



The Maryland Land Trust Alliance Newsletter June 2008

For more information on any article, please contact MET at 410-514-7900.

LEGISLATIVE VICTORY FOR LAND CONSERVATION

The hotly debated Farm Bill, which Congress enacted on May 22, 2008 with an override of the President's veto, renews a powerful tax incentive which has helped conserve thousands of acres of farms and forests in Maryland. The incentive had expired January 1st, but is now retroactive to the beginning of 2008 and will last through 2009.



The incentive, which applies to a landowner's federal income tax, will:

- Raise the deduction a donor can take for donating a voluntary conservation agreement from 30% of their adjusted gross income in any year to 50%;
- Allow farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their income; and
- Increase the number of years over which a donor can take deductions from 6 to 16 years.

The number of conservation easement donations to the Maryland Environmental Trust increased 40% from 2006 to 2007. More than 4,800 acres were protected, representing a 33% increase over the prior year. These dramatic increases were due, in large part, to the enhanced federal tax benefit. The extension of the tax benefit will allow landowners to more fully realize the value of their donations. We look forward to increasing the pace of our conservation efforts during 2008 and 2009.

NEWS AT MET

Nick Williams left as Director in April 2008. John Hutson is the Acting Director while the search for a replacement is undertaken.

The Land Trust Assistance Program is now undertaken by Beki Howey (rhowey@dnr.state.md.us) to provide support and training for local land trusts.



MARYLAND LAND TRUST ALLIANCE CONFERENCE – June 6th, 2008

The Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) hosted conservation professionals from land trusts throughout Maryland at the Maryland Land Trust Alliance Conference on Friday, June 6th at the Howard County Conservancy on Mt. Pleasant Farm in Woodstock, Maryland. Nearly 40 land conservation organizations participated in the all-day event at the education center on the beautiful 300-year-old 232 acre farm.

Participants attended educational sessions on what it means to be a land trust board member, how climate change impacts the land conservation movement, issues of stewardship, ways in which to interest diverse groups of people in environmental concerns, and how a land trust can apply for and achieve accreditation from the Land Trust Alliance Accreditation commission. Speakers included Liz Crane of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Vikram Krishnamurthy of the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, Ned Tillman of the Howard County Conservancy, Steve Bunker of the Nature Conservancy, Don Briggs of the Catoctin Land Trust, and Scott McGill of Ecotone, Inc., among many others.

MET presented three awards totaling \$33,000 during the event. The first was the Janice Hollman Grant to seven land trusts to further her vision of strong and vibrant local land trusts. Janice Hollman helped found the Severn River Land Trust and Arundel Conservation Trust and also served on the Severn River Commission. Grants of \$4,800 apiece went to; Vince Leggett of the African American Land trust; Liz McDowell of the Allegheny Highlands Conservancy, a new land trust in Garrett County; Miriam Avins of Baltimore Green Space; members of the Harford Land Trust; Meg Schumacher of the Howard County Conservancy; Ed Crawford and Jack Lattimore of Neighborspace of Baltimore County; and Kate Patton of the Lower Shore Land Trust.

The Dillon Award for Outstanding Conservationist Landowner was created from an endowment from sisters Alberta and Louise Dillon, who bequeathed their entire Garrett County property to the MET in 1984. This year it was awarded to another pair of sisters from Garrett County – Kathryn Weise and Carol Bartram -- for their easement donations at Deep Creek, which preserve 125 mostly wooded acres near Thayerville, an integral part of the scenic landscape of Deep Creek. The sisters were accompanied by their mom, whom they thanked for buying the property and presented with a beautiful bouquet of flowers.



The Aileen Hughes Award 2008 for Outstanding Leadership in Land Conservation was created by the Maryland Land Trust Alliance and MET to honor the late Aileen Hughes, a leader in the conservation movement who was also a supporter of women's and civil rights. This year two recipients received \$1,000 grants for their leadership roles in the land trust community: Meredith Lathbury of the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy and Ann Jones of the Howard County Conservancy.

Ms. Lathbury was honored for her work in recent successes like the Blackwater community input sessions in Cambridge, which supported public input regarding the uses of the 728-acre tract of farmland, wetland, and forest preserved by the State of Maryland in 2006.

Ann Holmes Jones is President of the Howard Country Conservancy and a member and secretary of the MET board of trustees. Ann's commitment and dedication to land conservation has had a major impact on conservation efforts in both Howard and Baltimore counties. Her knowledge of the area, familiarity with landowners, and expertise in easement drafting make her an incredible asset for State-wide conservation efforts. She is a member of the Long Green Valley Conservancy and the Land Preservation Trust.

Together Meredith and Ann's organization and enthusiasm for successful land conservation were critical to the success of this year's Conference and providing the opportunity for the land trust community to share experiences.



Iantha Gantt-Wright, founder and president of the Kenian Group consulting firm was the luncheon's keynote speaker. Winner of numerous awards such as the Department of the Interior's Award for "Stellar Deeds in Advancing Diversity," Ms. Wright spoke of her experiences as an African American environmentalist, and the challenges of including diverse groups and cultures within the environmental movement.

"It's not just about a certain group of people," Ms. Wright asserted. "We have to connect with all sorts of new groups of people in the up and coming generation. When it comes to helping the environment, "she suggested, "give everybody an 'A.' And then step into that 'A' with them."

The event wound down with a round of light refreshments, including the much appreciated offering of fresh ice cream made at the Kilby Creamery, Rising Sun, MD, local strawberries and cheeses from Chapel's Country Creamery, Easton, MD - all examples of vibrant local farm produce. Participants agreed that it was a successful event to equip Maryland's land trusts with the latest information to help them care for the precious legacy of undeveloped land within our state.

KENT COUNTY DESIGNATED AS THE BEST RURAL PLACE IN AMERICA TO LIVE 2008

The Progressive Farmer magazine has named Kent County as the Best Rural Place In America To Live 2008. Governor Martin O'Malley's Bay Cabinet celebrated this designation at The Langenfelder Family Farm, 11974 Blacks Station Rd. in Kennedyville. Work to preserve Maryland's special landscapes, working farms and natural areas made this designation possible. MET holds a total of 53 easements on 12,352.82 acres in Kent County. MET received its first easement in Kent County in 1974. The event on June 17th included informal discussions and locally-grown and -made refreshments.



2007 Kent County MET/ ESLC Easement

Save the Date -

Bridging Our Past — Connecting Our Future

The National Land Conservation Conference
September 18–21, 2008 | Pittsburgh, PA

Registration is now open at www.lta.org

**Please note: Regional receptions
Thursday, September 18, 5:30pm – 7:30pm**

The ever-popular regional receptions have been moved up one day to enable you to network and socialize earlier with colleagues from your region! Join us at the historic Omni William Penn Hotel for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres.

See you in Pittsburgh!

