



CONSERVATOR

THE NEWSLETTER OF CARDINAL LAND CONSERVANCY / FEBRUARY 2020

VIII

Stewardship thrives at Cardinal's Todd's Fork Preserve



Volunteer crew takes a photo break at Todd's Fork Nature Preserve

Indiana bats rest in their summer maternity colonies just a mile north of Wilmington, Ohio. A native prairie gains traction in retired cattle pastures. And Todd's Fork of the Little Miami River can be heard babbling in the distance.

Purple coneflower, cardinal flower, and partridge peas have not always grown in these fields, once choked by honeylocust, thistle or honeysuckle. Tall and short grass prairies now flourish.

Stewardship has something to do with it!

This is Todd's Fork Nature Preserve. It is 221 acres of forests, fields and river. We at Cardinal worked with the former owners to preserve this land as 2017 drew to a close.

Cardinal's plans for stewarding the land included restoring 50 acres of prairie and 50 acres of native woods. Spring of 2019 saw the native prairie's potential. Now, volunteers and Cardinal staff are working to bring about another evolution of this landscape.

A new landscape evolves

Spearheading these efforts is Mark Besserman, Cardinal's land manager. This fall, volunteers worked to control the competing weeds, and to make mowing possible in a field once set with traps of locust and clogged with ragweed so tall as to hide even the tallest person walking in the North field.

Mark is leading this restoration effort, along with Richard Hiatt, Cardinal's go-to volunteer. "Richard has done some great work recently clearing and mowing trails so we can access these fields, including our targeted tree planting areas," Mark reports.

Cardinal's stewardship continues

It is a delicate process to transition pasture into another use. Without the constant and effective trimming the cows can provide, undesirable plant species can gain traction—fast. Volunteers have worked in one such pasture every few weeks to prepare the land and to plant trees.



Volunteer Richard Hiatt

"In November, we planted 300 container trees in a day," Mark said. "We got a lot of help from the Ohio Valley Forestry Fellowship members. They brought tools, and a whole bunch of expertise and enthusiasm to help us out."

Ongoing reforestation

Mark's excitement is evident as he describes this reforestation effort. Trees were selected to match the condition of the area—spanning from wet bottom-lands to high ridges. Considerations also were made for wildlife—planting persimmon, walnut, and an American Plum thicket. Dogwoods, redbud, and tulip poplar will color this wooded ridge in the years ahead. Interested in volunteering at Todd's Fork? Get in touch with Mark: (513)752-2828 or mark@cardinalandconservancy.org

JOIN US! BECOME A MEMBER OF OUR STEWARDSHIP CREW

Sat., March 14 10-2

Tree planting at Todd's Fork

Sat., June 6 10-4

Kayak trip at Sycamore Park on the East Fork of Little Miami

Mon., March 23 10-12

Wildflower hike at Kope Hollow

Sat., June 13 10-12

Turkey Shoot / East Fork State Park

Sat., April 18 10-12

Wildflower hike at Kope Hollow

Sat., April 25 10-12

Wildflower hike at Todd's Fork

Get details: Andy Dickerson
andy@cardinalandconservancy.org
(513) 752-2828

Cardinal's Board: Planning for the future

— By Bill Hopple

Recently, I was elected to serve as President of the Cardinal Land Conservancy board. It is an honor and a pleasure to work with Board members, staff, volunteers and Cardinal members to meet the land protection needs of this region!

We all owe a great deal of gratitude—first to Roland Johnson as our first President, then to Laura Curliss for her leadership over the past four years! She led us through the merger of our founding land trusts, hiring of our first executive director, Accreditation by the Land Trust Alliance, launching of *Protect the Land You Love* campaign, and completion of numerous land deals.

Conservation background

A little bit about me: For the past 23 years, I served as Executive Director of Cincinnati Nature Center. Prior to that I worked as Director of Development raising funds to support my alma mater, Cincinnati Country Day School. In college, I worked as a mountaineering instructor at the National Outdoor Leadership School in Wyoming and then taught high school and middle school science.

My love of the outdoors and commitment to conservation began in my youth attending a camp in western North Carolina.

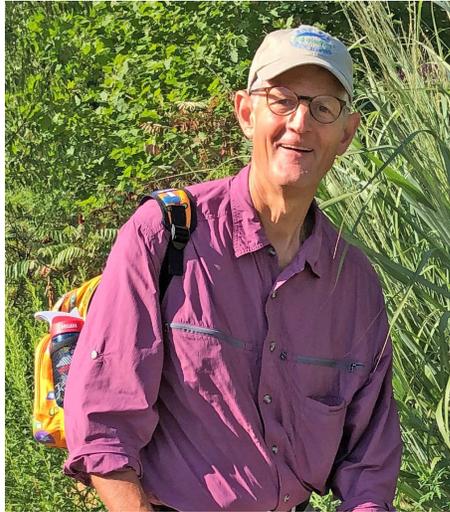
My one volunteer commitment upon retiring in May was to Cardinal Land Conservancy.

New Cardinal Board Member



Dr. Jeffrey Corney has enjoyed a 30-year career as an educator and conservationist, and has had the unique privilege of serving as director of three nature centers and an ecological field station.

Dr. Corney currently serves as executive director of Cincinnati Nature Center. “I aspire to motivate and educate people to engage in their natural world and enhance their science literacy toward being better informed, critically thinking, and conscientious decision makers.”



Bill Hopple, Cardinal President

My involvement with Cardinal began when Cincinnati Nature Center was approached to explore the merger of our founding trusts. The Nature Center became, and remains, a Strategic Conservation Partner of Cardinal. We are pleased that Dr. Jeff Corney, my successor at the Nature Center, has joined the Cardinal board to continue that partnership.

Spreading the word

Cardinal has tremendous opportunity going forward. In fact, opportunities for land protection in our seven counties exceed our capacity! Continued success of our fundraising campaign *Protect the Land You Love* is critical to our ability to meet the region's needs.

I look forward to working with everyone to spread the word about Cardinal and secure the financial support we need.

CARDINAL LAND CONSERVANCY, INC.

Our Mission:

Preserve natural habitats, waterways, agricultural lands and open space we love in Southwest Ohio by working with individuals, families and communities.

2020

Board of Directors

Dr. Jeffrey Corney

Laura Curliss, Esq.

Garett Feldkamp

Charlie Guarino
Treasurer

William Hopple
President

Patrick Hornschemeier,
Esq., Secretary

Roland Johnson

Jim Meyer
Vice President

Jerry Schwallie

Connect
with Cardinal Land
Conservancy

Website

www.CardinalLandConservancy.org

Facebook

Facebook.com/CardinalLandConservancy.org

E-mail

andy@CardinalLandConservancy.org



Mailing & Office Address

PO Box 957
790 Garfield Ave.
Milford, Ohio 45150

Telephone 513-752-2828

Affiliations

Land Trust Alliance: www.lta.org
Coalition of Ohio Land Trusts:
www.ohiolandtrusts.org

Cover Crops and Carbon Sequestration

By Andy Dickerson, Executive Director

Soil has tremendous potential to store carbon which could help offset greenhouse gas emissions such as the carbon dioxide produced by cars, power plants and many other sources. Our soil's ability to store carbon could really help to mitigate the effects of our changing climate. It is for this reason that there is a strong interest



Andy Dickerson

among farmers, scientists and agricultural agencies to better utilize best management practices, like planting cover crops, to help store carbon in soil.

But how does it work?

According to Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, cover crops put down roots and shoots which feed bacteria, fungi, earthworms and other soil organisms which increase the amount of carbon stored in the soil over time. To farmers, this is a way to restore soil

quality. The United States Department of Agriculture recommends four basic approaches to maintaining or improving soil health:

- Keep the soil covered as much as possible
- Disturb the soil as little as possible
- Keep plants growing throughout the year to feed the soil
- Diversify crop rotations, including cover crops

By utilizing these best management practices, farmers are able to enhance soil health in a wide variety of ways, potentially increasing the biodiversity in farm fields, improving water infiltration, reducing soil erosion and loss and making it easier to integrate livestock with field crops.

John Branstrator, a farmer in Clarksville, OH began using cover crops and other tools to improve soil health on his land years ago. He reports, "the payoff has been that I save fuel, equipment and fertilizer." He also uses: "less herbicide and has more resilient soil, more free time and increased profits. The pleasures of seeing the soil improve year by year and clear water running off from the farm are hard to calculate."

EQIP funds available throughout Ohio

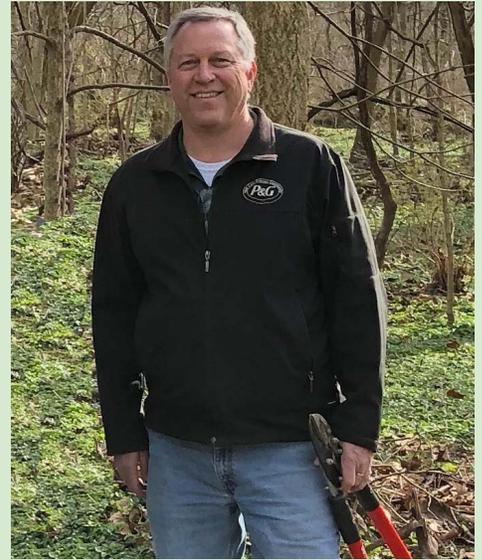
There are financial incentives to plant cover crops, too. Any farmer can look into these with their local Agriculture Extension agent or NRCS representative. There are two programs that help landowners with payments related to cover crops, as well; the Environmental Quality Incentive Payment Program or EQIP; and the Conservation Stewardship Program or CSP.

EQIP is available to all in Ohio and we happen to have an Enhanced EQIP in Clermont and Brown counties designed to protect the East Fork Watershed. Applications are accepted any time throughout the year for EQIP. Apply now! For more information, see this resource from Clermont Co.'s Soil and Water Conservation District:



Soybeans & rye complement each other

<https://www.clermontswcd.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2017/12/covercropsforswohio2016.pdf>



Mark Besserman: Close to the land

Land Steward Mark Besserman, Cardinal's newest addition to our small staff, focuses primarily on the annual Conservation Easement monitoring program. He also developed and maintains the Cardinal-owned nature preserves.

Mark became involved with Cardinal two years ago after he retired from a 32-year career at Procter and Gamble. "Having been stuck inside at a desk for 32 years, I'm now enjoying lots of time outside," he said. Mark stewards his 25-acre forest in Springfield Twp., Hamilton County, removing honeysuckle and planting trees.

He is also a volunteer for Great Parks of Hamilton County (stream monitoring and winter hikes) and the Mill Creek Alliance (stream sampling).

“When preparing talks on soil health, I want to set off an ab-ha moment like I had when realizing that things had to change.

Learning about soil health is a discovery of uncovering truths that aren't a product that is easily sold to farmers. A lot of these truths are old knowledge. Quite often we need to unlearn things.

Here's what I am attempting to do now. Disturb the soil as little as possible. Keep live roots in the soil all year. Add a small grain and plant a complex cover crop mixture of at least 8 varieties after harvest. Using the Haney soil health test informed me to reduce fertilizer. Attend soil health meetings on field days as often as possible. ” — **Jon Branstrator**, Clinton Co. farmer, protected his land with Cardinal in 2015.



We are proud to announce that with your support, Cardinal Land Conservancy has preserved 7,193 total acres of land to date.

In 2019 Cardinal preserved 2,338 acres. This land is diverse, including a wet woods in Clermont County, a cutting-edge cattle farm in Highland County, and over 2,000 acres of prime farmland in Clinton County.

Thank you for your support.

