



Conservation Connections
Fall 2017

Executive Director's Note

Every acre of land that we conserve together has a long story of the people who lived and worked on it. Since our goal is conservation for perpetuity, that means we need to connect with people now who will continue to love and steward that land and write the next chapters for generations to come.

It's a sad fact that much of the history of land ownership in this country is inextricably linked with injustice and inequality. Fortunately, land trusts including TLC have the opportunity to change the narrative by committing to a future that's more just, equitable, and welcoming in every place that our work touches.


Sometimes TLC tells part of the history of our properties or their previous owners through the name of a preserve: Irving, Brumley, Williamson. At Horton Grove we go farther back than just the previous owners; the names of the trails honor the enslaved people who worked the land and lived on it for generations. But what about the story of those yet to come?

TLC staff and board (and many other land trusts across the

country) are working conscientiously to increase diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our work – from board leadership to land projects and programming, to hiring practices, partnerships, and the vendors with whom we work. We are making mistakes and learning from them, but it is a journey we are dedicated to taking.

Together we hope to build a broad coalition to carry conservation work forward long after we are gone, by reaching out to younger and more diverse communities to tap into their love for the outdoors or develop that love. It is vital for the land we protect, but it's also the right thing to do for TLC and for the people who call this region home.

Our hope is that, in the future, the stories of the land we protect will include everyone in the Triangle and that these new stories will provide a permanent, strong foundation of support for conservation.



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Our 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.

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Brumley Nature Preserve opening on April 22, 2017. Photo by Caroline Gilmore.



Batalá Durham performing at the Brumley Nature Preserve opening on April 22, 2017. Photo by Caroline Gilmore.

Now Open: Brumley Nature Preserve

By Chris Fowler

The Triangle Land Conservancy family knew that opening the George and Julia Brumley Family Nature Preserve would be a special day, but we were overwhelmed with the response on the opening weekend and the record-setting attendance since then. On Earth Day, April 22, 2017, after years of planning and hard work, the trails officially opened to the public. On opening day more than 1,300 people enjoyed running, mountain biking, and hiking. Children enjoyed outdoor activities and there was also drumming by Batalá Durham, mountain bike skills classes with our partners Triangle Off-Road Cyclists and REI, and food trucks. Almost 100 people attended a ribbon cutting held one day earlier, with remarks by Reid Wilson, Chief Deputy Secretary, Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Ed Buchan, City of Raleigh, and Penny Rich,

Orange County Commissioner along with TLC's Executive Director Sandy Sweitzer, current Board Chair Russell Killen and previous Board Chair, Ron Strom. Strom related that while he was only just beginning to get to know the Brumley family, he "was very moved and inspired by their work, connections to this place, and commitment to conservation. It certainly contributed to my sense of purpose and mission to preserve what was then the largest privately held piece of property in Orange County and one of critical importance for all the public benefits it provides...when I look back on what I have left behind, collaborating with many other stakeholders on the preservation of Brumley Forest will be one of my life's most meaningful contributions."



TLC Member Lee Izlar taking in the sights of opening day at Brumley Nature Preserve in April 2017

The trail system at Brumley is unlike any other TLC preserve because it allows bicycling along the designated multiuse trails. Since April, Brumley has quickly become a destination for cyclists across the Triangle and beyond. This exciting new opportunity also brings new challenges. Because the trail system is new and traffic has been so heavy, TLC has had to temporarily close the trail on a number of occasions due to wet conditions. These temporary closures are a stewardship measure taken to protect the integrity of the trails. Senior Land Manager Walt Tysinger explains, "It is our hope that as the trails mature and firm up some of the weather related trail closings will become less frequent occurrences."



Mavis Gragg, Wendee Smith, Carla Nunn, and Danielle Spurlock at the ribbon cutting



Trail runners on opening day.

The northern section of the preserve, located across Old State Highway 10, will include an additional 3 miles of trail that will be for hiking only. Matt Rutledge, Associate Manager of Stewardship, relates, “We plan to install the parking lot for the northern section and open those trails before the new year. I’m excited for the community to get the chance to explore the northern section, which has a more agricultural feel than the southern side. The remnants of that agricultural legacy are still visible on the landscape.” 🌿

Thanks to our opening day sponsors!



White Pines Expansion

By Kyle Obermiller



White Pines Nature Preserve. July 2017.

Triangle Land Conservancy's first public nature preserve, opened back in 1986, will soon get a facelift. White Pines Nature Preserve currently has about 3 miles of hiking trails among the 275 acres of forest along the Deep and Rocky Rivers. Last year, TLC applied for funding through North Carolina's Recreational Trails Program to enhance current trails, add 3-4 miles of new hiking trails, and a kayak and canoe access point on the Rocky River near the confluence with the Deep. Part of the trail project will include rerouting existing trails that were experiencing erosion issues. This will help improve the safety of the trail system, as well as improve protection of the unique ecology of the area. New trails will bring visitors through TLC's active White Pine restoration areas and

along the towering bluffs of the Deep and Rocky Rivers. The views will be spectacular, especially in the fall when the leaves have dropped. The project will also include a new parking area to expand preserve capacity. The kayak and canoe access point on the Rocky River, just upstream from the confluence with the Deep River, will provide additional access to the Deep River State Paddle Trail and will allow visitors to experience White Pines Nature Preserve from a whole new angle. Work will begin this fall on the trail system. If you're interested in volunteering to support these efforts with the Conservation Corps or Trail Crew, contact Membership and Community Outreach Coordinator Margaret Sands for more information. 🌲



Mavis Gragg at Horton Grove
Nature Preserve in August, 2017.



*“My family, on Sundays, we would drive out to Pisgah National Forest or some other forest and walk. But for us that was going on a ride—we never talked about it as hiking. We would go out there and just be in the woods. But we didn’t call it hiking. **It was family time.**”*

Meet Mavis Gragg

Attorney + Conservationist

By Chris Fowler

Mavis Gragg grew up in Black Mountain, North Carolina. She’s always been a planner. At age 6, while riding in her father’s pickup she asked him about a passing car that piqued her interest. Her father explained that it was a Chevrolet Corvette. When she asked if he would buy her one, he agreed to do so on the condition that she must graduate from law school first. On that day that she decided that she would become a lawyer.

By the time she was in sixth grade she was corresponding with the Admissions Office at the University of North Carolina’s School of Law to inquire about what she needed to do in order to become a strong applicant. The letter she received in response explained she would first need to attend college before applying, and included an application to UNC. She decided that day she would attend UNC.

After high school she traveled east to Chapel Hill to complete her undergraduate studies at UNC. She then traveled west to California to obtain the J.D. and Master of Dispute Resolution from Pepperdine School of Law. After a successful run as a corporate attorney in Washington D.C. she returned to North Carolina (after a year and a half sabbatical to travel Europe and South America) to begin The Gragg Law Firm PLLC, which focuses on estate planning, estate administration, and heirs property. She explains, “When I started my law practice, part of my

consideration was how do I help people feel empowered when they have low resources, and so my mediation background plays a lot into that. My work with these land owners necessarily uses my mediation skills: helping to deescalate conflict, helping people communicate their interests and values with family property, and helping them see creative resolutions. I try to help people in unfortunate circumstances get to a better place.”

Since November 2016, Mavis has served on TLC’s Board of Directors. “I love to see how things work. And I love working with organizations that work well. So that’s one thing that I’m excited about at TLC—things are working well. But I think that you can never rest when things are working well. You have to think about the future, be prepared, and evolve continuously.”

She’s excited to be involved with TLC during such an energetic time, recently opening the The George and Julia Brumley Family Nature Preserve in Orange County and looking forward as the organization readies The Sarah and Bailey Williamson Preserve at Walnut Hill to open in Wake County. Sitting on the observation platform at Horton Grove Nature Preserve in Durham, she reflects “Land is very precious...the bigger picture for me: I want people to think about land and how land serves basic needs like access to clean water.” 🌿

From our Partners

By Randolph Senzig, President and Executive Director,
The Center for Human-Earth Restoration

*Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.*

*Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting --
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.*

—Mary Oliver, excerpt from “Wild Geese”

During the summer of 2017, the Center for Human-Earth Restoration hosted five week-long summer camps at Temple Flat Rock Preserve. This is TLC’s longest held preserve but due to its ecological sensitivity it is not open to the general public, although educational outings are permitted on a pre-arranged basis. Four of the camps, named Camp High Hopes, consisted of campers from various YMCA branches throughout Wake County. The fifth camp was the Neighborhood Ecology Corps (NEC) Immersion Camp. The Immersion Camp acted as both an introduction to the NEC after school program and as an immersion to studying environmental science through nature-based collaborative, and explorative, field-based activities. Camp High Hopes also served as an immersion into nature, with a focus of studying environmental science.

Each day was centered around Joseph Cornell’s “Flow Learning” model. Camp began with an Opening Circle that highlighted the schedule of the day, introduced safety concerns, and allowed students to review previous topics taught throughout that week. Opening Circle was followed by a Tree ID Walk, reinforced throughout day, which culminated in a fun identification competition on the last day. Next, the staff would lead a nature-influenced game to acclimate campers to the outdoors while

focusing their energies on a specific principle of environmental studies. After acclimating the campers to the outdoors, staff would conduct an environmental science lesson on the preserve. This allowed the students to comprehend these lessons with unique hands-on experiences that they would not have received elsewhere. Each day campers would exclaim that they were standing on two continents at the same time, a unique geologic concept (Plate Tectonics) taught on the first day of camp. When the campers walked around the property, they would actively search for clues of the controlled burns, and would marvel at the inter-related concepts of fire ecology.

The afternoons were dedicated to a small group explorative field science activity. Each staff-led group explored different ecologies of the prairie, the pine forest, the hardwood forest, and the granite outcrop. The campers, carrying the necessary supplies, hiked to their designated location. They sat on the ground and conducted their research in the quiet of the outdoors. After gathering data, the groups reconvened to discuss and share their findings.

One field science activity during the NEC Immersion Camp focused on invasive species, particularly those found throughout Temple Flat Rock. At an area of woods infested with Japanese Stiltgrass, staff taught campers of the damage invasive species can wreak on an ecosystem. Campers and staff adorned gloves and picked Japanese Stiltgrass from the forest floor. In less than an hour, nine trash bags had been filled with the invasive species. Oak seedlings were uncovered, and campers began to search for other native life that had been covered by the Stiltgrass. Soon they all were combing the forest floor, trying to find native life that might have been harmed by an invasive species.



Walkabouts followed the field science activity to awaken campers' sense of curiosity and use of imagination during journal activities throughout Temple Flat Rock. Each day, groups hiked to a different location to allow them to see most of the nature preserve. This was a favorite activity, as it gave them a chance to individually explore their surroundings, find animal signs, and ask questions.

Finally, the groups returned from their walkabouts to conduct the

Closing Circle. In this open setting, students shared their experiences and discussed what they felt throughout the day. One camper felt he had "talked to nature" when he "made a bird call, and a bird answered" when his group was in the prairie. After sharing their thoughts of the day, a staff member would read a nature-themed poem aloud, such as Mary Oliver's *Wild Geese*. The poem reading concluded the day with a reflective thought, at which time campers left Temple Flat Rock. 🌿

Climate Resiliency

By Chris Fowler

Climate change poses significant challenges to our way of life, our economy, and our culture. The recent devastation from hurricanes Harvey and Irma is a sharp reminder of how quickly an extreme weather event can displace people, disrupt business, and destroy what people have worked for generations to build. Climate change also poses threats to the goals of land conservation. The work that we do at TLC is all about perpetuity, so we are constantly looking to the future as we prioritize conservation projects. This summer TLC used grant funding from the Conservation Trust for North Carolina and the Open Space Institute and tasked two interns, Sabina Bastias and Ben Paynter, to work on analyzing spatial data on climate resiliency of lands in our service area. In particular, Bastias and Paynter looked at the resilience of TLC's existing conserved properties and at the connections between climate resilience and farmland. I caught up with them to learn more about their work.

CF: Could you tell me about the project that you're working on this summer?

SB: TLC was looking to develop a conservation plan featuring climate resilience for their six-county service area. The scope of this project has been integrating climate resiliency data from the Nature Conservancy and priority farmland data from the Conservation Trust for North Carolina with TLC's existing conservation planning GIS

data. Goals of the project included identifying parcels across the region that were high-priority for conservation, by exhibiting a combination of TLC's public benefits and climate resilience. We're ultimately looking at whether we can provide recommendations for TLC's focus areas that can better incorporate climate resilient areas.

BP: My focus has been on working lands, particularly cropland, where row crops like corn are grown, and pasture, where livestock is grazed, and how they overlay with land that scores highly for climate resilience. I'm using a dataset of high priority farmlands created by the Conservation Trust for North Carolina through their recent Triangle Farms for Food research. The goal is to determine where farmland – a predominant land use type in the Triangle region – intersects with climate resilient land as well as make recommendations for how to include working land in our local understanding of climate resiliency.

CF: Will you explain climate resiliency? And how is GIS an effective tool for helping us understand how it relates to our work?

SB: Climate resilience can generally be defined as the capacity for a socio-ecological system to absorb and adapt to stresses and maintain function, despite external stresses imposed upon it by climate change. This can mean

reorganizing and evolving into more desirable configurations that improve the sustainability of the system. A geographic information system or GIS, is a system designed to capture, store, manipulate, analyze, manage, and present geographic data. In general when someone refers to GIS, they are referring to spatial data analysis and visualization, often in the form of maps.

The Nature Conservancy used GIS to create a climate-resilient conservation portfolio by looking at the local connectedness and landscape diversity of areas throughout the eastern United States. GIS is an effective tool for this kind of analysis because you can simultaneously overlay spatial information such as geophysical (subsurface) data and vegetative (surface) data. It's one thing to see data numerically in spreadsheets, but it's another to see it displayed visually as lines, points, and polygons on a map.

CF: What's the most interesting or surprising thing that you've learned in your time working on this project?

SB: All in all, this has been a fascinating project to work on! One of the most interesting pieces was seeing higher climate resilience in Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs). A NHA is a site of special biodiversity significance due to the presence of rare species, unique natural



Purple Martin houses at Lindale Farm. Photo by Diana Hackenburg

communities, important animal assemblages, or other features. The designation of these areas was based on surface level ecological data while the climate resilience data looked more closely at soils, bedrock and other subsurface data. This correlation showed how important the relationship is between what is above ground and beneath your feet.

BP: Around 88 percent of farmlands that scored high for climate resiliency mainly occurred along riparian zones with forested patches on the farm parcel. This may tell us that farms with windbreaks and forested buffers around

fields can contribute to climate resiliency and may be an indicator of a more climate resilient farm. I was also surprised to find out that the Triangle region has much more than double the pastureland compared to croplands. Most of the croplands occur in northern Orange County and southern Johnston County with most of the other agricultural areas in pasture-based land use types. Along those same lines, the Triangle region contains over 50 percent forested land! For a densely populated area, we have a remarkable amount of working land, including forest, grassland, and cropland.

CF: Are there particularly good examples that come to mind?

BP: The Lindale Farm is an ideal case study for this research. It has been identified as a highly resilient farmland parcel due to its underlying geology. Additionally, proximity to riparian areas and a diversified landscape with forested buffers contribute both to climate resilience and TLC's public benefits. Not considered in the Nature Conservancy study but also important to climate resiliency, is the presence of pollinator habitat, migratory bird habitat, and other wildlife corridors on pasture-based farms. 🌿



Photos by Katia Griffin-Jakymec

Wild Ideas

Where has your water been? Where does it go? On June 27th 218 people and 18 partner organizations came to Wild Ideas for Clean Water to find out the answers to those questions. The event was emceed by Dale Threatt-Taylor, Director of the Wake Soil and Water Conservation District and speakers included Ed Buchan (City of Raleigh), Sandy Sweitzer (TLC), Zulayka Santiago (Earthseed Land Cooperative), Ryan Kolarov (Neuse River Brewing Company), and Ryan Bethea (Oysters Carolina). Join us on November 14th at Market Hall in downtown Raleigh for Wild Ideas for Walnut Hill! 🌱

Thanks to our Wild Ideas sponsors!



Morgan Stanley

THE COTTONMOEHRKE GROUP
AT MORGAN STANLEY



Upcoming Events

Registration for many TLC events is limited and required. Please register and reserve your spot online at: triangleland.org/events.

October

1 **Yoga on the Farm 11:00am-12:00pm at Irvin Nature Preserve**
Stretch into autumn with yoga and Triangle Land Conservancy! Irvin Farm is the perfect peaceful rural setting for mindful practice surrounded by working and wild lands. Ordinarily closed to the public, Irvin Farm will be open for this yoga class on October 1st when the fall is just beginning to touch the farm!

1 **Nut Harvest with Fullsteam 1:30pm-3:30pm at Brumley Nature Preserve (North Side)**
Fullsteam is Nuts for Conservation and want you to be too! They have decided to bring back the deliciously popular Brumley Forest Baltic Porter for another year to celebrate Triangle Land Conservancy's newest preserve, Brumley Nature Preserve. This beer is made with black walnuts and hickory nuts harvested from the property itself so we need your help to harvest the ingredients. This event will take place on the North side of the property that is not yet open to the public so this is a great chance to explore the beautiful forest and trails on this part of the preserve.

15 **Annual Membership Day 1:00pm-3:00pm at Brumley Nature Preserve**
We want to thank you for all that you do and celebrate another great year of improving lives through conservation! Join us for a special gathering for members on our newest public nature preserve.

21 **Trail Crew 9:00am-12:00pm at Walnut Hill Nature Preserve**
Join us for a fun work day to help make ready this future preserve in eastern Wake County. This Trail Crew event will provide participants the opportunity to visit the preserve before it opens to the public!

November

4 **REI Trail Run Series 9:00am-11:00am at Brumley Nature Preserve**
Come run with us! The course is 7K- chosen for its beauty more than its length. So lace up your shoes, grab your buddy and get out on the trail with REI!

11 **Beers from Here Dinner 5:00pm-7:00pm at Irvin Nature Preserve**
Get a taste of local lands on November 11th when the four Beers from Here breweries invite the public to taste what they've brewed with ingredients foraged and recipes inspired by wild and working lands in the Triangle! Details and ticket options to come.

14 **Wild Ideas for Walnut Hill 6:00pm-8:00pm at Market Hall, Raleigh**
A unique venue for experts and the community to share their innovative ideas to safeguard clean water, protect natural habitats, support local farms and food, and connect people with nature. At Wild Ideas for Walnut Hill you will meet the partners and features that make this property special and contribute your thoughts on how these 405 acres fit into your community.

December

2 **Travel Journal Class with FRANK 10:00am-12:00pm at Johnston Mill Nature Preserve**
These fall sessions (unless otherwise indicated) are held outside on a variety of terrain and weather conditions. Please wear comfortable shoes, wear layers to accommodate changes in temperatures.



Please look for us in your workplace giving campaign.



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