

Confluence

Fall 2021



Welcome

By the time you get this, I hope we will all be enjoying cooler weather and lower COVID numbers. We have missed seeing many of you – so many TLC events have been postponed indefinitely to keep staff and members safe.

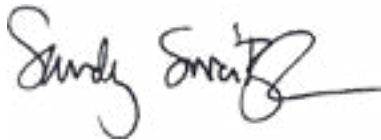
We are mid-way through the 2025 Strategic Plan (which you can view at tinyurl.com/esueppm) and you should be proud of what we have accomplished together! We have already conserved over 22,000 acres and have another 1,000 acres in the pipeline - ahead of our goal to protect 25,000 acres by 2025. We couldn't do it without your support.

In this newsletter, you'll get a peek into how much patience, persistence, and juggling it takes to protect 226 contiguous acres – the most recent success involved five parcels, three landowners, and three funding sources. You'll also come

to appreciate what goes into taking care of those protected lands – in perpetuity!

Finally, as I have mentioned in several newsletters over the years, TLC continues our efforts to build a broad coalition to carry conservation work forward long after we are gone. We continue to explore ways to reach younger and more diverse communities to inspire a love for the outdoors.

It is vital for the land we protect— and for the people who call this region home.



Sandy Sweitzer , Executive Director



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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 Sonke Johnson



Land, Water, Food—and Fun—are for Everyone

By Diquan Edmonds

As a TLC supporter, you know the benefits of nature and conservation. The many uses of outdoor spaces, from physical activity to growing produce, make the outdoors an essential part of our health and well-being. Last Fall in the Confluence (tinyurl.com/xzypkm4c) and in the Fall 2017 Confluence (tinyurl.com/ebu3kete), we outlined the history of land loss for people of color across the country and acknowledged the role that the conservation movement has played:

“When the conservation movement started, white people removed Indigenous people from their homes to create national parks. Today, Indigenous people live on a fraction of their land, and Black and Brown people own less than 2% of farmland. For decades, white people have dominated the conversations around outdoor recreation and limited access to outdoor space for minority people.”

There is a generally held notion that the outdoors are “for everyone,” but if you look closely, you’ll see it is an overwhelmingly White space.

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Research confirms that people of color are far less likely to participate in nature-based outdoor recreation than their White counterparts. As TLC has tried to address this disparity, we have seen the ways in which Black, Indigenous, and other people of color have been intentionally marginalized from outdoor spaces. From the beginning, White settlers stole territories from Indigenous people and forced them from their native homelands. Later, they enslaved Black people and forced them to work on that very same land.

After the end of slavery and the Civil War, the outdoors remained a dangerous place for Black people; many were victim to racially motivated hate crimes, restricted from using public lands, or subject to inferior resources due to Jim Crow laws. Many formerly enslaved people and their descendants who later acquired land, eventually had their land taken from them through well-documented (but not always well known) violence, intimidation, and racist laws. Today, there continue to be countless, well-publicized examples of racism in outdoor spaces. As a result of this dark history and the challenges that continue through today, many people of color feel unwelcome, unsafe, and uncomfortable in the outdoors.

The response from our members to our letter last fall was overwhelmingly positive. One comment stood out: “I found it so fascinating the way you explained the origins of racial bias as connected with land ownership and preservation of natural areas. It makes complete sense when organizations that are working directly with marginalized people address the issue of racial inequities. You managed, to my surprise, to make the connection to TLC equally compelling...may we never, ever take our privilege for granted, even when it involves a serene walk in the woods.”

While we outlined some of the work TLC has been doing to begin to address these inequities last fall, we realize racial equity efforts must be ongoing - as will be our learning. We wanted to share some of what we have done in the past year.



TLC’s board continues efforts to maintain diversity among the 18 members – currently we have 16 members who bring a range of expertise including business, forestry, conservation, finance, HR, and farming. They represent 5 of our 6 counties (with recruitment ongoing for two seats, which will ideally include a representative of Lee County), half are women and People of Color and White members are equally represented.

We’re investing time and resources into fostering and supporting the next generation of environmental professionals to increase and encourage racial diversity in the environmental field by supporting a paid internship program in collaboration with Knightdale High School and NC State. We are working more closely with partners like Outdoor Afro, Stagville State Historic Site, Duke University’s BOOST Program, and more. In the coming months, we will be doing more to amplify the amazing work of some of our community partners, who share our vision for a more inclusive and welcoming outdoors. Finally, consultants have almost completed a feasibility study for a Good Ground Initiative, which will use traditional land protection tools to protect more farmland and increase land ownership for people of color.

While there is a history of exclusion of communities of color in the outdoors, there is also a historical and deep-rooted connection to nature that has continued today. In America, Indigenous people are the original stewards of the outdoor spaces that we inhabit and enjoy today. Indigenous ecological knowledge offers us some of the best practices for land management. Enslaved Black people that were forced to labor on the land developed a unique relationship with the outdoors, often seeking solace in nature or living off the land as a means of pursuing freedom. In our National Park System, some of the first Park Rangers were Buffalo Soldiers, an all-Black U.S. Army regiment that formed after the Civil War.

Today, National groups like Latino Outdoors, Outdoor Asian, Outdoor Afro, Natives Outdoors, and many more strive to connect People of Color to the outdoors to continue to build upon these legacies. At TLC, we hope to be able to uplift these efforts, and provide access to opportunities to make the outdoors more equitable for all.

While there is still a magnitude of work to be done, we hope that we can continue to make strides and push the boundaries of making our organization more inclusive.

If you have suggestions, questions, or areas of growth for our organization, we invite you to share them with us so we can better serve our communities.



Photo of Little Beaverdam Creek Slopes property

A season of change— and growth.

As a supporter of Triangle Land Conservancy, you have likely heard of our goal to conserve 25,000 acres of land in the Triangle by 2025. It is a bold goal, and its magnitude is not limited to the size and scope of the acres protected— the public benefits of conserving land roughly equal to the size of Hilton Head Island in the next few years is immense.

From providing outdoor recreation and keeping our drinking water clean, to supporting local farms and protecting habitat for wildlife, TLC’s mission is ensuring that the land, nature and people of the Triangle have a vibrant, healthy future ahead. Thanks to you, we have protected 22,000 acres— including two recently acquired properties that we’ll share a few details on later— and we have another 1,000 acres in the pipeline.

At the same time as we have added properties, the ones we maintain are generating more interest than ever. Over the last year, demand for outdoor recreation has grown considerably— at TLC we have seen thousands more

visitors to our preserves, with double the number of people using trails at some locations. By the end of the year, TLC will maintain 50 miles of trails spread across six counties within the Triangle region, more than double the mileage we managed in 2015.

For an organization like TLC to fulfill our mission to the public, a lot of stewardship work comes along with conserving that much land. Countless staff and volunteer hours go into work like planting trees (like the 12,000 seedlings planted at Williamson, for example), managing invasive species, conducting landowner outreach and education, building and maintaining dozens of miles of hiking trails, and monitoring 120 conservation easements— along with so much else.

As TLC continues to grow and people’s engagement with outdoor spaces continues to increase, our small staff is tasked with doing more and and more to keep up with the work that goes on behind the scenes to keep



Photo by Land Ltd.

our preserves, both public and not, maintained in order to maximize the public benefits of land conservation.

As a small non-profit, we rely on the support of the community to continue doing the work of creating a happier, healthier Triangle region— one trail, one tree, and one acre at a time.

We sincerely appreciate the support we have received from our members over the years and continue to receive. And because of the growth we have seen this year in the scope of our work and the people that rely on TLC to protect the land they love, that support has never been more crucial.

One of the major ways your support for TLC helps advance the mission of land conservation in the Triangle is one of the most straightforward— providing us the resources to protect and steward more land. As we noted above, TLC has recently acquired two properties that we think you will love.

Without further ado, let’s introduce them!

Dickerson Forest

Dickerson Forest is a 98 acre property that was donated to TLC by the Dickerson family.

The forest is located between Johnston Mill Nature Preserve and Duke Forest, having the potential to serve as an important connector between the two. On the property are several streams and other bodies of water where salamanders like to lay their eggs, as well as some spectacular large rock outcroppings. Aside from salamanders, Dickerson Forest is home to dozens of other species that will have their homes protected for many years to come.

The property is also home to wetlands that may one day be engaging spaces for community education and scientific observation. The Dickerson family managed this property for generations and were inspired to donate it in order for it to continue to provide open space and habitat benefits.



Photo of Dickerson Forest



Little Beaver Dam Creek Slopes

Photo of Little Beaverdam Creek Slopes property

This 226 acre property was previously home in part to Three Bear Acres, a popular outdoor play space in northern Wake County. The property sits on the shores of a critical area of the Falls Lake Watershed, which provides drinking water to over 500,000 people in Wake County and the surrounding area. TLC’s acquisition of this land will protect over five miles of stream and has been identified as a high priority for water quality protection.

The project will create a sizable area of protected natural habitat— over 500 acres! More than 40 bird species have been documented on the site, including bobwhite quail, as well as many special plant species, such as pecan, post and white oak, slippery elms, hop-hornbeam, fringe tree, ghost pipe, and sparkleberry.

Funding was made possible, in part, by the City of Raleigh Watershed Protection Program, Wake County Open Space Bonds, and the Caterpillar Foundation through a partnership with the Conservation Trust for NC. TLC was able to secure the initial contract for the property by using our catalyst fund.

The property will not be open to the public for several years, although TLC will host guided tours and partner with groups to provide environmental education opportunities in the meantime.

BECOME A TLC VOLUNTEER OR MEMBER TODAY

WHETHER YOU WANT TO VOLUNTEER,
MAKE A DONATION, OR TO SET UP A
PLANNED GIFT, SUPPORT FROM
PEOPLE LIKE YOU IS WHAT MAKES
OUR WORK POSSIBLE.

JOIN US IN CONSERVING 25,000
ACRES BY 2025!

[TRIANGLELAND.ORG/GIVE](https://triangleland.org/give)






By TLC Staff

Photo courtesy of Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota

At the Bailey and Sarah Williamson Farm & Nature Preserve in the Walnut Hill Historic District of eastern Wake County, you can lose yourself in the tranquil scenery, totally forgetting the state’s capital lies just 20 minutes west. This special place is more than a nature preserve and farm, though, it’s an integral piece in protecting the history of the region and connecting the community with nature for generations to come.

In 2018, TLC partnered with the Regenerative Design Group to create a comprehensive Agricultural Concept Plan for Williamson Preserve to guide staff-led stewardship and restoration work at the property. One such project is an innovative regenerative agricultural water management practice, known as Keyline design.

This practice helps conserve water, reduce erosion and nutrient runoff, and increase carbon sequestration in soils. By demonstrating the use of keyline design, TLC’s strives to spur wider adoption of regenerative practices throughout the region, provide public education, and serve as a model of how farmers and other land stewardship organizations can conserve their water and soil resources on working lands.

Regenerative Agriculture is not a new practice— it has been in use on farms around the world for hundreds and thousands of years. Many of these practices have been lost in recent years, but TLC is part of a growing movement to learn from others about the current and historical agricultural systems and practices that replenish the soil, create healthier

air, support cleaner water supplies, and lead to flourishing ecosystems.

Long before the arrival of Europeans, Indigenous populations of the Americas protected local ecosystems and preserved biodiversity through land management and farming practices. For example, Indigenous Americans planted more than one crop together, in a practice known as intercropping, for hundreds of years. These methods directly echo the “polycultures” of today’s sustainable farms.

Around the turn of the 20th century, the work of Dr. George Washington Carver would revolutionize the field of agriculture. Carver, an agricultural scientist, inventor, and educator at Tuskegee University, focused on revitalizing and building soil health. Not only was he famously responsible for our beloved peanut butter, but he also helped lay the foundation for soil health and conservation, especially on small southern farms. Many practices such as crop rotation, erosion control, and composting have their roots in his work. Many of these practices highlight the need to not just focus on soil resources, but also water resources for agricultural production.

In the 1950s, another innovator in regenerative agriculture, P.A. Yeomans, introduced a system of land management known as the Keyline system, which many consider to be well ahead of its time. During this time, most believed that soil was a finite resource that must be conserved, similarly to rare metals. Yeomans understood that carbon cycles create soil, but also that this process spans centuries.

By adjusting the conditions in the soil with his plowing and management techniques, P.A. was able to speed up this process and create dozens of millimeters of fertile topsoil in just one year. Besides this contribution, Yeomans also made advances in the understanding of landscape geometry— by synchronizing with the natural geometry of the land, a farmer can drastically alter the way water interacts with it.

As Yeomans himself wrote, “The objective of the pattern in Keyline pattern cultivation is to direct the shallow overland flow, which results from rainfall runoff, to remain evenly spread and not follow its natural flow path to concentrate in the valley shapes. The same technique also provides the means for evenly spreading the water in the system of “hillside” irrigation named “Keyline Pattern irrigation.” It is the Keyline pattern cultivation that can convert what is commonly called “wild flooding” into fully controlled irrigation.” Consequently a well-planned drainage system can provide two key benefits, storing water for uptake by trees and reducing storm water runoff and protecting our downstream waterways.

By transitioning from a system of soil “conservation” and depletion to one which builds soil health, the land becomes more fertile over time, rather than less. For this reason, P.A. Yeoman argued that soil creation and the Keyline system would lower the costs of the farm while producing higher yielding harvests— which means more profits for farmers along with improved health of the land they farm.

It is in the same spirit as P.A. Yeoman, and the many stewards of the land that preceded him, that Triangle Land Conservancy is implementing Keyline design at Williamson Preserve. To work in concert with the land, rather than to attempt mastery over it. To draw upon the wisdom both of those who came before us and of nature itself. To manage farmland in a way that is the least intrusive and most sustainable.

This spring, through generous funding from Triangle Community Foundation, TLC staff worked closely with nationally recognized agroforestry consultant, Mark Shepard and his team from Restoration Agriculture Development (RAD) to design and install a 16-acre

sustainable water management system incorporating Keyline design in the Chickasaw Plum field at the Williamson Preserve. Six thousand linear feet of bioswales now crisscross a farm field that was in need of habitat restoration, storm water mitigation, invasive species removal, and soil health improvements. The field leads directly to a stream that runs south across the preserve to the Neuse River.



This field is the home base for local tree company Leaf & Limb on their new “Project Pando” initiative (*read more at leaflimb.com/project-pando*). Project Pando, which has a long-term agreement with TLC at Williamson Preserve, is a volunteer-driven operation that is sustainably growing native trees to give to the public for free. Project Pando staff and volunteers will be the site stewards of the Keyline design system, along with TLC staff, as they continue to plant native trees, shrubs, and grasses over the next ten years.

Implementing Keyline at Williamson Preserve will conserve water, reduce erosion and nutrient runoff, and increase carbon sequestration. By demonstrating the use of keyline design, we also hope to spur wider adoption of regenerative practices throughout the region, provide public education, and serve as a model of how other land trusts can utilize protected farmland in the fight against climate change.

Keyline design and practices like it have a long history of benefiting the land and farmers of the past. At TLC, we hope to use these tools to ensure the thriving of the land and farmers of the future.

INTRODUCING TLC'S NEWEST STAFF MEMBERS



**PATRICK
BOLEMAN**

Patrick joined TLC as the Land Stewardship Manager (East) in July 2021. His passion for forestry and land management grew from his time spent in the woods around his home in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Western NC. After graduating from UNC, he spent 3 years in the Peruvian Andes serving with the US Peace Corps, working with indigenous communities. He then received his M.S. in forestry from Penn State, studying agroforestry and sustainable forest resource management. He has worked in a variety of stewardship capacities from prairie management in Ohio to arboriculture in Virginia. Before joining the TLC team., he was a forest ranger and wildland firefighter with the North Carolina Forest Service.



**NICK
ADAMS**

We are excited to welcome Nick to our team of conservationists as the new Land Stewardship Manager (West) as of July 2021. Before onboarding at TLC, Nick worked for the North Carolina Botanical Garden where he managed a few public natural areas in Chapel Hill. Nick worked on a variety of projects there, including invasive species eradication, trail building and maintenance, prescribed burns, and habitat restoration. Nick has a background in Biology and Ecology, with a specific interest in ecological restoration. Nick is another Tar Heel, having earned his master's in ecology from UNC, along with a biology degree from the University of Central Arkansas. He lives in Durham with his wife, daughter, and dog!

As this newsletter was on its way to you, TLC welcomed 5 new staff members! Learn more about them at TriangleLand.org/About/Staff

The Healing Labyrinth

If you’ve visited Brumley recently, you may have noticed an intriguing new feature— the “Healing Labyrinth.” The labyrinth, located at the intersection of Brumley North’s Stoney Creek and Cemetery Connector trails, is a space for reflection, meditation and restoration. The twisting path you see is not a maze, but rather intended for contemplative walking. It is a work in progress, as we intend to add landscaping elements that will further beautify the space.

The Healing Labyrinth at Brumley North is a gift from Ellie and Bob DeVries and the Kellogg Foundation

About The Labyrinth

The labyrinth is an ancient pattern found in many cultures around the world. Labyrinth designs were found on pottery, tablets and tiles that date as far back as 5,000 years ago. Many patterns are based on spirals and circles mirrored in nature. One feature labyrinths have in common is they have one path that winds in a circuitous way to the center.

What to Know Before Visiting

1. The labyrinth is not a maze. There are no tricks or dead ends. You will enter and exit the same place. It is in full view, which allows a person to be quiet and focus internally.

“People who have walked the labyrinth say it has helped with healing, deepened self knowledge and empowered creativity.

Walking slowly can clear the mind, clarify correct action, and be calming in times of life transitions. Often people see their lives as a journey.

With all the stresses of today’s world, a contemplative walk can be enjoyable and freeing.”

- Eleanor DeVries

2. There is no right or wrong way to walk the labyrinth, but please be respectful of others.

3. As you wind your way toward the center, you may choose to try to let go of the worries of your life or to focus on a problem you are



trying to solve. Either way, the act of walking quiets and empties the mind.

4. Allow yourself to find the pace your body wants to go. Your pace may change throughout the walk. If you pass or are passed by others, please step carefully to the side.

5. At the center, you may stop and

allow yourself to receive guidance or clarity.

6. As you return from the center, you may be refreshed and have clarity as you return to the activities of the world.

We hope that you find this new way to enjoy nature relaxing and restorative!

Leaving a Conservation Legacy

This summer our community sadly lost two long-term conservation advocates who devoted most of their lives to protecting the incredible natural resources of Wake and Johnston Counties and helped establish two TLC nature preserves.

[Betty Brandt Williamson](#) (May 1, 1959 - July 31, 2021) was instrumental in the permanent protection of the Bailey and Sarah Williamson Preserve. In 2013, she and her sister, Sally Greaser, worked with TLC to honor their parents’ wishes to permanently protect the 405-acre family farm located in the Shotwell area of eastern Raleigh.

This was just one of many steps in Betty Brandt’s conservation legacy. She was tirelessly committed to protecting the rural open spaces of the entire Shotwell area and served on one of TLC’s first advisory boards that helped develop the initial plan for the Marks Creek and Neuse River area. Since that time, in partnership with Wake and Johnston Counties and many landowners, TLC has helped protect over 2,500 acres of open space in this priority area.



Photo by Ana Caicedo

The vision and foresight of Betty Brandt helped lay the foundation for this amazing landscape-level conservation initiative. Not only did she work to protect land and open space, she also brought together the entire Shotwell community to ensure not only was land permanently protected, it was also stewarded to the highest levels. From working with community members to organize and push back on expansion of a landfill to using her background in clinical data collection to analyze water quality reports, Betty Brandt dedicated her entire life to protecting land and all the beings that inhabit it.

[Don Stephenson](#) (December 9, 1944- August 16, 2021) was a biologist, a conservationist, an artist, teacher, army veteran, naturalist, poet, and a good conversationalist and humorist. Don and his wife Francine were early members of TLC and he was instrumental to protecting many unique and natural landscapes in Johnston County. TLC is thankful for all of Don’s efforts but perhaps his greatest conservation legacy was the permanent protection of Flower Hill Nature Preserve.

The unique preserve drew the attention of B.W. Wells in the 1930’s and had largely been forgotten until Don visited the site with his biology students from Johnston County Community College in April, 1987. On that visit Mr. Stephenson felt a similar excitement that Dr. Wells experienced a full half-century before. As a board member of TLC, he began working with members and the local community to build support and raise funds to protect this incredible ecological site. Don continued his efforts to support conservation with TLC throughout his life and was always willing to help staff on conservation planning and land protection efforts.



Photo by TLC Staff

Next time you stop to smell the Catawba rhododendrons at Flower Hill Preserve or take your dog on a stroll on Two Ponds Loop at Williamson Preserve, please be inspired that sometimes a spark from one person’s passion for conservation can be all it takes to create a lasting legacy for our community.

Betty Brandt and Don, you will be greatly missed

Create Your Legacy with Triangle Land Conservancy

- Planned giving is an easy and flexible way to meet your philanthropic goals and leave a lasting gift for nature and future generations.
- Make a gift through your will, trust, retirement accounts, or life insurance today and help protect the Triangle region that we treasure!
- Questions about how your gift will make a difference? Contact Christine Wilson, Director of Advancement, at (919) 908-0059 or cwilson@triangleland.org to get started today.

[TRIANGLELAND.ORG/GIVE](https://triangleland.org/give)

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*"Because our children
need to grow up in a
world where our natural
spaces are protected and
valued."*



**Exercise your membership right to
set the course for TLC by voting on
our new board members at:
www.triangleland.org/vote**



**Cast your ballot for
TLC's Board!
Use the link or QR
code provided to
vote.**



A QUICK NOTE ON TLC'S

COVID-19 Guidelines

All of TLC's events are planned with current guidance from public health experts— and your health and safety— in mind. At times, this may mean an event needs to be postponed or altered. TLC also seeks to build a supportive, mask-friendly environment everywhere we connect with you, our friends and neighbors.



Scan for more info!



Scan the QR code above or visit triangleland.org/covid19 to read more about TLC's health & safety guidelines.

HAPPY ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY TO WILLIAMSON PRESERVE!

To learn about enagaging activities and events at Williamson and seven other public nature preserves, simply scan the QR code or visit us at triangleland.org/events!



Photo by TLC Staff

Front cover photo by Don Kinney.
Back cover by TLC Staff.



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***“Mother Earth is not a
resource — she is an heirloom.”***

– David Ipina