

The Ozark Holler

The Ozark Land Trust Newsletter
Winter 2023

Conservation Close to Home
www.OzarkLandTrust.org



As we head into our 40th anniversary year in 2024, we look back fondly at some of the projects that Ozark Land Trust has done over the years since its 1984 inception.

We have had so many great people and partners that have participated in our projects to permanently protect Ozark lands across our beautiful region. While this Holler touches only on a small sample, we thought it might be fun to hear from the landowners, board members and staffers who participated in some of them.

Our diversity of geographies and natural resources over almost 40 years show a commitment to the breadth of Ozark beauty and landscapes... from forests to farmlands, watersheds to scenic views, and beyond.

The great and challenging work that OLT has done through the years was recently honored by the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation

and Missouri Department of Conservation, who recognized OLT with its Conservation Impact Partner Award.

In 2024, we'll hear through the year from those who have been involved with OLT in a variety of ways, and reflect on our history and on what's on the drawing board for... well, if not the next 40 years, at least the foreseeable future.

We've added our 40th anniversary to our logo to commemorate this special milestone, and as we roll into the new year, we'll tell you about the way we hope to celebrate with you, leading up to fun gatherings during the year.

Thanks to ALL of you who have helped OLT protect well over 30,000



Executive Director Larry Levin and Board President Karen Massey (left), accept the Conservation Impact Award from the Conservation Heritage Foundation and the Missouri Department of Conservation.

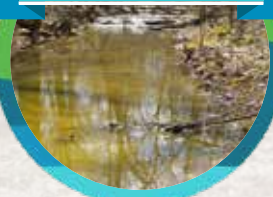
acres of Ozark lands, and by the end of 2024 we look forward to moving even closer to 40,000 acres protected...a goal that even just a few years ago might have seemed beyond reach. Now, with your partnership, it's not only possible, but very likely!

A look back...

Eureka Springs: 2



Washington County: 4



Bull Creek: 6



New Pear Farm: 3



Huzzah Creek: 5



... at 40 years.

Origins Small and Large

Eureka Springs, AR

Andy Thomas, longtime board member and leader of Ozark Land Trust

Eureka Springs, Arkansas has always had a quirky but very strong environmental movement. Folks that live there cherish the rugged mountain scenery, trees, wildlife, and waterways, along with its unique regional history. They want to enjoy what they have been given, share their bounty with visitors, but they also want to see its beauty and history protected. Ozark Land Trust found a symbiotic homeland there as the organization began growing and doing good work in the 1980s. People, partnerships, ideas, energy and a little bit of money came together with a common goal -- to protect some of the most scenic, fragile, and historic sites in the area. Through various creative approaches, OLT became the proud owner of several properties in and near Eureka Springs to protect in perpetuity.

Amy's Woods (7.5 acres) was Otto and Emilia (Amy) Mayer's beloved little mountain-top patch of pines and oaks, adorned with a funky, marvelous little cabin where these local legends lived for decades. OLT took ownership of the property in 1993 to permanently protect it, and continues to diligently safeguard the trees, animals, cave, and cabin in Amy's honor.

Just around the bend, on a different mountain-top, sits OLT's Oak Hill



Preserve. Beginning in 1997, Mary Jane Fritsch, another local legend (a humble powerhouse) who lived in the area her entire life, donated 146 acres of her family's stunning heritage to OLT for permanent protection. With it came the historic Oak Hill Grange building, a scarce relic of past cultures where people gathered regularly to learn, gossip, feast, play, and grieve.

OLT became the owner of several other properties in the area during those early formidable years in its journey – all for the greater good. Eureka Springs folks have always done things their own way; in doing so, they have, in turn, had a profound impact on the development and success of OLT.



Regenerative Ag Before its Time

New Pear Farm, AR

Andy Thomas

When the Johnson Pear Farm was founded in 1908, it was miles from Fayetteville. These days, Ozark Land Trust's historic New Pear Farm (as it is now called) is just beyond Fayetteville's City Limit. Over the decades, Ben Johnson and his sister Anne Prichard, multi-generation family owners, witnessed chunk after

chunk of neighboring lands being gobbled up by suburbs, strip malls, and freeways as the city sprawled south. Ben, a soft-spoken and rather forward-thinking environmentalist, dearly loved his family's legacy and wanted it protected. But rather than "hands-off" conservation, he preferred a more "hands-on" approach where the soils and productivity

of the farm could be engaged to produce healthy local food while simultaneously protecting and even restoring its natural resources. Ben's philosophy epitomized "Regenerative Agriculture" before this trendy buzzword was ever conceived. In order to fulfill his dream, Ben befriended the fledgling OLT and served on its Board for many years beginning in the early 90's. Slowly and methodically (over ten years), he donated four distinct, contiguous parcels of land (201 acres total) to OLT to protect in perpetuity. Ben didn't live to see his dream of ecological agriculture being implemented on New Pear Farm, but his trust in OLT and its mission created an incredibly vital greenspace among a sea of development at the foot of Kessler Mountain. The importance of Ben's vision to the region in terms of conservation, local food production, and education is still unfolding, but it will likely become even more critical and valuable as time moves on....



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Habitat Mitigation

Washington County, MO



Ted Heisel, former OLT Executive Director, was integrally involved in the pictured project in Washington County, MO.

Can we mitigate the harm of development on wildlife? A practice pursued under the federal Endangered Species Act attempts to do just that. When a listed species is found in the path of a utility line or building project the developer is often required to protect habitat for the species elsewhere to provide “compensatory mitigation.”

Over the past 20 years, OLT has agreed to hold conservation easements on several tracts of land to protect streams, wetlands, and forests to offset impacts to those resources. One such project came about in 2016 when a national retail chain built a large distribution center.

To offset the loss of forests that were habitat of the endangered Indiana bat, the company was required to fund the placement of a conservation easement on 193 acres of forest nearby. That forestland will now remain protected in perpetuity to serve as an enduring refuge for the bat and other wildlife.



Farms and Watersheds... Forever

Huzzah Creek, MO

Rachel Hopkins, whose family owns hundreds of agricultural acres on Huzzah Creek, where OLT and its partners have protected and provided restoration and erosion protection on well over 1,000 acres of critical Ozark lands.

In today's world, generational farms and ranches are becoming relics of the past. As the older generations die off, the children rarely have an interest unless it consists of building another house or monetizing and subdividing the ground - what their forebearers worked their lives for. Being a farm that has been in the family for over 80 years, we wanted to stop that process before it could ever begin.

Working with OLT, we have been able to protect just under half of the family farm from future subdivision and monetizing by future generations. It can be difficult to anticipate the future needs of a working farm in a conservation easement due to the constrictive nature. However, in most cases we feel that both our needs and OLT goals have been achieved though lengthy discussions and negotiation. Monetary compensation has always played a part in the decision making, but carrying the knowledge that development is curtailed and ground division cannot take place makes us rest easy for the future when we are not on this earth.



From Protection to Restoration

Bull Creek, MO



*Fred G McQueary, MD, MMM, CPE,
owner of almost 900 acres on Bull
Creek in southwest MO on which OLT
holds a conservation easement*

My journey directed me to OLT even before I knew about their existence. I worked for years on my property to improve it for wildlife...which ended up being a project focusing on restoration of the native Ozark Landscape. Thirty years of this produced a unique situation that was still not truly valued for what it was.....it was more valuable as development land. In order for me to ensure my work would not go under the developer's bulldozer after I leave this place, it was important for me to protect my work and ensure it continued onward. I came to realize



that a conservation easement was the answer to my concerns. The fact it actually allowed me to also have some financial benefit in return

made the decision easy...almost as easy as getting the easement itself in place.



Thanks to Our Generous Donors

We are so grateful to all those who continue to support conservation in our beautiful Ozarks by making a gift to Ozark Land Trust. Happy holidays from all of us at OLT!

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