

The Flow Chart



Winter 2015



Rotary Club of Birmingham breaks ground on Rotary Trail

Highly anticipated Rotary Trail breaks ground in downtown Birmingham

The Rotary Club of Birmingham's centennial anniversary project is underway! Rotary members raised more than \$4 million for the project and have now partnered with the City of Birmingham for its construction and future maintenance. This public-private partnership will not only support outdoor family recreation, but also improve our community's water quality through an appropriate storm water drainage system.

The trail runs along the historic "cut," an abandoned rail line that is 16 feet below street level plagued by crumbling concrete and graffiti. Although mostly hidden from view, this site was a forgotten part of Birmingham, relatively unknown to most observers. The century old "cut" only served as a water waste land, draining nonpoint source pollution from the streets of Birmingham directly into Valley Creek.

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The Freshwater Land Trust's mission is the acquisition and stewardship of lands that enhance water quality and preserve open space.



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Freshwater Land Trust Staff & Board Members

Here we grow again...

The Freshwater Land Trust is excited to have expanded our office space! The former Sidewalk Film Festival location, which is right next door to our main office on 1st Avenue North, is now being used as additional meeting space and Board of Directors room.

As we continue to bring on new members of the Freshwater Land Trust family, including two Americorps VISTA members, we saw no better opportunity than now to take advantage of the available space next door. As we approach our 20th anniversary in 2016, this new space allows us to accommodate our growing staff as we continue to serve Jefferson County and the greater Birmingham area.

This expansion would not be possible without the help of Sloss Realty and Vulcan Value Partners, two of the Freshwater Land Trust's Corporate Partners for Conservation. In addition to their presenting sponsorship of our Land Aid event this year, Vulcan Value Partners donated furniture for our new space. Many thanks to these outstanding partners!

If you're on our side of town on 1st Avenue North and 23rd Street North, feel free to stop by for a tour! This is a very exciting time at the Freshwater Land Trust, and we look forward to continued growth as we expand both our office footprint and our conservation footprint!



Rotary Trail featured on *Good Day Alabama* with Jeh Jeh Pruitt

Rotary Trail design benefits water quality

The trail's new design raises the grade of the cut to approximately 6 feet. The new trail, along with the green vegetation located along its corridor, will now allow for the filtration of sediment, oil and other storm water runoff before it flows into Valley Creek and eventually into one of our primary drinking water sources, the Black Warrior River. The new Rotary Trail is helping to make one of the largest positive impacts on our community's water quality in recent history.

Once completed, the Rotary Trail will leave a lasting legacy for the city of Birmingham and its citizens. The Freshwater Land Trust is proud to be playing a role in the planning process for this landmark project. The Rotary Trail will serve as another Birmingham success story and testament to the transformational work that public-private partnerships can bring to our community.



The Rotary Trail's entrance will bring back the historical "Welcome to the Magic City" sign.



Wendy Jackson and Bill Jones, Chair of the Centennial Project

Rotary Trail Facts:

- The Rotary Trail is a 4-block linear park in the old historical railroad cut.
- The trail runs along 1st Avenue S between 24th and 20th Streets.
- The trail will connect Railroad Park to Sloss Furnaces.
- The Rotary Club of Birmingham raised nearly \$4 million to build the trail in celebration of the club's 100th year anniversary.
- The trail will feature boardwalks, running and biking paths, picnic areas, and many other amenities.
- The Rotary Trail is an extension of the Red Rock Ridge & Valley Trail System's Jones Valley Corridor.



FRESHWATER
LAND TRUST



AWF President Horace Horn, Wendy Jackson, Commissioner Gunter Guy & Matt Bowden at AWF Awards banquet



Rotary Club Honored

While the Freshwater Land Trust brought home the AWF Conservation Organization of the Year Award, the Rotary Club of Birmingham was also honored as Water Conservationist of the Year Award for their outstanding efforts with the Rotary Trail and the numerous water quality benefits associated with this transformational project.

To celebrate our partners bringing home these two awards, FWLT Executive Director Wendy Jackson and Cheryl Morgan were asked to speak to the Rotary Club the following week. Governor Robert Bentley was in attendance as well as Attorney General Luther Strange, while Wendy and Cheryl discussed the Rotary Trail project and their recent honors at the Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards.

AWF honors FWLT at Governor's Conservation Awards

The Freshwater Land Trust was recently selected as the Conservation Organization of the Year for the Alabama Wildlife Federation's Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards!

For more than 40 years, this award has recognized organizations that make lasting contributions to conservation in Alabama. The Conservation Organization of the Year Award is a part of the Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards, selected by the Alabama Wildlife Federation (AWF) and is one of the highest honors in the conservation community.

The Freshwater Land Trust and its Board of Directors were honored for their work with Red Mountain Park, the Red Rock Ridge & Valley Trail System, and Turkey Creek Nature Preserve, including the removal of Old Shadow Lake Dam on Turkey Creek, a project that opened up an additional half mile of habitat for the endangered vermilion darter – a fish native to the Birmingham area that before this project only had about seven miles of habitat in the entire world.

"This award helps us continue to carry out our mission of preserving the special places that matter in Alabama, and we are extremely honored to be recognized as meeting AWF's standards of excellence," Executive Director Wendy Jackson said. "This mark of distinction allows us to position ourselves among the community as dedicated stewards of Alabama's exceptional and irreplaceable natural heritage, leaving a permanent legacy for future generations to admire."

Alabama Power Company, a longtime partner and supporter of the Freshwater Land Trust, provided the nomination for the award. Bruce Akin, CEO of B.A.S.S., and Randy Jones of Vulcan Materials Company provided letters of support.

This is the second time the Freshwater Land Trust has been honored as Conservation Organization of the Year award, previously winning in 2003 as the Black Warrior-Cahaba River Land Trust.



Governor Bentley & Wendy Jackson

Preserving a Legacy in Dunnivant Valley



For more than 60 years, Double Oak Mountain has represented a family's legacy. Over the years, this family watched as dirt roads turned to asphalt and pine forests turned to brick homes. Although the mountain was changing in front of their eyes, their legacy endured the test of time. Now, thanks to many conservation-minded partners, a piece of Double Oak Mountain that withstood decades of change and development, will be preserved forever.

The Freshwater Land Trust has purchased 225 acres of the Smyer Ridge property on Double Oak Mountain, totaling two miles of ridgeline seen by several communities throughout Dunnivant Valley in fast developing Shelby County. The Freshwater Land Trust will own and manage the property, ensuring that the ridgeline is conserved in perpetuity through a revolving stewardship program.

"Conserving this property on Double Oak Mountain is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Not only is this ridgeline biologically significant to the unbroken Appalachian mountain chain, but it is also beloved by people throughout Dunnivant Valley," FWLT Executive Director Wendy Jackson said.

Billy Smyer inherited this property on Double Oak Mountain from his father, eventually gifting a portion of the land to his children and later selling most of the rest to a local realty company. Being located in Shelby County, one of the fastest growing counties in Alabama, the Smyer's remaining undeveloped property on Double Oak Mountain is a treasure to the communities within its viewshed. This project not only conserves a beautiful and rare forested habitat, but also protects a ridgeline critical to the landscape of Shelby County.



Double Oak Mountain Campaign donors raised \$250,000 for the purchase of the 225 acres of ridgeline property on Double Oak Mountain.

The purchase of the property was made possible by a host of local and regional partners and from community individuals, some who were not previously conservation donors. The Smyer family made the lead gift to the FWLT's fundraising campaign to purchase the ridge, followed by a challenge grant from an anonymous North Carolina philanthropist. Local foundations including the Robert Meyer Foundation, Susan Mott Webb Foundation, and Norcross Wildlife Foundation matched the grant, along with outstanding individual support from the local communities.

"The communities within the viewshed of Double Oak Mountain dedicated their hearts to this project," Jackson said. "Conserving their mountain meant conserving their way of life, and that is what our work is all about."

In addition, Double Oak Mountain is a regional hotspot of biodiversity for both terrestrial and aquatic species, and is a part of the Southern Appalachian unbroken mountain chain. Headwater streams in the Southern Appalachians are the lifeblood of the larger watershed and are crucial to wildlife and healthy fisheries and maintaining water quality downstream. The Double Oak Mountain watershed also serves as the headwaters for both Shoal Creek to the northwest and the Coosa River to the southeast. The Freshwater Land Trust will manage the ridgetop property as a private nature preserve. However, the property will be used for scientific research and guided field trips for educational purposes.

Now, decades later, the Smyer family can rest assured that because of their good stewardship, this piece of Double Oak Mountain will continue to represent their family's legacy.

"The Freshwater Land Trust's work allows the mountain, which I have known all my life, to remain wild," Billy Smyer said. "My hope is that future generations can enjoy the same mountain views that I have."

Corporate Partners for Conservation

The Freshwater Land Trust was proud to honor its Corporate Partners for Conservation at the annual corporate breakfast event this September. The Freshwater Land Trust's Corporate Partners for Conservation program is a leadership opportunity for the Birmingham business community to recognize the value of land conservation. Each year, FWLT honors those corporations who have made contributions to preserving the places that matter throughout the previous year.

This year's event was generously hosted by Bill Horton, Senior Executive Vice President and South Region President of Regions Bank, and featured keynote speaker Bruce Akin, CEO of B.A.S.S. Bruce spoke on the importance of conservation to B.A.S.S. and its business bottom line, emphasizing the business's partnership with FWLT and its mission to provide access to recreational activities such as fishing and hunting. Regions graciously offered its corporate dining space where FWLT's guests enjoyed a catered breakfast and sunrise view over Birmingham's cityscape.

The Freshwater Land Trust looks forward to coordinating this event each year, as it offers the opportunity to convey our gratitude to our partners and reflect on our mission, while also allowing our key supporters the opportunity to talk about their involvement with the Freshwater Land Trust and how land conservation matters to their business.





Regions Bank



Wells Fargo



B.A.S.S.



Balch & Bingham



Drummond Company



Vulcan Materials Company



Wade Sand & Gravel



Waste Management

Other Corporate Partners...

We'd also like to acknowledge our corporate partners who were not able to attend the breakfast, but contributed in 2014:

- CSX
- Protective Life
- BBVA Compass
- Honda
- U.S. Steel
- The Westervelt Company



Ann Florie, FWLT Board Chair & B.A.S.S. CEO Bruce Akin



Bill Horton, FWLT Corporate Breakfast host, & Wendy Jackson



Leroy Abrams & Ann Forney, Regions Bank



(L-R) Ruffner Page, Temple Tutwiler, Grayson Hall



FWLT Staff

The Freshwater Land Trust is incredibly grateful for the continued support of our corporate partners. It is these organizations who are making a difference in conservation throughout Central Alabama. To learn more about how your business can become a Freshwater Land Trust Corporate Partner for Conservation, contact us today at 205-417-2777 or visit our website at www.freshwaterlandtrust.org.

Westervelt Ecological Services & Freshwater Land Trust preserve the Locust Fork



The Freshwater Land Trust recently closed on a conservation easement with Westervelt Ecological Services on their new mitigation bank. This 111 acre property in Blount County is along the Locust Fork River and is a Priority II Conservation Area for the Freshwater Land Trust. This new mitigation bank will focus on restoring five tributaries to the Locust Fork to enhance and protect water quality. The Locust Fork is at the upper eastern end of the Warrior Basin and is home to a multitude of aquatic life, including 74 species of fish and several species of endangered mussels & snails. In addition, the site will be replanted in mixed hardwoods and will also include a short leaf pine restoration component. Mitigation banks give the Freshwater Land Trust the unique opportunity to partner with Westervelt on large scale restoration projects. As the conservation easement holder, the FWLT will ensure that the site stays in conservation after the mitigation process is complete.

This is our third mitigation with Westervelt Ecological Services. In Shelby County, we hold an easement on the 547 acre Yellowleaf Mitigation Bank, and in Tuscaloosa County we have an easement on the 1,036 acre Big Sandy Mitigation Bank. Both restoration projects have been very successful, and we are looking forward to watching the newest bank be restored on the Locust Fork.



Locust Fork restoration in Blount County



Kopecky performs at Avondale Brewery for 7th Annual Land Aid

Party With a Purpose

The Freshwater Land Trust celebrated its 7th annual Land Aid event at Avondale Brewery this July. The event was headlined by Kopecky, an American indie-rock band based in Nashville. Kopecky has had their music appear on a variety of hit television series including *Grey's Anatomy*, *Parenthood*, *The Vampire Diaries* and *Nashville*, among others. Kopecky has toured all over the world and has played at some of the largest music festivals including Austin City Limits, Bumbershoot, SXSW, Lollapalooza and most recently Hangout Festival in Gulf Shores.

As the Land Trust's annual flagship event, Land Aid is an opportunity for Birmingham residents to learn more about conservation efforts throughout Central Alabama. Since 2007, thousands of attendees have helped make Land Aid a success and ultimately helped fulfill the Land Trust's mission to preserve the places that matter for future generations.

Good Music. Good Beer. Good Cause.

This year FWLT brewed two Avondale beers crafted exclusively for Land Aid: a Red Rock IPA and a Freshwater Honeysuckle Saison. These were brewed by the Land Trust's junior board, governing board and staff for the event., and proceeds from sales of the specialty beers were donated to the land trust

Freshwater Land Trust Junior Board

Land Aid is coordinated by the FWLT Junior Board, a group of young professionals whose goal is to increase support and awareness for the Freshwater Land Trust. In an effort to cultivate the next generation of conservationists, the Junior Board launched Land Aid as a way to educate young professionals about what the FWLT does through a fun, engaging event. Land Aid started seven years ago and has grown from the back patio at Parkside to the large stage at Avondale Brewery, a testament to Land Aid's success year after year. Land Aid has featured bands in the past like nationally well-known St. Paul And The Broken Bones and The Wild Feathers and continues to attract quality acts like this year's headlining band, Kopecky.

Vulcan Value Partners takes Land Aid to next level

This year, the Freshwater Land Trust was thrilled to bring on Vulcan Value Partners as the presenting sponsor for Land Aid 2015. Vulcan Value Partners is a new sponsor, and with their generous support, FWLT was able to take Land Aid to the next level and further establish it as the organization's signature event.

With Vulcan Value's continued support, FWLT plans to build on the momentum from this year's event, making Land Aid 2016 a show stopper for the Land Trust's 20th anniversary .



Anna Catherine Roberson, FWLT Junior Board member, & Ben Foster of Vulcan Value Partners



B.A.S.S. volunteers help to manage vegetation for the protection of rare species at Turkey Creek Nature Preserve



B.A.S.S. Volunteers help preserve critical habitat for Turkey Creek

The good folks at Bassmaster preserve more than just the picture perfect large mouths you see in their magazines—they understand the importance of protecting all fish and wildlife. That's why the Freshwater Land Trust is proud to have teamed up with B.A.S.S. volunteers to restore critical habitat for the endangered vermilion darter and watercress darter at Turkey Creek Nature Preserve.

The watercress and vermilion darters are both endemic to Jefferson County, and the vermilion darter's habitat is limited to only a 7-mile segment of Turkey Creek. The Freshwater Land Trust works to preserve the habitat of these two indigenous fish through a host of corporate and national partners. B.A.S.S. volunteers helped to enhance this critical habitat by removing invasive species and planting new native shrubs along the banks of the creek. The planting of native species reclaims the ground from invasive and exotic plants, contributing to healthier water quality and improved habitat for the darters.

B.A.S.S. has been a supporter of the Freshwater Land Trust since 2011, and has participated in a similar restoration project at Tapawingo Springs, which feeds Turkey Creek. More recently, B.A.S.S. CEO Bruce Akin gave the keynote address at the Land Trust's annual corporate breakfast (seen on pgs. 6-8).

"This was our second work day with the FWLT," said Bruce Akin, CEO at B.A.S.S. "B.A.S.S. prides itself on its conservation efforts, and as a partner of the Freshwater Land Trust, it is very rewarding to restore habitat and to protect an endangered species here in central Alabama."



Partner Spotlight: McWane, Inc.

As one of the Freshwater Land Trust's largest contributors, McWane, Inc. has helped preserve many of our community's favorite places that matter.

McWane is committed to protecting the environment and to providing safe, clean drinking water. McWane is the industry leader in environmental performance with its state of the art, comprehensive Environmental Health and Safety program, and shares the Freshwater Land Trust's dedication to conservation and preserving green spaces. Thanks to McWane's ongoing support, the Land Trust has been successful in bringing together diverse community stakeholders to conserve nature with a cooperative, collaborative and businesslike approach.

Over the past several years, McWane has been a champion for the Village Creek watershed, contributing to the land trust's ongoing efforts to improve not only its water quality, but also the lives of the people, communities and businesses that lie along its banks. In addition, Jim Proctor, Senior Vice President & General Counsel of McWane, and CEO Ruffner Page, Jr., serve on the FWLT Board of Directors and President's Advisory Council. We thank them for their visionary leadership in helping us fulfill our mission of preserving the places that matter.

"McWane, Inc. is proud to partner with the Freshwater Land Trust to support its mission of preserving and protecting water quality and open spaces. Our state is blessed with abundant natural resources, and it's up to all of us to ensure that they'll be here for future generations to enjoy." Ruffner Page, Jr., CEO of McWane, Inc.

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Our goal is to be your partner in conservation. For more information on how you can become a Freshwater Land Trust corporate partner, contact us today.

Freshwater Land Trust

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