

Confluence

Fall 2019



Welcome

Do your eyes glaze over when you hear the words “strategic plan?” This newsletter may change that. Inside, we highlight the exciting conservation work that TLC is doing thanks to the guidance of our Strategic Action Plan (bit.ly/2KBKbgj). Protecting 25,000 acres by 2025 is daunting, but these successes along the way are inspiring.

How does TLC select conservation projects? Mostly we set priorities for a watershed or area, develop a plan, find funding, focus on individual parcels, and then reach out to landowners. One 2025 goal is to protect 2,000 acres in the Cape Fear River Basin with our partners. I hope you’ll be as impressed as I am by the new Jordan Lake Watershed Conservation Strategy (page 3). It provides a framework for protecting this important drinking water supply through land conservation. Inspired by Raleigh’s innovative Watershed Protection Program, the strategy represents the work of TLC staff and partners.

The expansion of TLC’s Brumley Nature Preserve (page 6), advances several goals outlined in the SAP, including protecting land in the Upper Neuse, expanding existing preserves, and building more trails. That expansion was made possible in part by gifts to TLC’s Catalyst Fund, which a couple of very generous and creative supporters started last year (page 8).

Because I love to bike, I was thrilled by the donation of 23 acres of land by the Council Family (page 9), which protects important wetlands and contains and buffers an existing greenway (another SAP goal).

Finally, the countdown has begun to the Grand Opening of our Walnut Hill Preserve in Eastern Wake County on April 25, 2020! There is a lot to be done: building walking and mountain biking trails (hope you’ll volunteer!), restoring old buildings, installing fencing and irrigation for farmers, nurturing 7,000 fragile longleaf pine seedlings, and planning activities for opening day. On page 12, you’ll meet two of our newest staff working at the preserve.

During a staff meeting this summer, I was filled with gratitude for TLC’s passionate, smart, energetic, and funny team. In order to accelerate the pace of conservation we’ve hired 10 new staff in the past year! We filled vacant posts plus added three full-time and two part-time positions. They already bring new energy and ideas that we need to achieve our lofty goals. Best part: when the words “strategic plan” make their way into conversation (as they always do when I’m in the room) they are not met with glazed expressions, but enthusiasm by all staff to contribute to something bigger that will last forever.

Hope you’ll join us!



Sandy Sweitzer / Executive Director



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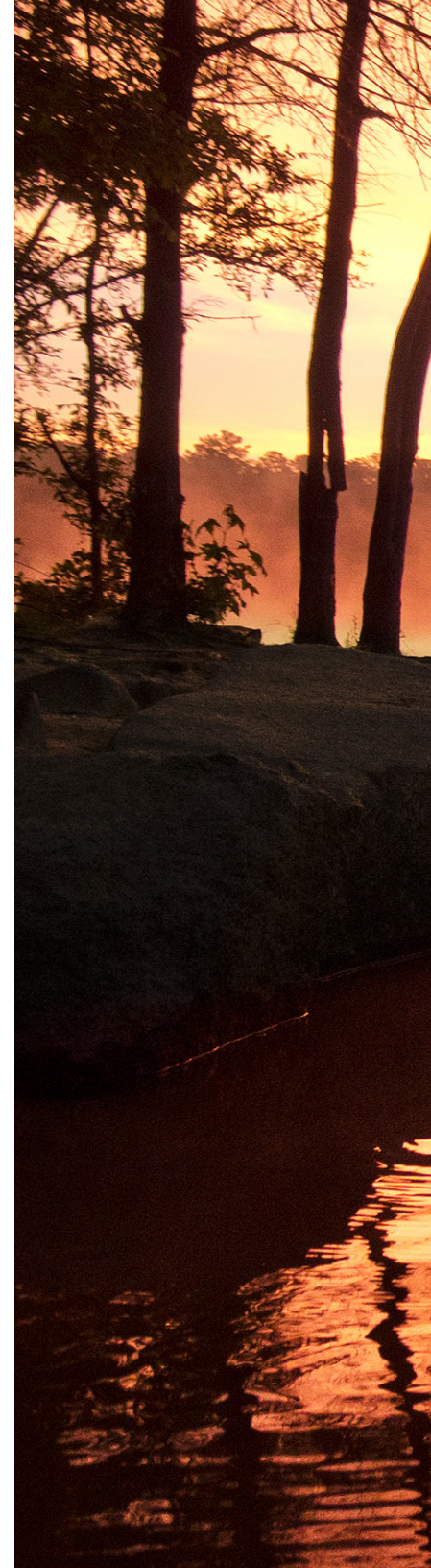
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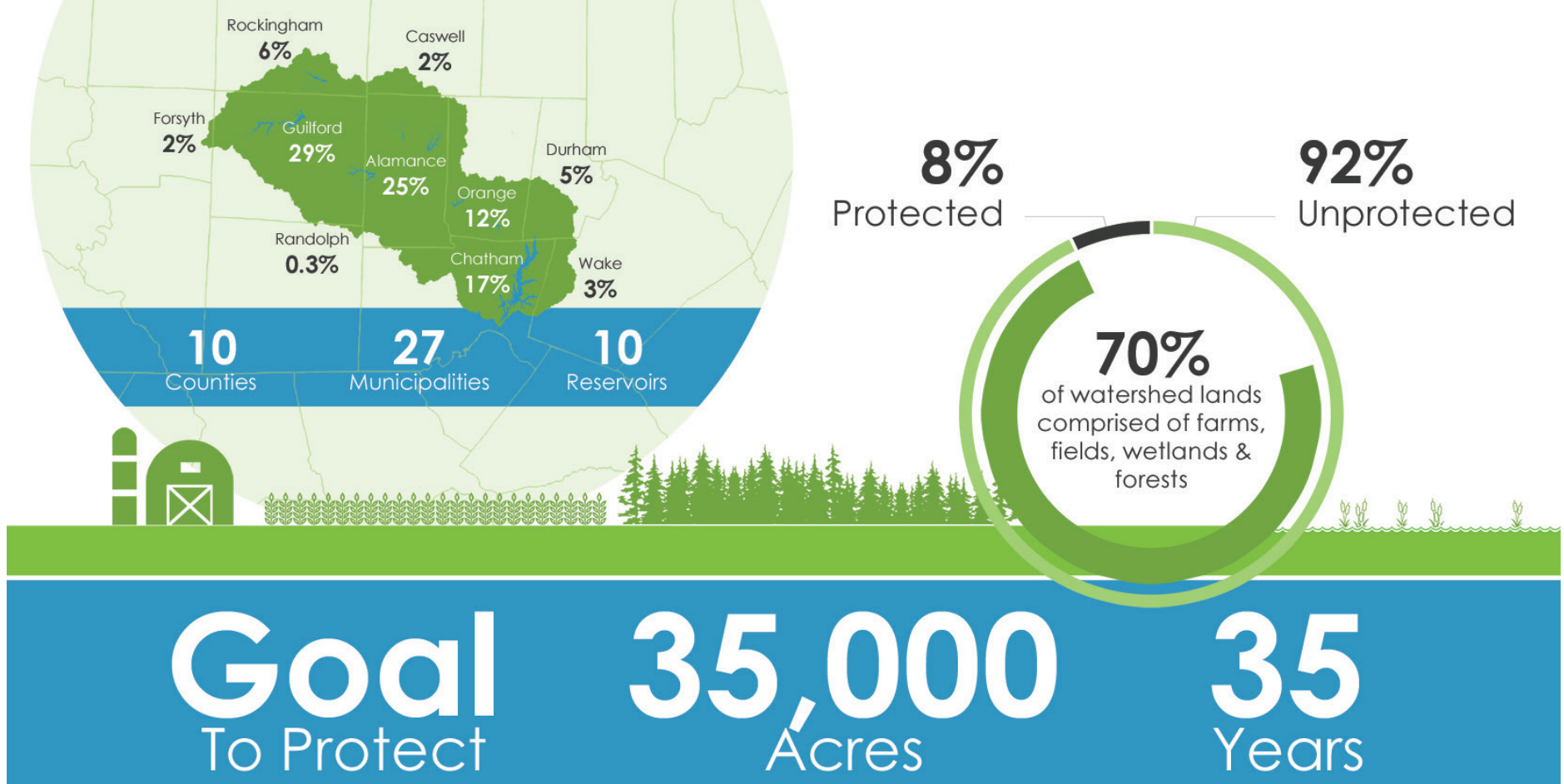




Our **Vision**

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.

Photo by Gary Simpson



Protecting Land for Clean Drinking Water

by Ron Gallagher

The highly successful and innovative Upper Neuse Clean Water Initiative, already well into its teenage years, is about to get a sibling. This fall, TLC and multiple partners unveil the Jordan Lake Watershed Conservation Strategy that will be a component of a new water-protection effort called the Jordan Lake One-Water initiative (JLOW).

Forging JLOW has brought together local governments in the Triangle and Triad, state water-quality officials, and multiple conservation and watershed-protection groups. All are looking for ways to reduce nutrients and pollution in the Haw River and the 14,000-acre Jordan Lake that was created when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dammed the Haw near its confluence with the Deep River in 1973.

The same year, the North Carolina Environmental Management Commission declared the reservoir as “Nutrient-Sensitive Waters” – but Jordan Lake has yet to conform to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards for nutrient pollution.

JLOW (pronounced JAY-low) grew out of a 2017 summit meeting about water quality in Jordan Lake. The initiative is administered by the Triangle J Council of Governments (TJCOG) with assistance from the Piedmont Triad Regional Council (PTRC) and the Jordan Lake One Water Advisory Committee.

The goal of JLOW, as stated in the conservation strategy, is “to develop and implement an integrated watershed management strategy” for the 1,687-square-mile watershed that reaches into 10 counties and feeds 10 reservoirs accessed by 26 municipal water-supply systems.

TLC’s efforts, led by Senior Associate Director of Conservation, Leigh Ann Hammerbacher, and other partners, have created a strategy that hews to JLOW’s six goals for a unified effort to improve Jordan Lake’s water quality:

1. Solve regional watershed issues beyond the capacity of any one stakeholder
2. Draw on leadership of elected officials and other champions of the group to make change

3. Work closely with state regulators to develop an effective, integrated watershed policy framework
4. Increase access to funding opportunities for watershed improvements
5. Establish and develop partnerships and trust
6. Share knowledge, resources, and experience among disparate stakeholder groups

Drawing on TLC's experience and strength

The best way to keep harmful nutrients and sediment out of drinking-water systems is to start where the pollution starts and do everything possible to protect upstream lands. These woods and farms serve as buffers and filters for surface and groundwater that will become drinking water for as many as 700,000 people in the watershed.

So far, about 8 percent of the Jordan Lake watershed – approximately 88,000 acres out of more than 1 million – is protected. JLOW has a big challenge, but protecting land is where TLC's decades of experience can contribute the most. The Upper Neuse Clean Water Initiative (also known as the Raleigh Watershed Protection Program) is the successful model that the JLOW conservation strategy aims to replicate across multiple jurisdictions.

Over the course of 14 years, TLC and other partners working in the Upper Neuse River put together and implemented a conservation plan that centers on lands where conservation can have the biggest impact on water quality in the 770-square-mile Upper Neuse watershed.

That plan used the best available science and geographic data to focus land protection priorities. The City of Raleigh, drawing water from the Falls Lake reservoir, has a big stake in the quality of its water and has supported the strategy vigorously.

Perhaps the best evidence that saving land to save water makes great sense is that for every dollar that the city contributes, the initiative has been able to generate an additional \$7 for land acquisition and protection. Customers pay a 15-cent fee for each 1,000 gallons of water used in the city and surrounding communities.

So far, the Upper Neuse initiative has protected over 10,000 acres of land in the Falls Lake watershed. That land involves 114 properties and has provided buffers along 111 miles of streams.

Where JLOW hopes to go

Building on the success of the Upper Neuse program, the JLOW partners have set a goal of protecting 35,000 acres over the next 35 years based on assessments of funding opportunities and land that could be available for conservation. That is about 5 percent of the eligible land that the partners identified in the Jordan Lake Watershed.

As the conservation strategy puts it, the 35,000-acre goal “would provide tangible water-quality benefits within the watershed and is a feasible target within a voluntary landowner, market-driven system.” With additional state and local funding sources and potential credits for conservation, TLC and partners think they could easily double or triple this goal.

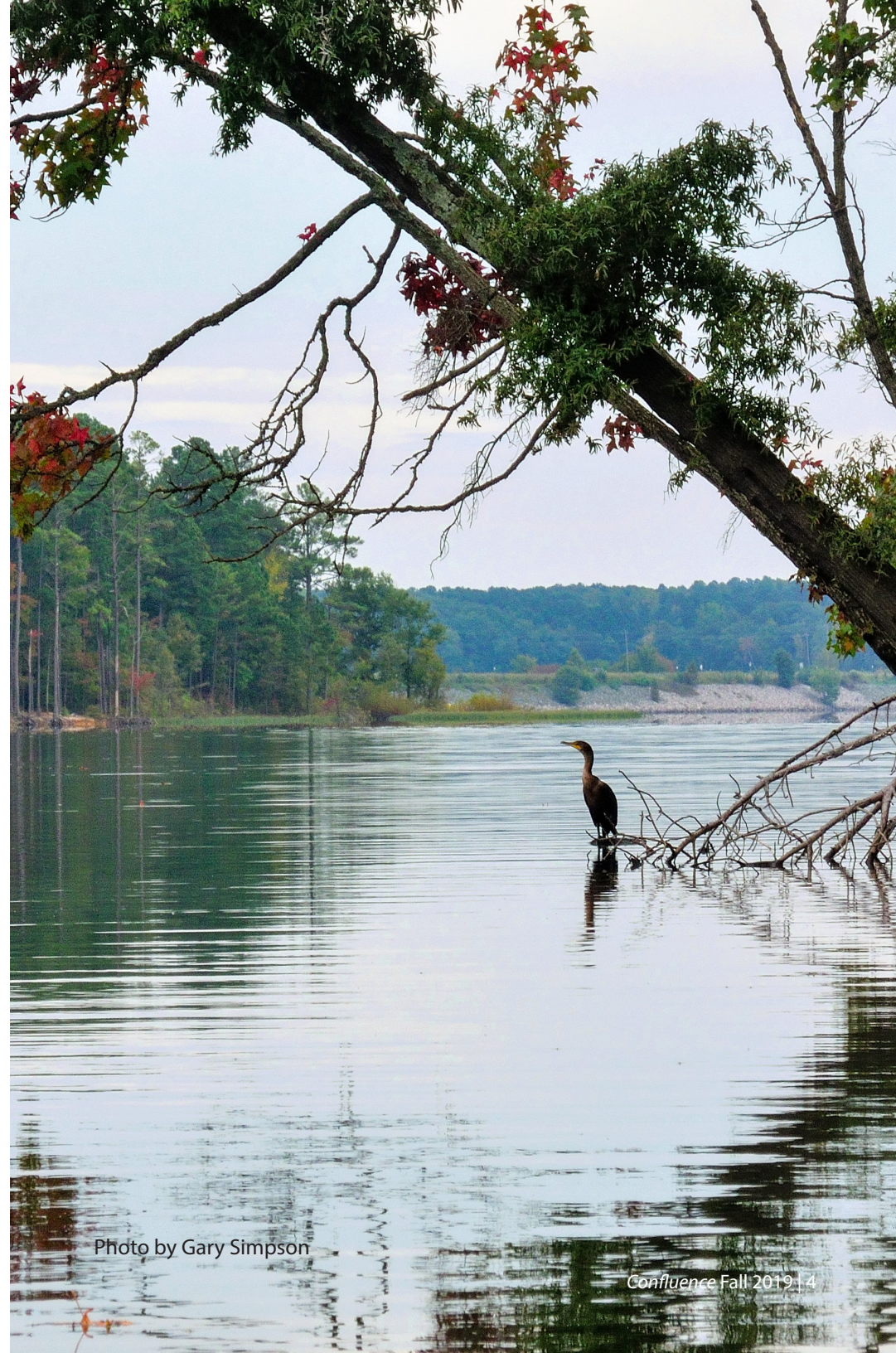


Photo by Gary Simpson

“Broad support from stakeholders in the watershed will help turn this ambitious vision into a reality,” emphasized Sandy Sweitzer, TLC’s Executive Director.

Working with data that TLC and others pulled together into a GIS-based map of the Jordan Lake watershed, the process of identifying lands for conservation and weighting priorities culminated in a March 27 meeting of 60 stakeholders at the Impact Alamance Center in Burlington.

That report stood on the shoulders of work that has guided the Upper Neuse efforts.

In 2018 and earlier this year, the team creating the model for Jordan Lake met with individual stakeholders, local officials who operate the water-supply systems, and the larger partnership group to get feedback that went into refining the model.

After collecting inputs, the model was used to show “priority” parcels in the watershed. Those parcels scored higher than the median score of 47.2 out of 100 and were at least 10 acres.

With those criteria, the model identified more than 10,000 parcels that comprise over 385,000 acres in the watershed. Those, the report says, would be parcels eligible for conservation if a fund were created to fuel the Jordan Lake program.

The Jordan Lake Strategy is part of a much larger project: by January 2020, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality’s Division of Water Quality is required by law to begin a process that will lead to reviewing conditions in Jordan Lake and setting water standards. It is a process known as readoption.

At a June 26 JLOW meeting in Mebane, Patrick Beggs, a water-quality specialist at DEQ, made it clear that the conservation strategy and other JLOW efforts can be part of the state’s wider plan for the lake. Because DEQ is, in effect, taking a whole new look at the lake’s future, “Everything is on the table,” Beggs told the group.

The JLOW model can feed into what Beggs called a policy collaborative for Jordan Lake standard-setting.

“I’m sure,” Beggs said, “we can come up with something far superior” to any past efforts. “And, maybe nowhere in the world has this been done for an area this size.” 🌳





"Stony Creek Henge" is a striking feature of TLC's 60-acre addition to Brumley Preserve: Brumley East

Conserving For, **Not From**

by Margaret Sands

News this good was hard to keep to ourselves! As you know, on Earth Day 2017, we celebrated the grand opening of Brumley Nature Preserve in Orange County with 1,300 outdoor enthusiasts. Each month 3,000 hikers, bikers, dog walkers, runners, Pokémon seekers, birders, volunteers, photographers, students, and nature lovers visit the 613-acre preserve.

In April 2019, we added 60 adjacent acres to Brumley Nature Preserve, almost exactly two years from the day the gates opened, with the help of numerous funders and a generous landowner!

With your ideas and our experiences from the last two years, we can imagine the enormous potential in these 60 acres. The hardwood forest in Brumley East protects more of a wildlife habitat corridor from New Hope Church Road to University Station and a tributary of Stony Creek (which feeds the Eno and eventually Falls Lake). Road frontage may provide another access point for the preserve and with it a wealth of possibility: a connector trail, a parking lot, an education center with flushing toilets perhaps?

However, for us to realize this expanded vision for Brumley, we need your help! We had to tap into our internal Catalyst Fund to complete the purchase. It is critical these funds be immediately replenished to enable TLC to acquire other parcels as they become available.

Boulders and stones pepper the forest floor all the way to the creek where they provide safe havens for amphibians and invertebrates enjoying the clear stream habitat. This stream is now protected in perpetuity on both banks, funneling water filtered by the surrounding forest to

The Catalyst Fund, established in 2018 by the Salamander Fund of Triangle Community Foundation and increased with gifts from others, provides an immediate source of funding to rapidly ignite conservation projects that may not otherwise have a financing mechanism.

This is not debt. We've used these funds as we were tasked by our donors, but now the important phase of replenishing the Catalyst Fund is key to future acquisitions and TLC's mission.

We know you'll love this spot for the large rock formations that catch your eye and curiosity. "Stony Creek Henge" is a bold reminder of the long and mysterious life of land.



Atamasco Lily, a spring blooming wildflower, at Brumley East

Not long ago, this property was slated for 14 large homes. These boulders that would have presented a weighty challenge for a developer now offer a picturesque opportunity for a trailhead, educational signs, selfie stop, perhaps a geology project, or a quiet moment for reflection.

Stony Creek then all the way to Falls Lake and the faucets of Raleigh residents.

As is so often the case with land conservation projects, Brumley East has been 10 years in the making. In 2009, Bo Howes, Director of Conservation and Stewardship, first met with the landowner to share a vision of a habitat corridor from Eno State Park to TLC's Johnston Mill with conserved forests for wildlife and trails for bipeds to traverse as well. 10 years and 10 miles of Brumley South trail later, several key partners stepped up to make this a reality.

Most importantly, the landowner generously donated about 1/3 of the value of the property and changed the fate of this land forever. The City of Raleigh drinks from Falls Lake every day and wants to see the streams that feed it stay "forest-filtered," so they made a grant of over \$100,000 from the Raleigh Watershed Protection Program. Orange County, which recognizes how much its citizens value the recreational opportunities Brumley Nature Preserve offers, also made a grant of over \$100,000 towards the purchase price.

When the next opportunity arises, anywhere across the Triangle, we must be ready with the necessary funds to act swiftly to conserve critical tracts of land and protect the Triangle's watersheds for wildlife and future generations.

Finally, a long-time TLC member made a generous grant of \$325,000 to help us reach a crucial tipping point. With 80% of the purchase price secured, a favorable deal on the table, and thousands of enthusiasts visiting Brumley each month, our board decided to use the Catalyst Fund, confident



Praying mantis at Brumley East

that the community would endorse this acquisition.

Using this fund was a risk for TLC, but one we took for several reasons. First, it is in line with our Strategic Action Plan to protect 25,000 acres by 2025 and the long-range plan for a protected corridor to the Eno. Second, we believe that the community's enthusiasm for Brumley trails would translate into donations for the expansion. Finally, the Catalyst Fund is also backed by TLC's Land Opportunity Fund (slightly more restricted funds raised during the Our Water Our Land campaign), which is also available for land acquisition.

From the moment we signed the documents this spring these lands were forever protected from sale, degradation,

and development. But this does not help us establish the infrastructure needed to make this section of Brumley accessible to the public, and most critically, it leaves a \$200,000 hole in our land fund. Thank you for helping accelerate the pace of conservation across the Triangle. 🌿



Christmas fern fiddlehead. Photo by John Petranka.

TLC is thrilled to announce a new fund for conservation: **The Catalyst Fund**

The purpose of the The Catalyst Fund is to provide a ready source of cash for TLC to ignite conservation projects across our six county region that may not have another funding mechanism. It is intended as a vehicle for the quick capture of conservation opportunities as they come up.

The Catalyst Fund was established in 2018 with a gift of \$250,000 from Salamander Fund of the Triangle Community Foundation, with emphasis on projects in Wake County. A second family foundation contributed \$325,000 for projects in Orange County and a third has pledged \$100,000 for projects in Durham or Orange County. The Catalyst Fund complements the Land Opportunity Fund, established during Our Water Our Land Campaign, which serves as an internal revolving loan fund.


As with all of TLC's projects, priorities in expending Catalyst Fund will be on land conservation projects in the six counties of the Triangle that are identified by TLC staff as having a significant impact on water quality and unique natural areas and will be approved by TLC's Conservation Strategies Committee and Board of Directors. If you would like to discuss a gift to the Catalyst Fund or have a question about Brumley East, Sandy or Christine are happy to talk to you. 🌿

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The White Oak Creek Greenway runs along the full length of the property

White Oak Creek Greenway Acquisition

by Jack Blackmer

Thanks to a donation from a generous family who loved their family's land, there is a shady oasis in the midst of one of the most rapidly developing areas in Wake County that is now owned and protected forever by TLC! Totalling 24 acres of rich bottomland hardwood forest and wetlands teeming with wildlife in Green Level, the land was a part of a farm owned by the Council family since the 1800's.

The tract has significant conservation value since it supports three of the four public benefits of conservation, the criteria TLC uses in evaluating properties. It "Safeguards Clean Water" by providing a riparian buffer along 1,150 ft. of White Oak Creek, which flows to Jordan Lake, a source of drinking water for approximately a half-million people in the region. The recently completed Jordan Lake Conservation Strategy ranks the property as a high priority for water quality protection (see article on page 4).

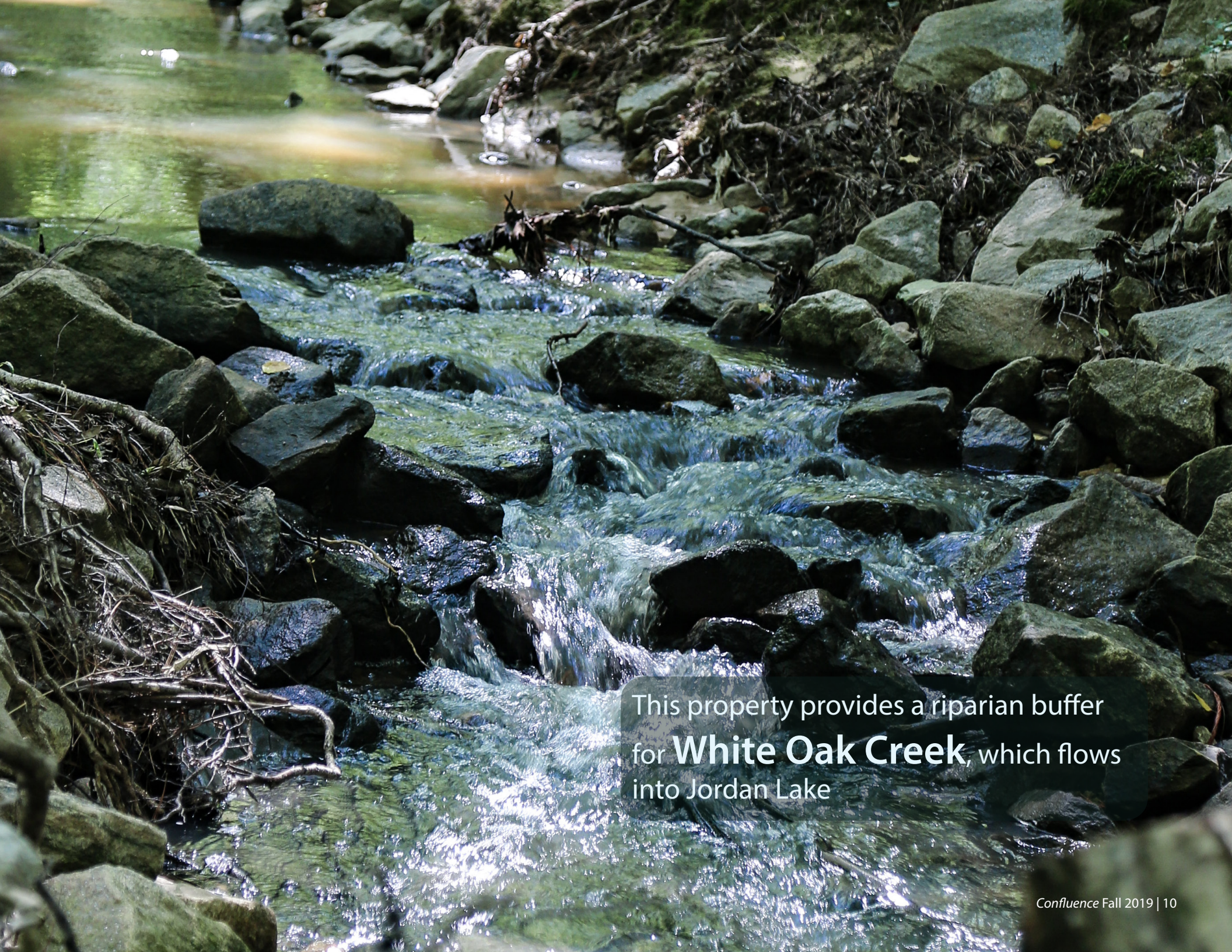
Second, it "Protects Natural Habitats" with a dense canopy of ash, maples, and water oak trees and a forest floor carpeted with wildflowers such as lizard tails and jewel weed that is home to a wide variety of wildlife. It's common to hear the drum of woodpeckers and the screech of hawks - you might even spot a bald eagle. The land along the greenway provides an excellent wildlife corridor where animals such as turtles, rabbits and deer can move freely, safe from an ever-increasing number of motor vehicles.

The third benefit supported by the land is "Connecting People with Nature." The popular White Oak Creek Greenway runs the full length of the property along a Town of Cary trail easement. The greenway will run 7.9 miles from Cary's Bond Park all the way to the American Tobacco Trail once a small segment currently under construction is completed. The greenway was recently designated a part of the East Coast Greenway that will eventually run from Maine to Florida. Being such an important link will bring multitudes of visitors and opportunities for environmental education!

Rebecca Ann Council Prince, a granddaughter of the original owners, said she used to play in White Oak Creek and watched horses pull out logs that had been cut for timber. Ann (as she prefers to be called) also said her father, Albert Murray Council, farmed the land and owned a General Store at the corner of Green Level Road West and Green Level Church Rd. Back then, the roads were quiet and the corner was referred to by locals as "The Crossroads."

Ann and her four sisters decided to donate the land to TLC to keep it natural and protected, "I have four grandchildren and I hope they can come back one day and experience this land as I have been able to."

TLC greatly appreciates the generosity of the Council family and is honored to be entrusted with the long term care of such a special place. 🌳



This property provides a riparian buffer
for **White Oak Creek**, which flows
into Jordan Lake

New Faces, New Spaces

Our excitement is growing as work kicks into high gear at the Sarah and Bailey Williamson Preserve at Walnut Hill for the Grand Opening on April 25, 2020! We have welcomed the first farmers to the property through our partnerships with Wake County's NextGen Farming Program and the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) and have added two new staff members who will help get the preserve ready for you (read more about Dymond and Eliza on the next page).

We recently completed exterior rehabilitation of an old barn that will serve as Welcome Center and entry to the preserve. Soon, the interior will be complete to provide office space for the farm staff. Meanwhile, we've started building 14 miles of trail across Walnut Hill and onto the adjacent Riverwalk property in Clayton. You will also be able to access the preserve from the Neuse River Greenway by next spring.

If you'd like to lend a hand (and maybe a bit of sweat), please join us for a Walnut Wednesday volunteer workday or one of our monthly Trail Crew volunteer days. You can sign up here: bit.ly/31Dc6Ub

If you're as excited as we are about seeing Walnut Hill, please volunteer or attend a sneak peek event.

We'll send event updates through our monthly e-News and list them on our event calendar: bit.ly/1VeCAVo



The Walnut Hill property features many historical barns and buildings.

Meet Dymond and Eliza

TLC welcomes two new staff members as we prepare for the opening of the new Sarah and Bailey Williamson Preserve at Walnut Hill

Dymond Generette is a North Carolina native from Raeford and a recent alumna of North Carolina State University with her B.S. in Environmental Sciences and a minor in Wildlife Sciences. After graduation, she accepted an internship with the Conservation Trust of North Carolina as the Walnut Hill Community Engagement intern at TLC. She is currently working on a comprehensive community engagement plan for Walnut Hill that includes a spreadsheet of potential partnerships surrounding Walnut Hill, a tentative event schedule, and social media strategies to promote Walnut Hill. She is also responsible for creating monthly events at Walnut Hill, such as the nature walk event in June and upcoming events for summer and fall.

Dymond recently accepted a position as a CTNC AmeriCorps member at TLC, beginning this September, as the Community Engagement Coordinator at Walnut Hill. She will focus on implementing the monthly event schedules, organizing volunteer workdays, organizing cultural and community outreach, and developing ArcGIS mapping solutions with community organizations and networks across a 5-10 mile radius at Walnut Hill Preserve. Dymond brings a wealth of energy and creative skills to our team and provides strong acumen and discipline for project deliverables. She will be instrumental with our efforts leading up to the grand opening of the Sarah and Bailey Williamson Preserve at Walnut Hill in April of 2020.

Eliza Lawdley is our newest member of the Triangle Land Conservancy team! As the Farm Manager at Walnut Hill, Eliza is excited to get to work with visitors of all ages to steward such a historic property.

Eliza was raised in downtown Durham, NC, receiving her bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from the College of Charleston, where she gardened across the city in her free time. This early experience inspired Eliza and three friends to create the Sol Food Mobile Farm, a retired school bus retrofitted to run on waste vegetable oil, which they drove 12,000 miles around the US teaching students about agriculture. When they returned to Durham in 2012, Eliza began working for LoMo Market, a mobile farmer's market that

sold farm-fresh products in neighborhoods. Eliza has since served as the Durham Urban Agriculture Manager for the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle, the Director of Community Development for Bee Downtown, and as a Board Member and Curriculum Coordinator for the Durham Public School's Hub Farm. Her experiences in these positions have ranged from developing learning gardens to teaching beekeeping workshops.

Eliza currently owns and operates property in east Durham County where she and her family are working to develop an agroforestry farm. She is pursuing a master's degree in Landscape Architecture at the College of Design at NC State University and hopes to continue to overlap design and farming at Walnut Hill. Eliza is thrilled about the Farm Manager role at Walnut Hill as it weaves together cultural heritage, habitat restoration, local food systems and regenerative farming. In this new position, Eliza is excited to work with school groups, plan and co-host events on the farm and revitalize Walnut Hill as an ecological and agricultural hub for the region. 🌿



Dymond and Eliza together with Eric from Humane Homes NC at July's Final Friday walk. Photo by George Jones.

COMING THIS FALL Wild Ideas for Clean Water

Chatham County Agricultural and Conference Center
Visit triangleland.org for updates!

Wild Ideas for Getting Outside

On May 8th we hosted Wild Ideas for Getting Outside at Marbles Kids Museum in Downtown Raleigh. We welcomed over 130 people and 30 unique Expo Organizations for our 12th Wild Ideas program. Speakers included Sarah King with the NC Coastal Federation, Kari Wouk with the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, Debra and Jeff Rezelli - Mountains to Sea Trail Thru-Hikers, and Chris Fowler and Casey Therrien from Triangle Land Conservancy, and topics ranged from favorite mountain biking spots to life as a thru-hiker to "Petiquette."



Photos by Manisit Das

Thanks to our Wild Ideas sponsors!



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Upcoming Events

As the weather starts to cool down, look for more opportunities to get outside with TLC including Trail Crew, Final Fridays at Walnut Hill and the return of our Get Wild! family series. Registration for many TLC events is limited and required. **Please register online at: triangleland.org/events.**

SEPTEMBER

- 21 National Public Lands Day** at Walnut Hill | 9am – 12pm | Celebrate with other volunteers at our monthly Trail Crew workday.
- 27 Final Friday Nature Walk** at Walnut Hill | 6pm – 8 pm | Join TLC staff for a sneak peak of this preserve in Eastern Wake County, set to open to the public in April 2020.

OCTOBER

- 05 First Saturday Hike** at Johnston Mill | 10:30am – 12:30pm | Join TLC staff for a guided hike at our beautiful Johnston Mill Nature Preserve as we explore the trails. Dogs on leashes and families are welcome. Please dress for the weather and wear sturdy footwear.
- 12 Mushroom ID Hike** at White Pines Nature Preserve | 11am – 12:30pm | Join TLC for a nature walk where we will learn tips and tricks for identifying wild mushrooms. *This TLC hosted walk is for identification and light sampling purposes only; foraging is not allowed on any TLC nature preserve*
- 25 Final Friday Nature Walk** at Walnut Hill | 6pm – 8:30pm | Join TLC staff for a sneak peak of this preserve in Eastern Wake County, set to open to the public in April 2020.

NOVEMBER

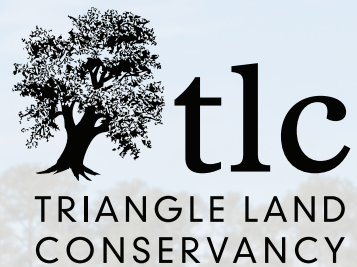
- 02 First Saturday Hike** at Brumley South | 10 am | Enjoy a fall morning with TLC's volunteer hike leaders who will lead an exploratory walk through our most visited preserve. Haven't logged a hike for TLC's Hiking Challenge yet? Make this your first one! Leashed dogs are welcome to join.



SAVE THE DATE

**Sarah and Bailey Williamson Preserve at
Walnut Hill
GRAND OPENING
APRIL 25, 2020**

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