

Delaware County Land Conservancy

*Preserving Green Space in Delaware County
... and beyond...*

Land strategies and objectives overview

(detailed fleshing out of how we actually carry these actions out to come later)

GOALS

Enable communities in Delaware County, Ohio to work cohesively to achieve effective conservation outcomes through sustainable land use practices.

Achieve landscape-scale ecological restoration and connectivity by identifying gaps and opportunities to protect, enhance, connect, and extend existing valuable habitats to create functional networks of green spaces.

Strategies/Tasks/Actions

1. Map and describe areas of higher ecological value using the county parcel fabric for boundaries.
2. Identify gaps and evaluate opportunities to protect, enhance, connect, and extend existing valuable habitats, conservation areas, habitat corridors and ecological connections.
3. Prioritize areas for intervention with landowners to place conservation or farmland easements on their land rather than sell and convert to development.
4. Use of national and local datasets in various mapping software to determine target areas through remote sensing and then perform ground truthing or a biodiversity survey to determine ecological value for prioritization.

As we know, this is everywhere...





From this...



... to this...

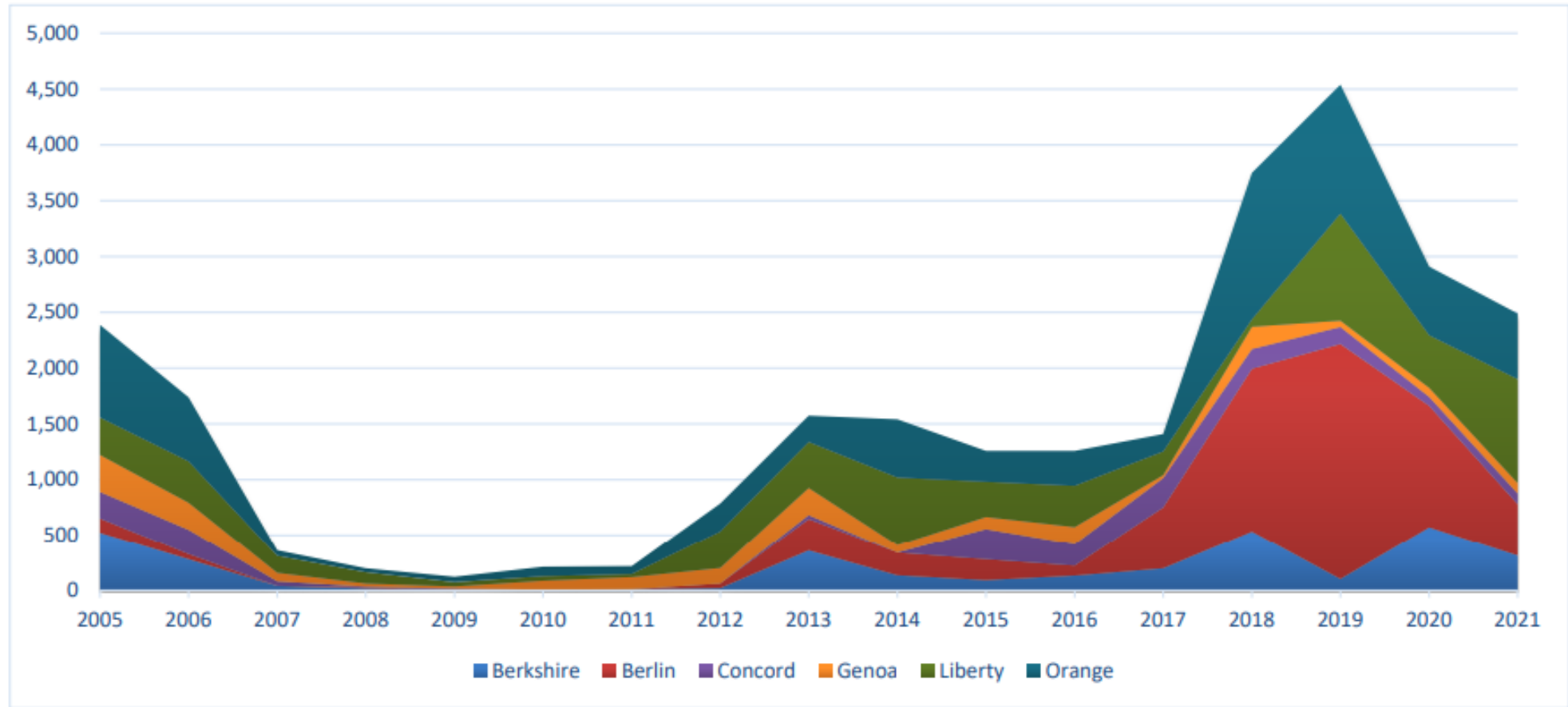




Subdivision activity over time

Subdivision

Active subdivision proposals lots reviewed by the RPC over the last 17 years.



Selected Townships only



Basic Facts and Resources for Landowners

Across America, thousands of people are determined to conserve the places they value. Landowners have a deep connection to their land and know the gifts undeveloped properties provide their communities: clear air and water, fresh food, wildlife habitat, and sheer scenic beauty. All too often these special places disappear forever because of development. Americans who want to conserve their land can turn to land trusts – non profit organizations that work with landowners interested in protecting open space.

What Does a Land Trust Do?

Land trusts protect land directly by buying or accepting donations of land or of conservation easements. They also educate the public and advocate for the need to conserve land. They can help landowners tailor a conservation plan to their individual situation and financial circumstances, and determine the property's conservation values and future ownership.

What types of land can be protected by land trusts?

Land trusts protect a variety of lands, but many concentrate their efforts on:

- Natural habitat for wildlife, fish and plants such as prairies, forests, bluff lands, or wetlands

- Watershed areas like lakeshores, rivers, streams, and other natural features
- Scenic landscapes, particularly those with local community, cultural or historic significance
- Working landscapes like farmland and ranchland have special significance for growing food

How Does a Land Trust Conserve Land?

Land trusts have many options available to them in order to conserve land. Two of the most popular options are fee simple and conservation easements.

Fee Simple

A land trust can conserve land through an outright purchase or donation, in which the landowner sells or grants all rights, title and interest in the property to the land trust. The land trust maintains perpetual stewardship and management responsibility for the land. It owns the land and may grant conservation easements on land it owns in fee to another conservation organization, agency or town.

Conservation Easement

A conservation easement (or conservation restriction) is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. It allows the landowner to continue to own and use the land and to sell it or pass it on to heirs.

A landowner may sell a conservation easement, but usually easements are donated. If the donation benefits the public by permanently protecting important conservation resources and meets other federal tax code requirements, it can qualify as a

tax-deductible charitable donation. The amount of the donation is the difference between the land's value with the easement and its value without the easement. Placing an easement on property may or may not result in property tax savings.

Perhaps most importantly, a conservation easement can be essential for passing land on to the next generation. By removing the land's development potential, the easement lowers its market value, which in turn lowers estate tax. Whether the easement is donated during life or by will, it can make a critical difference in the heirs' ability to keep the land intact.

What Are a Land Trust's Responsibilities Regarding Conservation Easements?

The land trust is responsible for enforcing the restrictions detailed in the easement document. Therefore, the land trust monitors the property on a regular basis, typically once a year, to determine that the property remains in the condition prescribed by the easement document.

What are some of the Other Methods Land Trusts use to Protect Land?

- Planned Gifts
- Mutual Covenants
- Deed Restrictions
- Rights of First Refusal
- Conservation Buyer Program
- Registry Programs
- Limited Development
- Like-kind Exchanges

Where Do Land Trusts Get Funding to Conserve Land?

Land trusts draw upon a variety of sources to buy land, or interests in land, using a unique and proactive method called conservation financing. Con-

servation financing utilizes local, state, federal and other funding sources to protect open space and manage growth.

Since the amount of federal funding available for conservation fluctuates annually, local funding is the key to effective, long-term conservation financing. It is important to have local commitment and control. Local funds also help leverage federal, state and private dollars, establishing a predictable and sizable conservation funding stream. State and local governments continue to fund open space acquisition, viewing parks, recreation and habitat as "green infrastructure" important to the quality of life and the economy.

What are the Advantages of Working with a Land Trust?

Land trusts have many advantages as land protection organizations. One advantage of working with land trusts is that they are very closely tied to the communities in which they operate. They can draw on community resources, including volunteer time and skills. Their community orientation is also helpful in selecting and negotiating transactions. They are familiar with the land in the area and often have the trust and confidence of local landowners who may not want to work with entities from outside the area.

Moreover, the nonprofit tax status of land trusts brings them a variety of tax benefits. Donations of land, conservation easements or money may qualify for income, estate or gift tax savings. Properly structured land trusts are exempt from Federal and state income taxes and sometimes from local property and real estate transfer taxes as well.

Additionally, due to the fact that land trusts are private organizations, they can be more flexible and creative than public or government agencies, and can often act more quickly. They can hold and manage land and other assets as a corporation, and are able to negotiate with landowners discreetly.

Examples of Land Protected – Licking County Land Trust




- A forested corridor along Raccoon Creek and tributaries
- Farmland in agricultural use, including production of soybeans, corn, hay, produce, cattle, sheep, and goats
- Farmland held by families for many generations, including “Century” farms
- Land of historical significance along the old Ohio and Erie Canal
- Protected greenspace adjacent to new housing developments
- Wetlands that are important amphibian breeding grounds
- Scenic open space bordering parks, recreation areas, and roadways

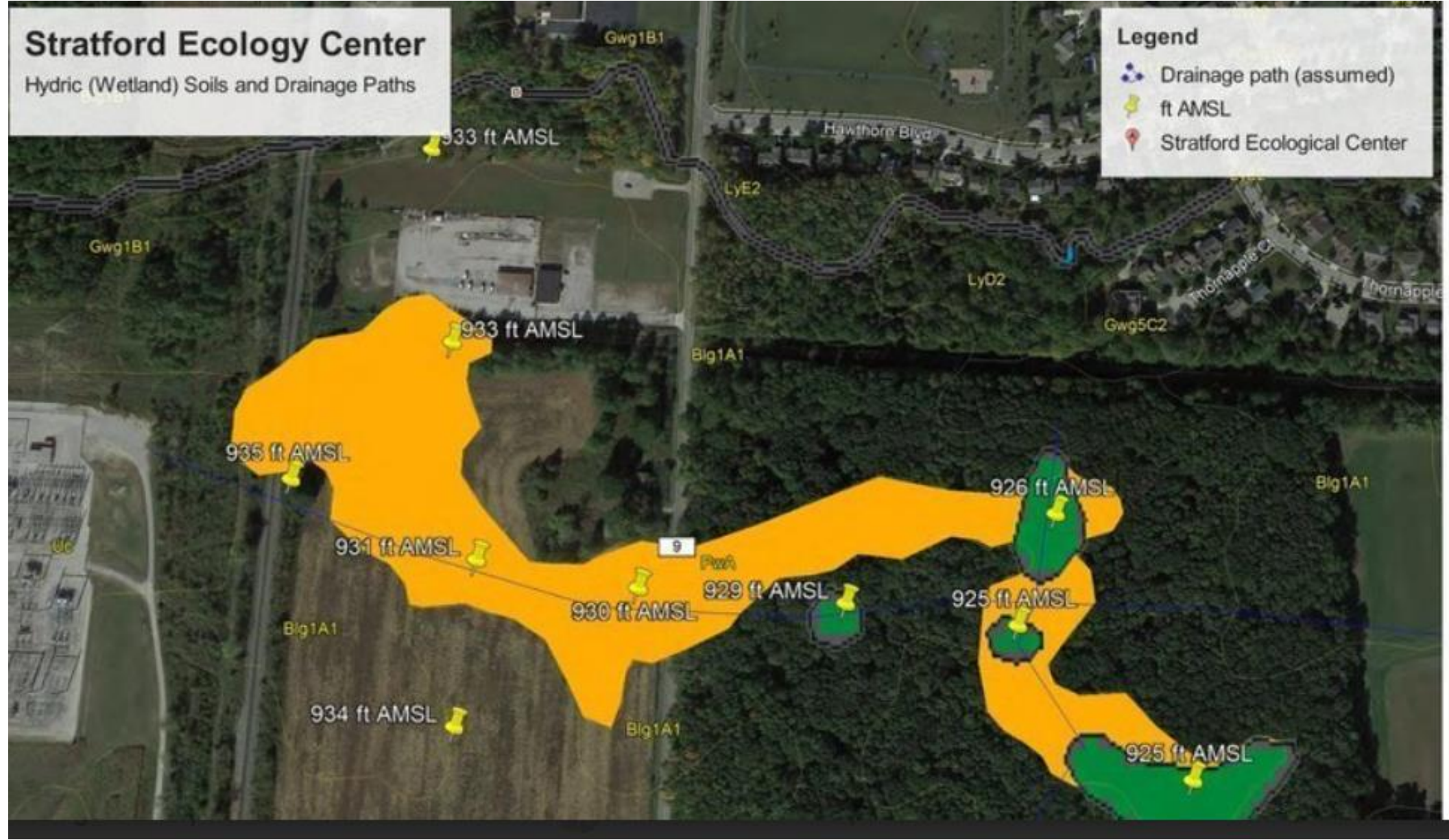


Stratford Ecology Center

Hydric (Wetland) Soils and Drainage Paths

Legend

-  Drainage path (assumed)
-  ft AMSL
-  Stratford Ecological Center



PETITION TO STOP DEVELOPMENT ON LIBERTY ROAD

Sign this petition to oppose the proposed development on 2880 Liberty Road*! The development plan calls for 155 housing units to be built on 23 acres of former cropland with a natural wetland component that feeds into the adjacent Stratford State Forest Preserve.

High-density housing development is sheer out of place in this sub-rural area. Delaware township zoning code states that the township in its entirety must be low-density and preserve the topography of the land, wetlands, and watersheds. High-density housing would negatively impact the water quality of Stratford's stream, wetlands, and vernal pools. The additional traffic, noise, light, and air pollution from this type of development would be detrimental to the delicate ecosystems at work within the preserve as well as to the unique species who depend on them.

We are not against development but want it developed sustainably and using ecologically appropriate methods. We want to preserve open and green space, help restore wetland, and make sure that any further development is done with regenerative, innovative, and conservation-oriented practices. At a minimum, an environmental analysis, an anti-degradation flow study, and an environmental impact statement should be presented prior to any development on this parcel.

Let us do everything we can to preserve and enhance the unique quality of this parcel —a quality synonymous with Stratford State Forest Preserve itself. This 236-acre preserve has not only improved the land, water, and biodiversity, but also education and enjoyment to our residents, for which no price can be named.