



WINTER 2014

Conservation Connections

Honoring a Land's Legacy: The Conservation of Walnut Hill Farm

- Director's Note -



Family, Generations and the Land

Recently, I returned from a family reunion held on the farm that has been in my family for three generations in Upstate New York. These 400 acres of rolling hills produce feed for the cows that supply milk for Cabot Cheese, and we are preparing to celebrate the 100th anniversary since my great grandparents purchased the farm in 1916. At these gatherings, we remember relatives who walked the land but are no longer with us, reconnect with our heritage, and the cousins of my generation talk about how we will steward the farm in the generations to come.

Experiences we have on our own family lands or at special natural areas are often cornerstones of our traditions. Whether it's gatherings at long-held family lands, beach or mountain vacations, visits to a favorite park or greenway, or produce purchased at a local farm, land so often plays a critical role in grounding our traditions and our sense of place in our community.

TLC serves a key role in our community by helping ensure as the Triangle grows and matures into a major metropolitan area our region's "livability" remains



Staff

Chad Jemison, Executive Director
Katherine Baer, Director of Conservation
Ben Blankenship, CFO & Director of Administration
Diana Hackenburg, Communications Manager
Robert (Bo) Howes, Associate Director of Conservation
Paula Mazzanti, Development Operations Manager
Kyle Obermiller, Land Maintenance Technician
Matt Rutledge, Associate Manager of Stewardship
Sandy Sweitzer, Director of Development
Tonya Taylor, Community Engagement Coordinator
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*On the cover: Walnut Hill at Dawn
by Diana Hackenburg, October 2014*



Wild Yam at Horton Grove Nature Preserve by Diana Hackenburg, October 2014

- About Triangle Land Conservancy -

Vision

We see the Triangle region as an increasingly healthy and vibrant place to live where wild and working lands are protected and everyone has access to open space, clean water, and local food.

Mission

TLC strives to create a healthier and more vibrant Triangle region by safeguarding clean water, protecting natural habitats, supporting local farms and food, and connecting people with nature through land protection and stewardship, catalyzing community action, and collaboration.

Board of Directors

Betsy Bennett, Orange County
Tom Bradshaw, Wake County
Patty Briguglio, Wake County
Jack Clayton, Wake County
Josie Scott Dorsett, Wake County
Pam Hemminger, Vice-Chair, Orange County
Chris Hitt, Secretary, Orange County
Alan Hughes, Wake County
Russell Killen, Wake County
Michael Mankowski, Orange County
John McAdams, Chair, Orange County
Sepi Saidi, Wake County
Delphine Sellars, Durham County
Mark Sotichek, Treasurer, Wake County
Larry Tombaugh, Past Chair, Wake County
Dean Urban, Durham County

Busy Schedules Don't Keep the Scislowicz Family from Getting Outside

Elise, a bright and spirited 6-year-old, normally wakes up on Saturday mornings eager to get outside and play. Unfortunately, a broken leg temporarily sidelined her from joining her parents and sister **Quinn** (3) on their usual outdoor adventures.

Like Elise, most of us take for granted our mobility much in the same way we do not give a second thought to how quickly the natural landscapes around us may change if not permanently protected. Having seen this play out near their own backyard prompted Elise's parents, **Jana and Jason Scislowicz**, to lend their financial support to TLC.

"It is nice to be able to give to a local organization whose work is so tangible," remarked Jason. "We are very fortunate to have so many protected natural places close to where we live."

Proud southerners, Jana and Jason moved to Raleigh from Washington, D.C. twelve years ago to escape the concrete jungle and to be closer to their families. Jason, a competitive cyclo-cross biker, works as Vice President for BridgePoint General Contracting in Durham, a firm focused on fit-ups, interior and historic renovations, and other similar property reuse projects. A former French teacher, Jana works for RTI in their International Development Group, a position which has given her unique insights into global environmental issues.

"When I've had colleagues visit the area from Haiti they are amazed by the number of trees," Jana explains. "Some of them have never seen a forest before."

The Scislowicz family is fortunate to be surrounded by trees at their North Raleigh home, but they

also spend a lot of their free time exploring the area's diverse natural settings. Jana and Jason enjoy the exercise and fresh air while the young girls find plenty of entertainment in examining rocks and listening to nearby owls and coyotes.

"Hiking in nearby parks is an easy way for us to get outside while the girls are young," shared Jana. "When Elise talks to her friends about going on hikes, many of them don't have any similar experiences to share. **Being outside was always part of my youth, and I want that for my kids too."**

"Being outside was always part of my youth, and I want that for my kids too." Jana's parents not only instilled a love for hiking and camping in their daughter, they also inspired her family's support of TLC.

"Seeing her parents contribute to organizations and be good stewards of their legacy inspired us to emulate their success," described Jason. Jana added, "**Not only did they pass down their love of the outdoors, but they also passed down their philanthropic intent.**"



Jason, Quinn, Jana, and Elise Scislowicz pose for a family photo (credit: Tierney Farrell)

Honoring a Land's Legacy: The Conservation of Walnut Hill Farm

Sun breaks over the horizon on a crisp winter's morning. Mom and dad, still bundled in their thick night-robles, brew a pot of coffee or tea while the children begin stirring in their beds. Soon, the house buzzes with the excitement of Christmas Day and the promise of gifts, food and family. However, the attention suddenly shifts from indoors to the frosty grounds outside when dad announces 'it's time.' The whole family quickly bundles up and marches out to a red-painted barn where they watch in amazement as a baby calf is born; a true Christmas miracle not entirely uncommon 100 years ago when one out of every two people lived in rural areas or even just as recently as 40 or 20 years ago.

For Sally Greaser and Betty Brandt Williamson, this is a real, not-so-distant memory of spending parts of their youth at Walnut Hill Farm in southern Wake County with their parents, Bailey and Sara Williamson. While the family's primary residence was in Raleigh, the sisters spent plenty of time, including whole summers, out on the farm. Their father, Bailey, dutifully farmed the land, following in the footsteps of his father before him. In fact, the land known as Walnut Hill has been in the Williamson family for over 225 years.

"In elementary school, I would bring in a paper bag with barley and oats to show my class what was grown on our farm," remembered Sally. Over the years, their father also grew wheat, oats, cotton, and tobacco on the farm. Betty Brandt recalled how the crops changed over time depending on the costs of labor and on the shifting markets. Eventually, their father rented the land instead of planting it himself because as Betty Brandt recalled, it was the "middleman making the money." Their father often lamented that "farming was an honorable way to live, but a terrible way to make a living."

Despite the economic pitfalls and long hours required, Bailey Williamson felt most at home on the farm. **"He felt closer to God down there on the farm than sitting on a pew in church,"** explained Sally. Betty Brandt added, "Dad could have had an easier life, but he loved the land. He talked often about being connected to nature and being a good steward of the earth." Their mother, Sara, shared a similar land ethic, but devoted her energies to historic preservation projects in Raleigh. Together, the parents and sisters embarked on what would become a 12-year-long process to permanently protect Walnut Hill Farm.

continued on next page...

The Conservation

Since 1960, Wake County's population has swelled from just 169,000 people to over 1 million residents this past August. During this time of growth, families shifted away from traditional farming communities to more urban and suburban lifestyles. Ordinary people, like the Williamsons, began to see the effects of such profound growth on the landscape as parts of the historic Walnut Hill Farm were swallowed by development. Bailey and Sara wondered how they might protect the agricultural and natural legacy of the farm long after they were gone.

This desire to keep the land from being developed led the family to initially approach Triangle Land Conservancy back in the early 2000s. Unfortunately, the process of conserving a property isn't always straightforward; it varies considerably depending upon the conservation values of the property, the landowner and their goals, the partner organization(s) involved, and the chosen conservation method.

For the Williamson family, the value of permanently protecting their property was immediately evident. Walnut Hill Farm's high-quality soils once supported over 2,700 acres of farming, making it once one of the biggest agricultural operations in Wake County. Consequently, part of the farm, along with the



Bailey Williamson at Walnut Hill Farm circa 1960
(photo courtesy of the Williamson family)

neighboring property to the east, was officially listed on the National Historic Register in October 2000 as the Walnut Hill Historic District.

"He felt closer to God down there on the farm than sitting on a pew in church."

In addition to its agricultural and historical significance, Walnut Hill Farm contains contiguous, unfragmented forests as well as several streams that drain into Marks' Creek and the Neuse River. NC DENR has identified the southwest portion of the property as a Natural Heritage Site. The property is also adjacent to the Riverwalk conservation tract to the south, which is owned by the State and under a stewardship management agreement with the Town of Clayton. The Riverwalk tract links Walnut Hill Farm to the Neuse River and the Neuse River Greenway, a segment of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

While seeing the conservation values of Walnut Hill Farm was easy, finding the right conservation method and resources proved more difficult. The original plan was to place the property under conservation easements in separate phases, but unfortunately, Mr. Bailey Williamson passed just weeks before the planned signing of the first easement. Following his passing, a new plan for permanently protecting Walnut Hill Farm developed as TLC continued working to create a shared vision and commitment to open space protection amongst local partners and communities.

This new vision, to purchase the property for future use as a public nature preserve, was finally realized in October 2013. The future preserve was made possible by investments from the Wake County and Johnston County Boards of Commissioners; private donations made to Triangle Land Conservancy's Our Water, Our Land campaign; North Carolina's Clean Water Management Trust Fund, and the Environmental Enhancement Grant Program; and of course, the unfailing generosity and foresight of the Williamson family (see next page for a list of resources contributed).

The Future

TLC is now working to solidify the vision for the future of Walnut Hill Farm as a preserve with the intention of opening the property for public access within 4-7 years. Both Sally and Betty Brandt are interested in making sure the property's future honors its agricultural past.

"I want visitors to understand the history of the area, what farming meant to the community," suggested Sally. Betty Brandt added that she's excited to "see how today's farmers mix old techniques with new knowledge," but worries "they can't afford the land" to pursue their late father's "noble lifestyle."

Thus, similar to TLC's Irvin Farm, Walnut Hill could become a hub for TLC to host community partnerships that foster agriculture, similar to our work with Transplanting Traditions, an organization providing refugees with access to land for growing fresh food at Irvin Farm.

Both Sally and Betty Brandt agree that giving people access to the farm fits with their parents' wishes. "I want it to be open to the citizens," affirms Sally. For her, "this project is about encouraging others to preserve open space and enjoy the outdoors for generations to come. It is a place where families can

Resources Contributed to the Conservation of Walnut Hill Farm

Wake County	\$1,600,000
Clean Water Management Trust Fund	\$700,000
Triangle Land Conservancy	\$400,000
<i>(derived from the OWOL Capital Campaign)</i>	
Johnston County	\$231,000
Environmental Enhancement Grant Program	\$121,000
+ the tremendous generosity of the Williamson Family	

Total cost for what will become a 410-acre public nature preserve that safeguards clean water, protects natural habitats, honors the region's agricultural heritage, and connects people with nature? PRICELESS.



Sara and Bailey Williamson

(photo courtesy of the Williamson family)

come and spend time together." Besides the potential for trails within the preserve, the ultimate design may also include linking Walnut Hill Farm to the nearby Neuse River Greenway, a connection that could certainly draw in visitors near and far to the farm. Like the many lessons bestowed by parents Bailey and Sara while on the

farm, Betty Brandt hopes Walnut Hill confers upon its visitors "an appreciation for nature. **Dad and mom would say that there are things more important than money and that money can't buy happiness. Seeing the beautiful vistas, the stars, and hearing the wind – those are things you can easily take for granted.**"

Thankfully, the Williamson family, through many years of hard work and with great determination, has given our community an opportunity to experience this land for themselves, for generations to come. *



For more information and photos related to Walnut Hill Farm, scan the code at left with your phone or visit triangleland.org/walnuthill

TLC Members Elect Board of Directors for 2014-2015

As a nonprofit, TLC is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, nominated by TLC's Nominating Committee and elected by the general membership. During the last board election held in June 2014, our members elected ten new board members and reappointed two sitting members.

New Board members include: Betsy Bennett of Orange County, Strategic Counsel for CapDev and former Director of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences; Patty Briguglio of Wake County, President of PFB Connect; Jack Clayton of Wake County, Regional President for Wells Fargo Triangle East Community Banking; Josie Scott Dorsett of Wake County, founder and CEO of OrgAMI, LLC.; Pam Hemminger of



Two New Staff Members Join TLC

TLC is proud to announce the recent hiring of Kyle Obermiller as Stewardship Maintenance Technician and Diana Hackenburg as Communications Manager.

Kyle is from western North Carolina and graduated from NC State University with a degree in Natural Resources Systems Assessment. Since June, Kyle has been working on a wide range of stewardship and maintenance activities, including trail building, invasive species removal, and volunteer management.

Originally from Ohio, Diana started in September after moving to the Triangle from Roanoke, Virginia. She previously worked with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality as a watershed field coordinator

Orange County, Chair of the Upper Neuse River Basin Authority; Christopher Hitt of Orange County, former President of Whole Foods Market; Alan Hughes of Wake County, Executive Vice President and COO at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina; Russell Killen of Wake County, Mayor of the Town of Knightdale and Partner at Parker Poe; Sepideh (Sepi) Saidi of Wake County, President and Owner of SEPI Engineering and Construction; and Mark Soticheck of Wake County, Senior Vice President and COO of Fidelity Bank.

Re-elected Board members include: Tom Bradshaw of Wake County, former Mayor of Raleigh and retired co-head of the transportation group of Citigroup

Global Markets, and Michael Mankowski of Orange County, Senior Director of Corporate Development at Quintiles Transnational.

A complete list of board members can be found on page 2 of this issue of *Conservation Connections* and online at triangleland.org/board.

New Board members, clockwise from top left: Betsy Bennett, Patty Briguglio, Jack Clayton, Pam Hemminger, Alan Hughes, Russell Killen, Sepi Saidi, and Mark Soticheck (not pictured - Josie Scott Dorsett and Christopher Hitt)



and with the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy as their project manager.

Read more about Kyle and Diana's work on TLC's blog, *The Dirt* - triangleland.org/the-dirt.

Stakeholders Key to Developing Strategic Plan

In June 2014, following six months of work, TLC finalized a new strategic plan that will advance the organization's work toward creating a healthier and more vibrant Triangle through 2020. The plan, which was informed by stakeholder input from partners, members, board and staff, clarifies TLC's vision and mission as well as the strategies that will guide its role, effectiveness and relevance in the Triangle. The new strategic plan identifies the following key outcome areas:



Safeguarding clean water: Population growth in our community increases demand for clean water, while associated pollution has compromised supply.



Protecting natural habitats: Natural areas and well-managed forests support healthy ecosystems and balance our built environment by providing habitat for native plants and animals.



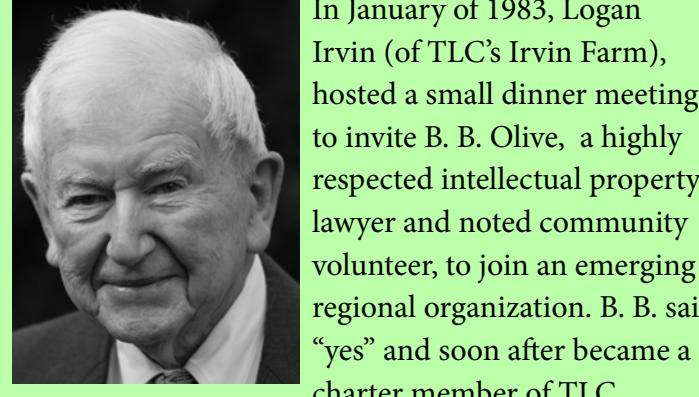
Supporting farms and food: Well-managed farms and associated woodlands enhance our communities by producing food and other crops and sustaining local economies.



Connecting people with nature: Connecting people with nature is essential as we look to balance our increasingly indoor, urban lives with the benefits and fun of being outside.

The plan also defines specific outcomes for each area to be achieved within a **six-year time frame** as well as strategies for achieving those outcomes. You can read the whole plan online at triangleland.org/strategicplan.

Remembering B. B. Olive TLC Founder and Past Board Member



In January of 1983, Logan Irvin (of TLC's Irvin Farm), hosted a small dinner meeting to invite B. B. Olive, a highly respected intellectual property lawyer and noted community volunteer, to join an emerging regional organization. B. B. said "yes" and soon after became a charter member of TLC.

Sadly, B. B. Olive passed away on December 4, 2014 in Durham. A man described as "someone you can always count on" in a letter by Bob Healy, Billy Brown "B. B." Olive made a lasting impact on TLC. He served as TLC Board Secretary from 1983-1988 and as Treasurer from 1983-1985. B. B. also volunteered with the Durham Inventory of Natural Resources, the Historic Preservation Society of Durham, and more.

Learn more about B. B. Olive by reading a short bio, a story about his involvement in TLC, and letters from the community at triangleland.org/bbolive.

Partnership Conserves 83 Acres to Protect Clean Water Supply

Sept. 2014 - TLC partnered with **The Trust for Public Land** to purchase **Southview - 83 acres** of forested land and stream corridor along an unnamed tributary of Lick Creek in eastern Durham County. Acquisition of the Southview property was made possible by a \$600,000 grant from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) and a \$300,000 grant from the Upper Neuse Clean Water Initiative (UNCWI).

Lick Creek is considered impaired due to high levels of coliform bacteria and nutrients as well as habitat degradation. The protection of undeveloped properties, like Southview, within the creek's watershed is critical to stopping and reversing this degradation.

The long-term plan for this property, which is less than 30 minutes from both downtown Durham and downtown Raleigh, is to **open it for public use**. This plan may also include trails that connect to land across the street owned by the City of Durham and Durham County, thus forming a large trail network easily accessible to many communities in the Triangle. For more on Southview, visit triangleland.org/southview.

wildideas

a Triangle Land Conservancy series

"Every really new idea looks crazy at first." - Alfred North Whitehead

Triangle Land Conservancy is interested in exploring some new ideas that may sound a little crazy at first, but have the potential to improve communities throughout the Triangle. That's why we've created the **"Wild Ideas"** forum as an opportunity for both experts and community members to share their wildest ideas for safeguarding our water, protecting natural habitats, supporting farms and food, and connecting people with nature. **On October 22nd, over 100 community members joined us for the first event in the series, Wild Ideas for Feeding the Triangle: Increasing Access to Fresh Food and Farms.**

"A lot of folks thought it was a wild idea that we wanted to be small scale farmers over 30 years ago," began panelist Alex Hitt of Peregrine Farm. "My wife Betsy and I just wanted to live in the country and make our living there. Now, we run a profitable business." Living proof that wild ideas can and do work, Alex shared two of his wild ideas for promoting agriculture in the region: **providing secure access to land for beginning farmers and protecting the best farmland to ensure those young farmers stand a chance.**

"The average age of a farmer is my age, 58," Alex admitted. "How do we get people on the land that will do the real hard work to improve the soil and know that at the end of five, ten, or even twenty years that they will be able to get their money back or have a secure situation?"

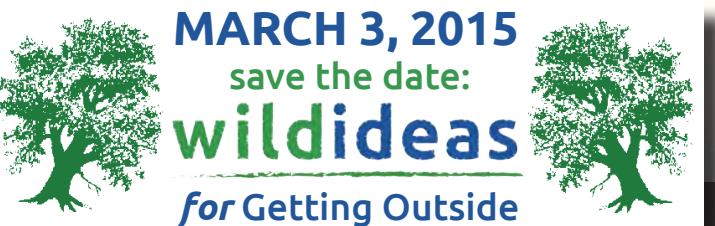
Following up on Alex's comments on the aging farming community, panelist Chef Amy Tornquist of Watts Grocery and Hummingbird Bakery noted how she has



Left to right: Panelists Alex Hitt, Amy Tornquist, and Jared Cates

seen many of the North Carolina's food traditions also begin to disappear, most notably her favorite Jerusalem artichoke pickles. "I want all those kinds of North Carolina traditions to stay," remarked Amy, a self-avowed "real" North Carolinian. "I am a Durhamite. I look at the people who come in my restaurant and the people at the farmers market and I just wish that everyone in town had access to fresh, local food."

Her wild idea for increasing access? Raise the minimum wage. **Make sure farmers get paid an actual wage.** As a small business owner, I believe in the minimum wage being raised, but I would also like



customers to support us in this."

Everyone Amy mentioned - farmers, restaurant workers, and customers - are all part of the community food system, as explained by the third panelist, Jared Cates of the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association. "When talking about food systems, they are anything or anyone that affects the production, distribution, sale, consumption, and disposal of food. These are big systems with many different pieces." Jared's wild idea? **"Getting everyone, including public health, economic development, cooperative extension and folks supporting farmers, tourism, local governments and elected officials to sit down at the table and work together."** That way, they can work together to figure out what gaps need to be filled to create a more sustainable community food system.

Following the panelists, audience members asked questions and shared their own wild ideas such as better integrating food into public schools and using churches as a venue for encouraging healthier eating habits. The conversations continued during the reception which featured locally-crafted beers from Lonerider Brewing Company and a delicious array of appetizers prepared by Chef Amy's Sage & Swift Gourmet Catering Company. Even though the forum has ended, we hope some of these wild ideas become reality, potentially through partnerships like the new Durham Food Policy Council and through TLC's ongoing work to protect farmland.

Many thanks to our platinum series sponsor, **Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina**; our silver sponsor, the **Research Triangle Park Foundation**; and **Lonerider Brewing Company** for donating the tasty beverages. *We hope you'll join us this spring to discuss your wild ideas for connecting people with nature!*

Image courtesy of Wendy Banning, Learning Outside



MLK Day of Service 2014 volunteers at Horton Grove



- Upcoming Events -

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service

January 19, 2015, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Horton Grove Nature Preserve

5000 Jock Road, Bahama (northern Durham county)

Honor Dr. King's legacy through service at TLC's Horton Grove Nature Preserve. Volunteers will help build trails, remove trash, and hang signs. Please register at triangleland.org/mlkday by January 14th.

- Support TLC -

Here are a few ways to show your support this season:

- **TLC memberships make a great gift** with lasting impact and a **\$40,000 matching challenge** from TLC's board means your gift has twice the impact! Learn more and give at triangleland.org/donate.
- Give to TLC through the **Indy Give!Guide** and *receive a punch card with great local freebies.* Visit give.indyweek.com to donate.
- Shop at smile.amazon.com to support TLC year-round *at no cost to you!* For every eligible purchase, Amazon donates a portion of the purchase price to TLC.
- **Donate your vehicle** to TLC as an easy solution for both getting rid of that old car, truck or boat and supporting conservation! Visit triangleland-cardonations.org to learn more.

Stay current with all the different ways you can support TLC, including as a volunteer, and learn about upcoming events by signing up for our e-newsletter at triangleland.org/enews.



TRIANGLE LAND
CONSERVANCY

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triangleland.org/the-dirt

Supporting Farms & Food



Chip Holton, Artist in Residence for the O.Henry Hotel in Greensboro, painted this scene from a photo of Triangle Land Conservancy's Irvin Farm Preserve in Orange County. The painting was created on September 13th in Raleigh as part of Farm Aid 2014, a benefit concert to help family farmers thrive while inspiring millions of people to learn about the Good Food Movement. For more information about TLC's efforts to support local farms and food, visit www.triangleland.org.