



DELAWARE
HIGHLANDS
CONSERVANCY

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STAIRWAY RIDGE, CONSERVED PROPERTY IN PIKE COUNTY, PA
PHOTO BY STEVE GOSSET



DELAWARE
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CONSERVANCY

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Advocating for the Delaware River Watershed in Washington, D.C.

Representing the Conservancy on Capitol Hill

This spring, members of the Conservancy’s board of directors and staff traveled twice to Washington, D.C. to participate in the Coalition for the Delaware Watershed’s Hill Day and the Land Trust Alliance’s Advocacy Days.

Together with other land trust partners from across the country, directors and staff met with legislators to discuss key issues, advocate for the protection and restoration of the Delaware River Watershed, and share strategies to advance conservation goals for our region. Priorities included support for the Delaware River Basin Restoration Program, the Natural Resources Conservation Service Farm Bill, the Legacy Restoration Fund, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

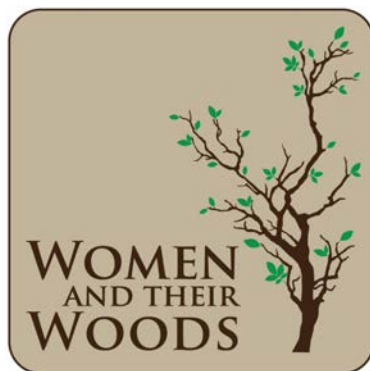


These important meetings help to strengthen federal support for local conservation, ensure our region’s priorities are heard, and build lasting partnerships that protect the lands and waters we all depend on.

Special thanks to Conservancy President Jacqueline Sailer and and staff members Samantha Mango and Trey Talley!

Women and Their Woods Educational Retreat

**September 11th - 13th, 2026
Lukan’s Farm Resort, Hawley, PA**



Women forest landowners and aspiring landowners from across the mid-Atlantic region are invited to an educational retreat to learn practical forest management skills and build connections with other landowners.

Join us for three days and two nights of learning, networking, and exploring in a friendly, peer-learning environment.

Details and registration information at DelawareHighlands.org/events

Lake Jamie: Conserving Land, Water, and Wildlife

76 Acres Protected in Monroe and Pike Counties, PA

When David Niper purchased his 76 acres on Lake Jamie in Monroe County, PA in 2019, he was fulfilling a lifelong dream to build his home on lakefront property. As a professional contractor, David knew the land he was purchasing had already been surveyed and could be developed into as many as 32 building lots.

But after spending time on the property, David began to notice a striking difference between the two sides of the lake. The north side, already home to 18 houses, was almost completely devoid of wildlife. By contrast, the undeveloped west and south sides of the lake, including David's property, were thriving with otters, beavers, eagles, osprey, and a wide variety of other birds and wildlife.

As David built his home and worked to clean up the property—removing tires, garbage, and an old house that was falling down—his connection to the land deepened. Through that process, he became determined to preserve the rest of this side of the lake for the wildlife that depend on it.

“I could have made a fortune building houses on this lake, but it would be one of the worst things I’ve ever done in my life to destroy this environment,” David said. **“People impinge on wildlife whether they want to or not, and it changes their patterns of behavior. I don’t care if I can build 32 houses here and make more money. To me, the important thing is to keep it the same.”**

While exploring the area, David noticed a sign on a neighboring conserved property for the Delaware Highlands Conservancy and reached out to the organization's Land Protection staff. He invited them

to visit and took them on a boat ride around the lake, where they observed beaver lodges and spotted both an osprey and an eagle. Over the next year, David and the Conservancy worked closely together to develop a conservation easement that would permanently protect the property from future development and subdivision, while safeguarding its vital forest, wetland, and lake wildlife habitat.

In January 2026, the conservation easement was finalized, and the property is now forever protected.

David and his wife continue to own and manage the land and have lived full-time in their Lake Jamie home since 2021. “This is paradise to me. I look out my window fifty times a day,” David commented. “I don’t see wildlife every time, but it makes me happy to know that they’re not being bothered by somebody’s car, somebody’s radio. They’re undisturbed.”

Reflecting on the future of the property, David added, “The water presents so many more opportunities for the wildlife. It’s so important to just leave it alone—to leave the swampy area, the dead trees standing for woodpeckers. I have a whole mile of lakefront that’s undeveloped, and it’s staying that way.”

By choosing to conserve his 76 acres, David has ensured that no matter who owns the property in the future, this important wildlife habitat will remain protected forever.

This project was supported through the Open Space Institute’s Delaware River Watershed Protection Fund (DRWPF). The fund is made possible with support from the William Penn Foundation, which works to protect water quality throughout the Delaware River Basin. To date, the DRWPF has helped conserve nearly 25,000 acres of forested land to safeguard clean water for the nearly 15 million people who rely on the Delaware River Watershed—including residents of northeastern Pennsylvania, Trenton, Philadelphia, Wilmington, and New York City. Additional support was provided through the WeConservePA Conservation Easement Assistance Program.



Annual Photo Contest

Confluence: Land, Water, Wildlife

The Conservancy is pleased to announce our ninth annual juried photo contest for the Upper Delaware River region, open to professional and amateur photographers.

Confluence: Land, Water, Wildlife invites photographers to capture striking nature images in six categories: **landscape, wildlife, macro, water, the Van Scott Nature Reserve, and a youth category for photographers under age 18**. Without disturbing or harming any creature or its habitat, be creative in showcasing the diverse wildlife, plants, and special places of our region.



Photos will be judged on creativity, originality, composition, clarity and quality, and impact. **Photographers may submit entries via the Conservancy's website from August 3 until August 31.**

The winning photos will be chosen by a panel of judges, along with one People's Choice, and will be hung at the ARTery gallery in Milford, PA, beginning with a reception in November. Photographers are invited to submit no more than two photos to the contest. Entrants must agree to the official rules and submit a \$15 entry fee to be eligible.

For full contest details, to download the Official Rules, and to submit your photos, please visit www.delawarehighlands.org/photo-contest.



Giving Through Your IRA

A Tax-Smart Way to Protect the Upper Delaware River Region

Giving through your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) is a tax-efficient way to support land, water, and wildlife conservation in the Upper Delaware River region. Whether you are meeting your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), planning for the future, or looking for a meaningful way to give back, an IRA charitable rollover—also called a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)—offers benefits for you and for conservation.

- ◆ **Tax Savings:** When you donate directly from your IRA to the Delaware Highlands Conservancy, the amount of your gift is excluded from your taxable income.
- ◆ **Satisfy Your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD):** If you are age 73 or older, you can direct all or part of your RMD to the Conservancy, reducing the amount treated as taxable income.
- ◆ **Simplicity:** You don't need to withdraw funds, realize income, or pay additional taxes. Simply instruct your IRA administrator to send a gift directly to the Conservancy. It's straightforward, efficient, and immediately impactful.
- ◆ **Support Conservation Without Affecting Your Cash Flow:** Because IRA gifts come from retirement assets rather than your checking account or monthly income, you can make a meaningful difference without affecting your daily budget.
- ◆ **Your Gift Stays Local:** Donations made through your IRA support conservation work here in the Upper Delaware River region, helping protect the family farms, forest habitat, and clean water that sustain our communities.
- ◆ **Create a Living Legacy:** Let your financial planning reflect your values. Your IRA contribution helps ensure that the scenic views, working lands, and wildlife habitat you cherish today will be protected now and for future generations.

To learn more about making a Qualified Charitable Distribution or to notify us of an IRA gift, please contact Samantha Mango at 570-226-3164 ext. 9 or samantha@delawarehighlands.org.

Protecting Shelter Valley for Generations to Come

165 Acres Conserved in Wayne County, PA

Shelter Valley has been part of the Price family for generations. The 165-acre property in Wayne County, Pennsylvania was first purchased in 1940 by Cole and Gertrude Price as a summer retreat. For Cole, who had grown up on a farm in New Jersey and dreamed of owning one again, the land offered a return to his roots.

Gertrude named the property Shelter Valley, and the name endured. Summers were spent tending gardens, exploring the woods, and enjoying time together as a family. Cole cultivated a large garden each year, and some of the perennials Gertrude planted more than eighty years ago still bloom on the property today—a living reminder of the family’s deep and lasting connection to the land.

In 1970, Cole and Gertrude gifted Shelter Valley to their son Edward. Nearly two decades later, in 1988, Edward and his wife Susan made the property their full-time home, raising their two sons, Rob and Ed, among its forests and fields.

Although Edward passed away in 2007, Shelter Valley remains at the heart of daily life for Susan, Rob, and Ed, who continue to live on and steward the land. Rob still plants gardens each year, working to improve the soil while appreciating the diversity of the property. From mature forests to successional fields and wetlands, the land supports a wide variety of unique wildlife habitats. Bears, bobcats, foxes, mink, and countless bird species are regular visitors.

“It just has a peaceful atmosphere; it feels like we’re just surrounded by nature,” Susan explained. “I would always just be so glad to come home after a long day.”

Over time, as development pressures increased in the surrounding area, the family began thinking seriously about the land’s future.

“Growing up here and seeing the area change, seeing the neighboring farms being subdivided, that motivated me to want to conserve it,” Rob explained. With the property bordering both an industrial park and a mining corporation, the family felt a growing responsibility to protect the forests, wetlands, and clean water that make Shelter Valley so ecologically significant.

The Price family worked with the Delaware Highlands Conservancy to develop a conservation easement to permanently protect their family land from future subdivision and development, and in early 2026, the easement was finalized.

The family enjoys hiking and exploring the woods and fields and hopes the property will remain a central part of their lives—and their legacy—for many years to come. “We hope to grow old here,” Susan stated. “It’s just good to know that it’s going to be preserved and not developed, and we’re glad that Delaware Highlands Conservancy will oversee the future of the property.”

Reflecting on their experience, Rob encourages other landowners to start the conservation process early, noting that it takes time to complete and that planning ahead helps ensure a property’s future is protected.

By choosing to conserve their 165 acres, the Price family has ensured that no matter who owns the property in the future, its forests, fields, wetlands, and wildlife habitat will remain protected, honoring the legacy of those who first named it Shelter Valley more than eight decades ago.

Funding support was also provided through Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, through the Environmental Stewardship Fund, and the WeConservePA Conservation Easement Assistance Program.



Going With the Flow: Fifty Summers on the Delaware

by James Sinni, Delaware Highlands Conservancy Member

In August of 1977, a handful of young men fresh out of college, some of us friends since elementary and high school, gathered for what we called “The Canoe Trip.” We packed coolers, borrowed gear, and launched ourselves onto the Delaware River with little more than optimism and time to spare. None of us could have known that we were beginning a tradition that would carry us through five decades of life.

We still call it “the canoe trip,” though truth be told, we haven’t canoed since 1995. These days we rent large inflatable rafts—comfortable, forgiving, and perfectly suited to a group of old men who have embraced the art of relaxation. The rafts have rings, and we clip ourselves together into a floating flotilla. We don’t paddle. We quite literally go with the flow. Conversation drifts as easily as we do. For a few days each summer, the river carries our stories the way it has always carried us.

In that first summer, the river was beautiful with tree-lined banks, but something was missing. Bald eagles were nearly gone from New York State, according to the Delaware Highlands Conservancy. A year earlier, in 1976, there were only two nesting pairs recorded statewide. The widespread use of DDT had devastated the population, thinning eggshells and nearly wiping out a species that once defined the American wilderness. On our early trips, we saw herons and hawks, but never eagles.

Around the same time our tradition began, efforts were quietly underway to restore what had been lost. Conservationists, including what is now the Delaware Highlands Conservancy, were working to protect habitat, educate communities, and support the broader recovery that followed the ban on DDT. Over the decades, those efforts transformed the river corridor. Clean water protections, conserved lands, and careful stewardship made it possible for wildlife to return. And return they did.

Somewhere along the way, no one remembers exactly when, we looked up and saw our first eagle. Then another. Today, it is not unusual for us to see several in a single afternoon: soaring above the bluffs, perched in tall oak and maples, skimming the water with astonishing grace. The absence we once took for granted has been replaced with abundance.

Over fifty summers, our group has changed too. Some early years we were eighteen strong. One year we proudly called ourselves “The Awesome Eight.” We have added friends, welcomed friends-of-friends, and said goodbye to men who now float only in memory. We have aged, slowed down, and learned the value of simply being present. The river remains our constant.

Our canoe trip began as a gathering of young men looking for adventure. It has endured as a testament to friendship. And alongside it, the recovery of the bald eagle stands as proof of what dedication and stewardship of the Delaware Highlands Conservancy can accomplish.

Each summer, as we drift together and look skyward, we are reminded that renewal is possible. The river flows on. The eagles soar. And for fifty years now, so have we.



Visit DelawareHighlands.org/eagles to watch a short film about the process of bringing bald eagles back to the Upper Delaware River region.



PHOTO BY JEFF SIDLE

Leaving a Legacy

What type of legacy will you leave behind? Our Legacy Leaders have included the Conservancy in their will or estate plans, or have helped a parent, partner, or loved one leave a legacy.

We can discuss strategies to help you support the Conservancy's land protection mission while also maximizing your tax and financial benefits. If you would like to learn more, or if you have already considered us in your estate plans, please contact Samantha Mango, Development Coordinator at samantha@delawarehighlands.org or 570-226-3164 ext. 9 so we may thank you during your lifetime.

Legacy Leaders

- Sue Currier
- Patricia Diness
- Helen Early (*deceased*)
- Mary Evans
- Arnold Friedman (*deceased*)
- Linda Gearhart (*deceased*)
- Susanne Hand & David Kinsey
- Susan Hartney
- John Lipari (*deceased*)
- Karen Lutz
- Harold MacGregor (*deceased*)
- Dorothy Merrill (*deceased*)
- Mary Sue Sweeney Price
- Kimberly (Mimi) Raleigh
- Brenda Seldin
- Richard Snyder (*deceased*)
- Charles Victor Traeger (*deceased*)
- Sigrid Wilshinsky (*deceased*)
- Jonathan Wind
- Barbara Yeaman (*deceased*)

Upcoming Events

Join us for community programs for all ages at the Van Scott Nature Reserve and throughout the region! Space is limited and events require advance registration; a small registration fee is requested. Visit DelawareHighlands.org/events for all the details, to register, and to view our complete Calendar of Events.

Timber Sale Field Tour

June 5 • 10am-1pm • Delaware State Forest District Office

Are you considering a timber harvest as part of your property's long-term management? Do you want to learn more about what goes into a timber sale? Join Delaware Highlands Conservancy and the PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry for a "Walk and Talk" to have your questions answered!

Morning Wellness Walks

June 13, June 20, and July 11 • 9am-11am

Relax and connect with nature at the scenic Van Scott Nature Reserve. The morning walks will last for approximately 1.5-2 hours and take different routes of the Bluebird, Butterfly, Explorer, Wildflower and Woodland Trails. Just drop in at 9am to join the group—no registration required!



Monitoring Volunteer Training

July 24 • 1pm-5pm

Learn more about our monitoring program and how volunteers can get involved and join us on annual visits to conserved properties.

Sunset Wellness Walk

July 25 • 7pm-8:30pm

Relax and connect with nature at the scenic Van Scott Nature Reserve. Sunset walks will last for 1.5 hours and take different routes to finish off with the best view of the sunset. Perfect for photographers!

Growing Your Own Food: Harvesting Your Hard Work

September 19 • 10am-12pm

Join local farmer Amy Erlwein at the Van Scott Nature Reserve where we will discuss the final stages of growing your own food—the harvest! Amy will discuss and demonstrate how to properly harvest your crops along with how to preserve and store your food through canning, dehydration, freezing and more. Learn how to collect and store your seeds properly to ensure that they will be ready for planting next spring.



PHOTO BY LIZ DIMENNO

PHOTO BY STEVE GOSCH



The Delaware Highlands Conservancy is protecting more than 19,380 acres of working farms and forests, clean waters, and wildlife habitat in the Upper Delaware River region.

To learn more about...

the Delaware Highlands Conservancy or to make a donation in support of our work, visit DelawareHighlands.org.

Find us on  @DelawareHighlandsConservancy  @DHConservancy

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PHOTO BY MARY KEENE

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DELAWARE HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY

"Nature is not a place to visit. It is home." – Gary Snyder