

Letter from the President



Cheryl Scholl

It is my honor this year to serve as Blue Mountain Land Trust's Board President. As a board member the past five years I have seen our organization grow and continually gain momentum. We have accomplished many projects recently, and as you can see by this newsletter, we have a lot more going on.

I wish to thank outgoing president Carl Scheeler for his steady leadership, humor and dedication. Thanks also to our core membership, my fellow board members, staff, and our conservation partners for their steadfast support of our mission.

My hat is off to our new Executive Director, Tom Dwonch. He has provided us with a fresh approach and new ideas. The board is energized and excited by our recent successes, our present and future projects.

The economy this past year has given many of us reason to pause and evaluate what is truly important to our families, our future and ourselves. I hope as you look around this beautiful place we call home, you will find a landscape and lifestyle worth investing in for now and for the future.

Our mission is to conserve and protect the unique character of our region. I invite you to join us.



Wetland Protected

A 23 acre wetland site off of Reser Road southeast of Walla Walla has been protected under a conservation easement through the joint effort of a number of local groups including Tri State Steelheaders, Walla Walla Conservation District, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Ducks Unlimited. The project was funded by the Washington Department of Transportation as mitigation for construction of the new US Highway 12.

The site will be restored by recreating an open pond and reestablishing native wetland, riparian, and upland grass vegetation. The pond will generally conform to the outline of a historic pond at the site. The shallows will be planted with hard and soft stem bulrush which will transition into shrub and grassland plantings. The inner portion of the grassland buffers will be scattered with shrubs such as willows and dogwoods. The upland buffer areas will be planted with native grasses such as basin wild rye, Idaho fescue, blue bunch wheat grass, and intermediate bunch grass. The site will provide excellent habitat for migrating waterfowl and birds when restoration is complete and offer opportunities for wildlife observation from nearby Reser Road..

Mill Creek Easement

Over 20 acres of land along Mill Creek two miles west of Walla Walla are now protected under a conservation easement between the landowners Michael Lasher and Cheryl Scholl and the Blue Mountain Land Trust. The agreement protects a 4.7 acre creek side riparian buffer along one half mile of the north bank of Mill Creek, which is a spawning area for Mid Columbia Steelhead and rearing habitat for Bull Trout. Sixteen acres of adjacent agricultural lands is also included.



Under the agreement the creek side buffer will be permanently protected to provide natural habitat for fish, wildlife, and native plants. The remainder of the property will be retained in open space and continue to be used for agricultural or low impact recreational purposes. The agreement allows the owners to construct, replace, and maintain residential, agricultural, and commercial structures within a designated 2.6 acre building envelope. No other development will be allowed on the site.

A stream bank restoration project slated to begin in September will remove about 65 old car bodies that were previously used for bank stabilization and the banks will be sloped and replanted with native vegetation.

Funding for the project comes from the Snake River Salmon Recovery Board.



Walla Walla Crush

1 Mile, 5K, 10K Walk/Run

Registration is now open for the 5th Annual Walla Walla Crush Walk/Run, a benefit for the Blue Mountain Land Trust, to be held on October 3, 2009.

With a backdrop of the beautiful Blue Mountains, participants will have an opportunity to spend an enjoyable fall morning walking or jogging through local vineyards in the midst of harvest. The course winds through Pepper Bridge, North Star, Va Piano, and Gifford-Hirlinger Vineyards. Choices are a one mile out and back walk along an unimproved road in Pepper Bridge Vineyard, a longer 5K route through Pepper Bridge and North Star Vineyards; and a 10 K course through two more Vineyards, Va Piano and Gifford-Hirlinger. The course consists of both dirt two track and paved roads. The terrain is varied with some short hills. A portion of the 10K is on paved county road. Prizes will be awarded to the top male and female finishers for the 5K and 10K in seven age categories. All entrants are eligible for additional prize drawings and food and beverages served after the event.

If you enjoy walking or jogging, want to see beautiful local scenery and at the same time support BMLT, please take part in this event. To register or to learn more call 509-525-3136 or visit www.bmlt.org.

Thank You Sponsors!

We are indebted to the following sponsors of the 2009 Walla Walla Crush Walk Run: Pepper Bridge Farms, Pepper Bridge Winery, North Star Winery, Va Piano Vineyards, Gifford Hirlinger Winery, Abeja, Amavi Cellars, Walla Walla Vintners, Columbia REA, Key Technology, Walla Walla Clinic, Paul Richardson Agency, McGregor Company Blue Mountain Team, Brooks Shoes, Elsom Roofing, Standard Printing, USKH Inc., Super 1 Food's, Great Pacific, and Starbucks Coffee.

New Projects Move Forward

Several conservation easement projects are underway at BMLT. Two projects financed through grants from the Snake River Salmon Recovery Board (SNSRB) will protect riparian habitat and natural stream conditions to benefit salmon and steelhead. One is a 35 acre project on the middle Touchet River downstream from Dayton and the second is a 30 acre project on the Walla Walla River west of Walla Walla. We have several more grant proposals under review by the SNSRB that will protect riparian habitat and natural stream conditions. We will know the results of these applications in the fall.



We are also working on a new project that will protect almost 500 acres of land near Dixie. This conservation easement will be donated by the landowner who wants to keep the land in agricultural production and protect riparian habitat while prohibiting development, mining, and windmills. Another large project of almost 2100 acres is complete but the land is for sale and the agreement is subject to approval by prospective buyers.



Fall Campaign

BMLT will soon conduct its fall campaign to raise funds for operating expenses for the next fiscal year. We have made great strides in the past year and we see a busy year ahead. In the coming year we plan to expand our education and outreach program, implement many of the recommendations in the organizational assessment study, refine our stewardship program to ensure that lands under conservation agreements are protected, and continue to work to protect even more important lands under conservation agreements. To do these things we need your continued financial support. If you haven't already done so, we hope that you will consider a donation to BMLT. Your contribution is an investment in the future quality of life of the Blue Mountain region. Thank you for your support!

Personnel Changes

Thank you Todd Kimball for four years bookkeeping for BMLT! Todd serves on the BMLT Board as Treasurer. For the past four years he has also kept the books, paid the bills, and prepared our taxes in addition to his full time job as a farmer and family man. We have recently started doing the book keeping in the office thanks to our new computer and software capabilities. Todd will remain on the Board as Treasurer to oversee our efforts and to provide technical assistance when necessary.

BMLT said farewell to Beth Thiel, Conservation and Stewardship Director in July. Beth served BMLT for six years as both Executive Director and Conservation and Stewardship Director. She was instrumental in helping BMLT develop into the organization it is today. Beth has left to pursue other interests. We thank her for her work at BMLT and wish her well in the future.

New Board Officers

Effective at the June Board of Directors meeting the following directors were elected as officers. President – Cheryl Scholl, Vice President – Jon Cole, Secretary – Beth Kreger, and continuing as Treasurer is Todd Kimball. Our thanks to outgoing officers President – Carl Scheeler, Vice President – Jim Peterson, and Secretary – Cheryl Scholl.

From the Executive Director



The four months since our last newsletter have been a busy and fruitful time for us. As you can see in this newsletter we have a variety of activities underway.

I think the most important thing we do is to help protect landscapes under conservation agreements. It takes a lot of work and a long time to execute an agreement but the results are everlasting. Whenever we complete an agreement it is reason to celebrate and this past year has given us a number of occasions for that. The coming year will bring even more.

The next most important activity is to make sure that the conservation values identified in our agreements are protected. Our stewardship program includes annual monitoring of protected lands to ensure compliance with terms of the agreement. We do a baseline study in the first year and thereafter measure conditions from that. We take our stewardship responsibility very seriously because that is where we deliver on the promises contained in the agreement.

Fund raising and public information and education activities are important too because without donations we can't operate. And without an informed public we do not identify conservation opportunities.

Last but not least we need you to spread the word about BMLT and land conservation. As this area continues to grow and experience pressure for various types of development, we need to get the word out that there is an option for landowners that want to conserve their land for future generations. We're always happy to meet with individuals or groups to talk about BMLT and protecting our important natural landscapes. If you belong to a group that would like to hear more about conserving the unique natural resources in our area, please contact me.

Tom

Organizational Assessment

BMLT has completed the organizational assessment funded by the Land Trust Alliance. The assessment identified organizational strengths as well as weaknesses. We are very happy with the results of the assessment and are in the process of implementing the highest priority recommendations. We are excited about the operational changes that will result in making BMLT a more effective organization. The assessment and implementation of recommendations is also a step towards accreditation by the Land Trust Alliance. Each accredited Land Trust operates under a uniform set of standards and principles. Accreditation ensures that the Land Trust has developed the policies and procedures that enable it to work effectively to achieve land conservation goals. We appreciate the assistance from the Land Trust Alliance for funding the study.



Continuing Legal Education

Blue Mountain Land Trust will sponsor a continuing education workshop on conservation easements for legal and financial professionals on September 21, 2009 in Walla Walla. The one day workshop will be presented by Konrad Liegel a partner at K&L Gates in Seattle, Washington. Contact us if you are interested in attending this workshop.

Conservation Easements

September 21, 2009 we will offer an opportunity to landowners and the general public to learn about BMLT and conservation easements. This free session will be held from 1 – 3 P.M. at St. Francis Parish Hall, 712 W. Alder Street. Preregistration is not required. Refreshments will be served. Please plan to attend.



Art Raffle

It's not too late to purchase tickets for the 2009 art raffle. Donated landscape art to be raffled off includes an oil painting by James McNamara, an acrylic by Fr. Bruno Segatta, and a large format photograph by Clyde Strickland. The art can be seen at the Farmers Market on Saturdays or on our website at www.bmlt.org. One of these would be perfect in your home or business or to be given as a gift. Take a chance on winning one of these beautiful pieces of art and support the activities of BMLT at the same time. The drawing for winners will be at our Board of Directors meeting to be held October 20, 2009.

Thank you!

We have been very fortunate to receive very useful gifts that are already benefitting our operations. Our sincere thanks go to Walla Walla University for donating two surplus, but very good computers for the office, in June. They have the additional needed capacity to run software needed to conduct our business. At the same time a donor purchased Quick Books for Non Profits to help us with our bookkeeping. In July we received a grant from the Art & Clara Bald Trust that will enable us to purchase equipment needed for our education and outreach, and our conservation and stewardship programs. With funding from the Trust we are able to purchase a lap top computer and projector for presentations, a digital camera to be used in our stewardship program, and a number of other items. Without this grant we would have been unable to obtain this much needed equipment. Later in July we were fortunate to obtain free surplus office furniture from the Walla Walla School District. We now have two additional file cabinets, an office divider, and several additional chairs for the office. We are thankful for these much needed additions.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Blue Mountain Land Trust is to protect, agricultural and forested lands, critical riparian and other habitat, and lands of historical significance through voluntary, nongovernmental means with an emphasis on private ownership of protected lands

BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF

President - Cheryl Scholl
Vice President - Jon Cole
Secretary - Beth Kreger
Treasurer - Todd Kimball
Director - Shirley Muse
Director - Sue Parrish
Director - Jim Peterson
Director - Carl Scheeler
Director - Tom Scribner
Director - Carol Jean Thompson
Director - Tom Williams

Executive Director - Tom Dwonch
Administrative Assisitant – Vacant

BLUE MOUNTAIN LAND TRUST CORE VALUES

- ✧ **Commitment:** Carrying out landowner wishes in perpetuity is an enormous responsibility. Landowners and communities count on our commitment.
- ✧ **Generational responsibility:** Our generation has enjoyed access to plentiful natural resources. We feel an obligation to provide future generations similar access to nature's services such as purifying water and air, providing venues for recreation and personal renewal, and sustaining valuable plants and wildlife. We must act now to ensure these services will be available in the future.
- ✧ **Community involvement:** We will strive to engage individual community members, local governments, business interests and conservation partners in our planning, and in completing our mission.
- ✧ **Public trust:** Transparency, neutrality and open communication are considered absolutely necessary for our organization to succeed in meeting its mission
- ✧ **Integrity:** Honesty, sincerity and strength will always be the base from which we conduct our business.

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