

About Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or governmental body. The agreement limits certain uses on all or a portion of a property for conservation purposes while keeping the property in the landowner's ownership. The easement is nearly always perpetual—applying to all present and future owners of the land—and is recorded at the County Recorder of Deeds office.

In Centre County, ClearWater Conservancy, the Centre County Farmland Trust, the Centre County Agricultural Land Preservation Program, and Mount Nittany Conservancy protect land with conservation easements. The Potter Farm is protected through a unique two-easement partnership between ClearWater and the Centre County Ag Land Preservation Program.

About CREP

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a voluntary conservation program for agricultural landowners. The goal of this program is to protect the Chesapeake Bay from the effects of excessive nutrient and sediment loading due to agricultural runoff. Unique state and federal partnerships allow landowners to receive incentive payments for installing specific conservation practices such as riparian buffers. Through CREP, farmers can receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving vegetative covers on eligible land.

About ClearWater Conservancy

The mission of ClearWater Conservancy is to promote conservation and restoration of natural resources in central Pennsylvania through land protection, water resources protection, and environmental outreach to the community.

ClearWater has conserved over 3,400 acres of land with conservation easements and through conservation partnerships.

*Everyone working together to conserve natural beauty
and the environment in the heart of Pennsylvania*

Written by Shelley White, 8/2006

Special thanks to project partners: Centre County Agricultural Land Preservation Program, US Fish and Wildlife Service, PA Department of Environmental Protection, PA Fish and Boat Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and especially the Potter family for their vision.



2555 North Atherton Street
State College, PA 16803
(814) 237-0400
www.clearwaterconservancy.org

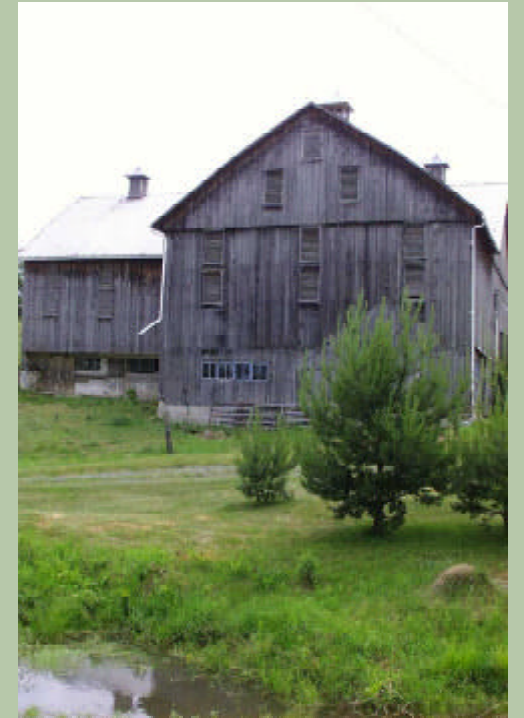
ClearWater Conservancy

Stories of Land, Water, and People

Preserving Potter Farm

When Fergus and Margaret Potter first built their home near Mackeys Run on Brush Valley Road in 1793, they had no idea of the legacy that was to follow. For the next two centuries, the 197-acre farm passed through succeeding generations of Potters, earning a nod from Pennsylvania's Secretary of Agriculture as Centre County's first Bicentennial Farm in September 2005. The current owners, Taylor and Elizabeth Potter, however, understood that the farm's significance stretched beyond this recognition.

Concerned about preserving the well-being of the family farm, the Potters entered into negotiations with ClearWater Conservancy and Centre County regarding the possibility of conservation and agricultural land preservation easements. The result was the emergence of the first dual easement agreement this side of the Mississippi—one that would eventually protect all but 10 acres of the property.



Several springs emerge on the Potter Farm property, including this one near the historic barn and homestead.

On September 11, 2003, the Potters signed a conservation easement with ClearWater Conservancy to preserve and protect the 81 acres of forested and riparian areas on the property. The easement was made possible through the implementation of a Supplemental Environmental Project funded by a fine levied by the EPA related to the Centre County Kepone Superfund Site.

In December 2005, the Potters signed the second easement—drafted by the Centre County Agricultural Land Preservation Program—to protect the farm’s 107 acres of tillable land from residential or commercial development. According to Norm Lathbury, Centre County’s Farmland Preservation Administrator, the number one goal of the program is to ensure the preservation of prime agricultural soils. To accomplish this goal and to reduce soil erosion, only environmentally-friendly practices such as no-till farming are permitted on the land.

Mr. Lathbury recognizes the importance of these adjacent easements: “The most valuable asset of this property is that it’s protecting more than one thing. It’s not only the agricultural resources that are being preserved, but also the forest, water, and wildlife resources that are being protected.”

The EPA fine money that allowed ClearWater to purchase the conservation ease-

ment, along with funds from the Ag Land Preservation Program that purchased the Ag Land Preservation Easement, provided the Potters with financial resources for their retirement. As retired



missionaries, the Potters welcomed the opportunity to permanently protect their family farm while providing a modest financial return.

In addition to protecting the natural resources of the farm through the two easements, the Potters also

have worked with several agencies and organizations to protect and restore the stream, an unnamed tributary of Mackeys Run, that flows through their farm.

In the early 1990s, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and the State College Area



Newly-named Potter Brook rises from springs on the Potter Farm and flows into Mackeys Run, a tributary to Cedar Run.

“You can look at the farm and see the history there.”

~ Norm Lathbury

School District’s Center for Applied Academics and Technology developed a project to repair the fish habitat of Mackeys Run and its tributaries after a survey revealed an undersized population of adult brown trout. The tributary on the Potter Farm was part of this project.

More recently, ClearWater Conservancy worked in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service’s Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to further restore the unnamed tributary by installing streambank fencing to exclude livestock access from the stream, removing invasive species, and planting a riparian buffer between the stream and the fence.

Aspects of the CREP program include clearing a designated area of invasive plants (such as Japanese barberry and multiflora rose) and planting native trees and shrubs. The new buffer protects aquatic organisms by providing shade, which lowers water temperatures and reduces nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus from reaching the stream. The vegetation also filters harmful pesticides and sediment from runoff and prevents damaging erosion.

ClearWater Conservancy’s volunteer site



Green tree tubes protect the 1,200 trees planted in the Potter Farm riparian buffer through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

stewards Elwood and Carolyn Hatley have made it their duty to help Lance and Debbie—Potter descendants currently residing on the farm—find methods of managing the invasive species and improving the welfare of the 1,200 trees that compose the riparian buffer along the tributary of Mackeys Run.

With the land in such good hands, the Potter Farm will continue to thrive, preserving the 200-year-old legacy for years to come. As a tribute to Taylor and Elizabeth’s commitment to good stewardship of their natural and historical resources, ClearWater Conservancy set about the task of naming the unnamed tributary of Mackeys Run on their farm.

In August 2006, “Potter Brook” will flow into Mackeys Run and mingle with the waters of Cedar Run, Spring Creek, the Susquehanna River, and the great Chesapeake Bay beyond.