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2024 Annual Newsletter

The year 2023 was an exciting and prosperous year for the Trust, securing new opportunities, forging new partnerships, and raising public awareness of our efforts in protecting natural, cultural, agricultural, and recreational resources in Sussex County. As development pressure in Sussex County continues to increase, the Trust has been equally persistent in its efforts to protect open space opportunities with an emphasis on public access.

The Sussex County Land Trust was founded in 2001 with an underlying partnership with the Sussex County Council, a partnership that has been mutually beneficial and a key alliance to securing several recent

property acquisitions which will feature public access and recreation. With each new opportunity comes new management responsibilities for the Trust and its partners.

Public engagement through special events and education was a key focus this past year and the Trust continues to leverage these assets and resources to build a stronger community network. The future is bright for 2024 and the Board of Trustees is excited for the opportunities that lie ahead.





STEPHEN P. HUDSON
PARK RIBBON
CUTTING CEREMONY

Stephen P. Hudson Park

– Grand Opening



The vision behind Stephen P. Hudson Park dates back more than a decade to the decommissioning of a portion of the former Delaware Coast Line Railroad that extends 17 miles between Lewes and Georgetown, DE. Portions of this rail line were replaced with a multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trail, known today as the Lewes-to-Georgetown Trail. The Trust's vision was to acquire a property roughly equal distance between Lewes and Georgetown and contiguous to the trail that could serve as a trailhead for trail enthusiasts. After more than a decade of planning, that vision became a reality this year when Stephen P. Hudson Park was opened to the public.

The 30-acre property, formerly owned by the Hudson family, is located at the intersection of Rt. 9 and Coolspring Road southeast of Milton and was acquired by the Sussex County Land Trust in partnership with Sussex County Council, the State of Delaware (Division of Parks), Delaware Department of Transportation (DELDOT) and the Delaware Open Space Program. Earlier in 2023, construction and site work began on the first phase of the project which included a parking lot, sidewalks, landscaping, and an asphalt trail connection to the existing Lewes to Georgetown Trail.

A grand opening event was hosted by the Board of Trustees at Stephen P. Hudson Park on November 4th and was attended by members of the public and

surrounding communities. Attendees were encouraged to ride their bikes or walk to the event using the trail to highlight the mission and purpose of the park. A special announcement was made at the event by the Lewes-Rehoboth Rotary Club of its intention to build the first Can-Do Playground in Sussex County at Stephen P. Hudson Park. The Lewes-Rehoboth Rotary Club had been searching for a suitable location to build a Can-Do Playground in Sussex County for several years and worked directly with members of the Board of Trustees to secure the location at the park. The estimated cost of the playground is \$800,000 and is planned for the third phase of the project.

The Board of Trustees and its partners have started the design for the second phase of the park improvements which will begin in 2024 and include additional parking and an onsite perimeter trail around the property. Phase 3 will include the Can-Do Playground, pavilion, public restrooms, shade structures and the conversion of the existing farm field into a pollinator meadow. What started as a conceptual idea for a public recreation amenity has become a reality over the course of a ten -year period. Good things take time.



HUDSON PARK GRAND OPENING



Forest of the Broadkill

– Trust partners with Sussex County to preserve nearly 300 Acres



Residential development pressure in eastern Sussex County continues to move westward from the resort area, with several large-scale developments approved near Milton. This increases the need for additional open space in that area. Early last year, the Sussex County Land Trust identified a 292-acre tract of land located at the intersection of Rt. 30 (Gravel Hill Road) and Shingle Point Road southwest of Milton, DE as a strategically located property worthy of protection. The property has a mix of fields and hardwood areas and borders Ingram Branch and the headwaters of the Broadkill River.

The property was acquired in May through a partnership between the Sussex County Land Trust and the Sussex County Preservation Program, which provides a portion of the County's realty transfer tax revenue to be allocated towards the preservation of open space. Sussex County holds title to the land and entered into a management agreement with

the Trust to maintain, operate and manage the property on behalf of the County. The property currently features several walking trails and will be accessible to the public in the future. The Trust is currently focused on enhancing the trail system and designing a small parking lot for public use. The property has been named Forest of the Broadkill and will be an incredible public amenity for area residents to enjoy.



FOREST OF THE BROADKILL SIGNAGE



AERIAL VIEW LOOKING NORTHEAST

FOREST OF THE BROADKILL FUTURE TRAIL NETWORK

Nanticoke Crossing Park

– Progress Report – Grand Opening



It's been almost three years since the Sussex County Land Trust acquired this beautiful 41-acre site located on the Nanticoke River near the historic Woodland Ferry southwest of Seaford, DE. The property features a mix of woods, open space and more than 1,900' of shoreline along the Nanticoke River.

Nanticoke Crossing Park was acquired by the Trust in partnership with the Chesapeake Conservancy, Mt. Cuba Center, Sussex County Council, Delaware Open Space Council, the U.S. Navy and the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife, a true public private partnership to protect and preserve an ecologically important property that will be utilized for recreation and public access.

The Trust and its partners have been focused on improving the natural features of the property, improving the existing trail network, and instituting the appropriate security measures in preparation for opening the site to the public. A Forest Stewardship Management Plan was prepared by the Delaware Forest Service for the purpose of maintaining and improving the naturally occurring trees in the wooded area, retaining soil and water quality, enhancing wildlife habitat, and providing recreational opportunities.

A grand opening was hosted this past June, welcoming members of the public to celebrate this new river front park. At the event, Vernacular Landscape Architecture unveiled the concept plan for the Trust's long-term vision for the property and members of the public and neighbors were able to ask questions and provide input. The Trust will continue working with the team at Vernacular to finalize the plan and solicit construction estimates for the first phase of the project in 2024.



MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC REVIEWING MASTERPLAN



NANTICOKE CROSSING PARK SIGNAGE



L TO R – JUDY SCHWARTZ, RUSS MCCABE, BILL HUNTINGTON



EXTERIOR FAÇADE OF CANNON-MASTON HOUSE

Ickford Park – Update



Development progress on Ickford Park continues to move forward on both the Cannon-Maston House built in 1727 and the Williams Litchford farmhouse built in 1912 situated on the 59 acre property located northwest of Seaford on Atlanta Road. The property was acquired by the Trust in partnership with Sussex County for the purpose of protecting and preserving the Cannon-Maston House, one of the oldest structures in Sussex County. The Williams Litchford farmhouse was recently relocated to the western side of the property to preserve the viewshed of the historic Cannon-Maston House. Renovations to the Williams Litchford farmhouse are ongoing and a Certificate of Occupancy is expected in early 2024.



HISTORICAL MARKER SIGNAGE

The Trust has received funding from the Delaware Preservation Fund and Delaware General Assembly and was approved by DE Historical and Cultural Affairs for the historic credit program for the preservation and restoration of the Cannon-Maston House. The Trust also hired Barton Ross and Partners, a nationally recognized preservation architect, to design and renovate the historic structure. Plans and construction estimates for the first phase have been completed and construction is scheduled to begin this year! The Cannon-Maston House was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. The next phase of the project will be to design a conceptual masterplan for the entire 59 acres to include a perimeter walking trail and a historical interpretation component. This project has been more than a decade in the making and the Trust and its partners are extremely excited to finally begin restoring the property to its former glory, with the creation of an interpretive center to highlight Sussex County's rich history and heritage!

Hopkins Preserve Update



In early 2022, the Sussex County Land Trust collaborated with Sussex County Council in partnership to acquire a 52-acre site located along Sweetbriar Road contiguous to the Lewes to Georgetown Bicycle Trail in Lewes, DE. Both the Trust and Sussex County worked with the Hopkins family, a long time Lewes land owner and dairy farm operator, who was interested in preserving the land for future public use. The property is ideally located and surrounded by new development and is a strategic location for open space preservation. The property is also less than two miles east of Stephen P. Hudson Park, another Trust holding that will be utilized for recreational purposes in support of the popular Lewes to Georgetown Bicycle Trail, one of the most popular bike/walking trails in the State of Delaware.

The Trust and Sussex County partners hosted a public event to celebrate the acquisition of the property October 2022 which was attended by more than 400 members of the public. The event featured the unveiling of the masterplan design for the future of the property along with live entertainment, food trucks, craft beer, face painting and a bonfire! Members of the public were able to ask questions and obtain information regarding the future of the project.

The Trust has completed the civil engineering plans and is preparing to bid the construction for the first phase of the project this year. The first phase of the project includes the site entrance, parking area, stormwater management, walking trails and landscaping. The goal is to begin construction in early summer 2024 and funding has been received from Sussex County for construction. The Trust has also applied for grants through the Delaware Forestry Service to support the reforestation efforts in 2024. The Trust and its Sussex County partner were in the right place at the right time to secure this opportunity in the right location!

HOPKINS PRESERVE MASTER PLAN

- 1 BIKE TRAIL ENTRY
- 2 SWEETBRIAR ROAD ENTRY
WELCOME AREA + RESTROOMS
- 3 HERITAGE HILL
- 4 POND + BRIDGE OVERLOOK
- 5 PEDESTRIAN TRAILS
- 6 HOPKINS MULTI-USE LOOP TRAIL
- 7 MEADOW
- 8 EPHEMERAL WETLAND +
FOOTBRIDGE
- 9 TRANSITIONAL SHRUBLAND
- 10 REFORESTATION
- 11 11-ACRE WOOD + TRAIL
- 12 GATHERING SPACE
- 13 OPEN LAWN + PARKING
OVERFLOW
- 14 STORMWATER MANAGEMENT
- 15 ROADWAY ALLEE



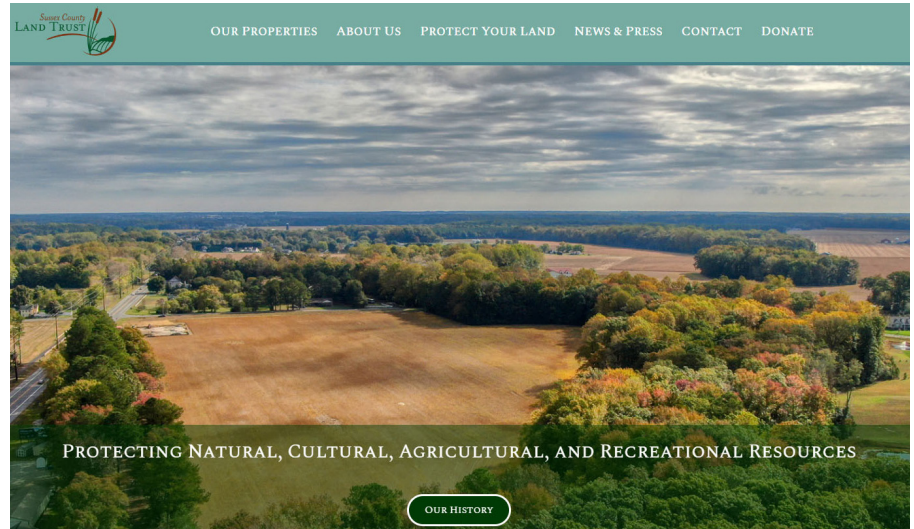
MASTERPLAN BY VERNACULAR LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Visit Our New Website!



Earlier this year, the Trust launched a new and improved website! The new site features a user-friendly map highlighting properties under management, updated bios on all Trustees, current information on upcoming events and media coverage and an easy way to donate! **Please check us out at www.sclandtrust.org**

NEW WEBSITE DESIGN



New Board Members – Kelly Stevenson, Hal Carmean



KELLY R. STEVENSON

The Trust welcomes two new members to the Board of Trustees this year! Kelly R. Stevenson and Hal Carmean are both natives of Sussex County who believe in our mission and are excited to join our team!

Kelly R. Stevenson has spent more than three decades in the banking industry and currently serves as a Commercial Relationship manager for Fulton Bank. A graduate of Wilmington University with a BA in Banking & Finance, Kelly has served on numerous boards throughout her career and currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Rehoboth Beach – Dewey Beach – Chamber of Commerce. Kelly enjoys the outdoors spending her free time recreating on the water. She is a life-long life Delawarean and currently resides in Milford with her family.



HAL CARMEAN II

Harold “Hal” Carmean II grew up on the Eastern Shore and has been involved in the financial industry for more than 20 years. In 2011, Hal founded Creative Wealth Management, LLC, a boutique financial planning firm, and in 2018, CWM Advisory, LLC a registered investment adviser. Hal is an avid ultrarunner completing multiple 100-mile races and other various events. Hal and his wife Mandi have two children and enjoy spending their free time engaged in outdoor activities. The Carmean’s take an active role in their local church through missionary work both domestically and internationally, and they are joyfully involved in local and regional philanthropic activity.

Meet Our Corporate Donors



Schell Brothers is a regional home builder based in Rehoboth Beach and has been a key contributor and partner to the Trust for several years. Schell Brothers is responsible for the construction of some of the most popular communities in the Delaware resort area and generously pledges \$1,000.00 for every home sold in Sussex County to the Sussex County Land Trust. This commitment has allowed the Trust to continue investing in open space opportunities with a focus on public recreation. Schell Brothers was recently awarded the prestigious Pro Builder's "Builder of the Year" in 2023.



Carl Freeman Companies is a real estate development company with a presence in Delaware for more than half a century. The Freeman organization has supported the Trust through generous donations and have collaborated with the Trust on special events and other philanthropic causes. Tower Hill is a newly designed master plan community in Lewes, DE developed by Carl Freeman Companies. K. Hovnanian Homes is responsible for all new home construction within the development and both Carl Freeman Companies and K. Hovnanian Homes have agreed to pledge a portion of each sales proceeds to the Trust.



Dogfish Head Craft Brewery is a Milton, DE based craft brewery that has been a long-term supporter of the Trust's efforts. Through its Beer & Benevolence charitable arm, Dogfish Head sponsors several events throughout the year that support the Trust. For the past several years, the brewery has hosted a local bike ride known as the "I-Pedal-A-Lot (IPA) Ride" throughout Sussex County where a portion of the race proceeds have been donated to the Trust. The Trust has also partnered with Dogfish Head on several local events at the Trust's properties where they have donated supplies and provided funding in support of the event.

THE TRUST IS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR NEW PARTNERS WHO CAN HELP FURTHER OUR MISSION! PLEASE CONTACT US TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WAYS YOU CAN HELP MAKE SUSSEX COUNTY A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE FOR EVERYONE!

Be a Friend of the Sussex County Land Trust!

The Sussex County Land Trust is a non-profit 501(c)3 conservation organization dedicated to protecting natural, cultural, agricultural, and recreational resources in Sussex County. Since the organization was founded in 2001, the Trust has been involved with the protection of more than 6,000 acres. Public and private partnerships are the key ingredient to leveraging our resources and goal of making Sussex County a better place to live for everyone.

Donations are an excellent way to support the Trust and make a contribution to benefit the greater good of Sussex County. The Trust is currently involved in several projects featuring public access and recreation and we need your help.

**SUSSEX COUNTY LAND TRUST,
EIN 04-3611220, IS RECOGNIZED BY THE
IRS AS A
TAX-EXEMPT, CHARITABLE
ORGANIZATION.**

All or part of your gift may be deductible as a charitable contribution. Please check with your tax advisor. We appreciate your generous donation.



**DONATIONS CAN BE MADE BY
SCANNING THE QR CODE.**

Our Board of Trustees are all committed volunteers. We sincerely appreciate your generous support of our mission!