skoloda and N. Alice Newlon	Anonymous
Linda R. Finley	Patricia K. Nichols	
Brian P. Gallagher	Dr. Lois Oliver	
Randall and Linda Gatton	John C. Oliver III	
Adrienne Geddes	Stephen and Angela Parks	
Ms. Linda J. Getts	William M. Paul and Nancy J. Paul	
Mr. and Mrs. Richard L. Giles	Ms. Suzanne Powell	
David C. Glick	Mr. and Mrs. William H. Presnar	
Caryle Glosser	Mrs. Martha Raak	
George M. Golvash	David M. Rankin	
Daniel C. Green, Jr.	Mary and Michael Regan*	
Stephen Green	John E. Reynolds	
	Paul F. Rizza	



Ultimate Legacies

We are deeply grateful to the following donors whose legacy gifts in 2024 will support the Conservancy's mission and work well into the future.

G.C. Brafford
John J. Busko
Michael F. Butler
John Dolheimer
Suzanne Flood
Christina C. Friday
Betty Guidish
Cathy E. Haas
Clarence E. Klaus, Jr.
Dr. Herbert Kramer
J. Scott Lally
Richard K. Petrovich
Debra K. Reis
Malcolm Strachan
Anonymous

If you are interested in including the Conservancy in your estate plans or have already done so, contact Julie Holmes, senior director of development, at 412-586-2312 or jholmes@paconserve.org for more information.



Save the Date!

Members' Day and Annual Meeting

Saturday, May 3, 2025

8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Join us at the Barn at Fallingwater in Bear Run Nature Reserve for an activity-filled day for Conservancy members. Guided hikes, information sessions, Fallingwater tours and more!

Details to follow — look for your invitation in March.

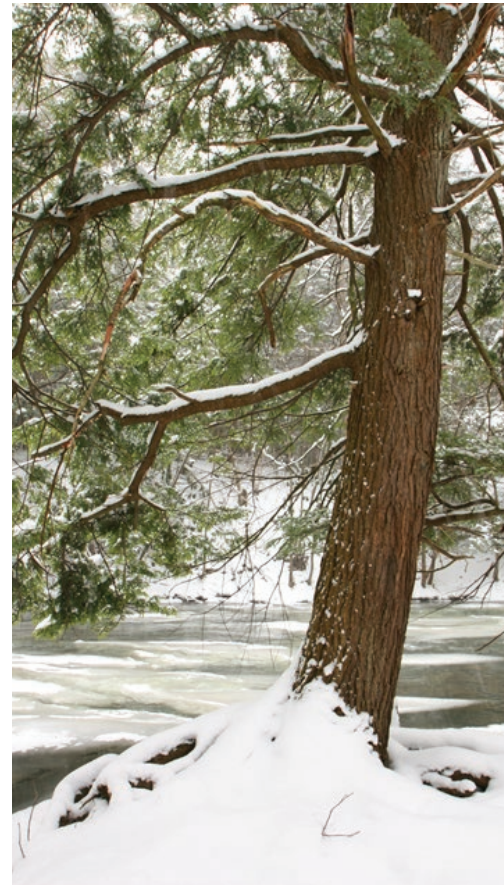
Make an Impact with your IRA's Required Minimum Distribution

Are you deciding what to do with your 2025 Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your retirement account? If you are 70½ or older, you may be able to give up to \$108,000 of your RMD directly from your IRA to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (and may designate Fallingwater or any other program) — without having to pay income tax on the money. This type of gift — called a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) — could satisfy all or part of your 2025 RMD if made before December 31.

Important points to keep in mind:

- The IRA account holder must be 70½ or older at the time the distribution is made.
- Distributions are limited to \$108,000 per individual per year and must be transferred directly from the IRA custodian to the Conservancy.
- Distributions can only be directed from a traditional or Roth IRA (not from a retirement plan such as a 401(k), 403(b), etc.).
- Gifts must be received by December 31 to count towards your 2025 RMD.

We encourage you to consult your financial advisor to determine if this opportunity is right for you. If you have any questions about IRA rollovers or other charitable gift opportunities, please contact Julie Holmes at **412-586-2312** or jholmes@paconserve.org. 🌿



Mission Statement: The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy protects and restores exceptional places to provide our region with clean waters and healthy forests, wildlife and natural areas for the benefit of present and future generations. The Conservancy creates green spaces and gardens, contributing to the vitality of our cities and towns, and preserves Fallingwater, a symbol of people living in harmony with nature.