



# Philander Chase Conservancy

2022 – 2023  
YEAR IN REVIEW









## A Year of Learning

by Khara Strum, Director of the Philander Chase Conservancy

My first year at Philander Chase Conservancy was filled with something I really enjoy: learning. There was the process of learning a new organization, how it operates and the tools used to protect open space. Then there was the process of learning the people that keep the Conservancy moving: the incredible staff, who, on a day to day basis, work tirelessly in support of our mission to protect the natural beauty of the farms, woodlands, waters and open spaces surrounding Kenyon, and the passionate members of the board, who generously contribute their time and talent to conserve the sense of place Kenyon students and alumni hold so very near to their hearts. There are many others who support the Conservancy at the College as well as our community partners.

Most importantly, I am learning about the landowners who have chosen to protect their land as open space forever in partnership with the Conservancy. Another aspect of learning over the past year has been learning the land that makes this place so special. Where else can you look out to rolling green hills and know that the view will never change, hike on miles of trails that will always be trails, and explore nearly seven miles of a river that will always have streamside forest?

Knox County, and especially the land around Kenyon, is a hidden gem that I am so lucky to have discovered. While I have climbed a steep learning curve over the last year, I have much more knowledge to acquire about the people, places and things that make the Conservancy what it is. Thank you for supporting our work, and I hope you enjoy learning about some of the things we did over the last year.

# A Reflection

by Zali Win '84, Chair

Over the past year, we commemorated the service of Lisa Schott, who retired after 12 years of service as Philander Chase Conservancy managing director, which capped her 37 years of service to Kenyon College. During Lisa's tenure, the Conservancy expanded partnerships with many new conservation easement owners, developed the Kokosing Nature Preserve, added to the Knox County park system, and strengthened our infrastructure by working towards and receiving accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, a part of the national Land Trust Alliance. Lisa led the Conservancy during a period of tremendous growth in our land protection portfolio, and we are grateful for her service and friendship.

We also welcomed Khara Strum as our new director. Khara returned to her native Ohio and joined us from the California Office of the National Audubon Society. During her first year, Khara led a review of our activities and helped us re-focus our priorities as we face the increasing challenges that growth in the Columbus area brings to Knox County and Gambier. Working with Khara and helping her acclimate herself has helped me and my fellow board members step back and re-focus on our mission of preserving the rural atmosphere around Gambier that makes Kenyon College such a special place to learn.

We look forward to working on the many initiatives that Khara and our incredible colleagues, Amy Henricksen and Jill Shriver, will be pursuing — a greater involvement in regional land use and planning conversations with local government and other stakeholders, expansion of public lands in cooperation with the Knox County Park District, and greater engagement with our many local and not-so-local supporters, without whom this endeavor would not have been possible.









# A New Look for the Conservancy

Philander Chase Conservancy has been protecting land for more than 20 years. For half that time — 2011 to the present — one logo has served as the main visual identifier for the Conservancy’s work. As the Conservancy continues to gain recognition in the local and college communities, the staff and board of the Conservancy felt it was time to update the logo to reflect the current and future direction of the organization.

Over the last year, we worked together with a design agency, PostHouse Creative, to develop a new logo and brand. We solicited feedback from our easement grantors and other partners to inform the new design. We were intentional about including a tie to Kenyon as well as the types of open space we protect: agricultural, woodlands and streamside forest. As an organization, we hope this logo will lead to greater awareness of our work and appreciation of the permanently conserved open space enjoyed by all.



## Philander Chase Conservancy

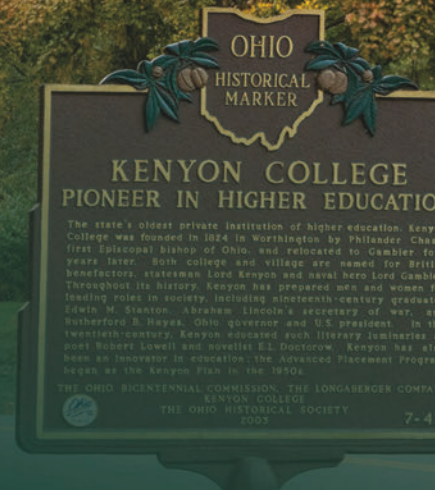
## PCC by the Numbers







# Land Conservation



## Land Protection in the Face of Development Pressure

by Khara Strum

By now, I'm sure you've heard about Intel Corporation's semiconductor chip manufacturing plant that broke ground in January less than 30 miles from Gambier. Intel promises to invest \$20 billion in construction of the site alone. When fully complete, the plants are expected to attract up to 3,000 workers. Other tech giants such as Amazon, Google and Microsoft have followed suit and purchased land adjacent to Intel, creating what some think will become the "Silicon Valley" of the Midwest.

In quiet Gambier, it's hard to believe this much development is happening nearby. The community is buffered from the impacts from the thousands of acres of open space

protected by the Conservancy. Look out in any direction from campus, and your eyes are met with rolling green hills filled with the abundant sounds of nature.

Still, the region is beginning to feel the impact of the tech giants' choice to develop in central Ohio. Housing and land prices are higher than they have ever been, which, in turn, is driving up property values and taxes. To give you a sense of the impact, recently, the second most expensive home on the market in Ohio was a 1,092 square foot home on 5.96 acres next to the Intel development in Johnstown. This home is on the market for \$9.9 million dollars. In 2011, it sold for \$89,500.

As we look to the future, the Conservancy will continue to work with officials from the county and townships along with the Area Development Foundation to understand where development is projected to happen and do our best to keep open space open and farms farming. At a panel the Conservancy hosted for Reunion Weekend in May, I was heartened to hear about the strong sense of place that all panelists described as important and unique to this area. Let's continue to focus on preserving that sense of place and together keep Knox County's rural character.



# Conserving the Natural Resources of Knox County

by Khara Strum

We were delighted to work with local landowner and Kenyon alumnus Bruce Kiracofe '72 on a conservation easement to protect his 25.6 acre property. Bruce's property is unique because it is bordered by the Kokosing River on one side and a Knox County park on another. The easement permanently protects nearly a quarter mile of streamside forest that provides exceptional habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife and protects the water quality of the Kokosing.

Many species of trees are present on the property, including oak (*Quercus spp.*), hickory (*Carya spp.*), beech (*Fagus spp.*) and maple (*Acer spp.*). Other tree species of note are black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), basswood (*Tilia americana*),

cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) and ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*). Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) and wingstem (*Verbesina alternifolia*) are present throughout the property, making this an attractive spot for the monarch butterfly, a species in decline for several years. Along the river bank, large ledge-like rocks create ideal conditions for the state-endangered eastern hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*), which was reintroduced into the Kokosing River over the last 10 years. As you can tell, we protected a number of unique natural resources with this easement and we are honored to have worked with Bruce!



Bruce Kiracofe and Zsa Buehner with Amy Henricksen and Khara Strum at the closing of Bruce's Conservation Easement protecting 25 acres along the Kokosing River.  
Photo credit: Samantha Stull, Heartland Title Agency





Conservancy intern Jordan Schuster '25 learning new field research techniques as part of Introductory Environmental Lab.

*Photo credit: Rebecca Keiger, Office of Communications*

# College Collaboration

## Bringing Communities Together Through Research on Protected Lands

by Jordan Schisler '25

Introductory Environmental Lab is a requirement for Environmental Studies majors at Kenyon. The course teaches students introductory field and laboratory techniques used in the environmental and biological sciences. From donning waders to collect water samples from the Kokosing River to using a trowel to dig up soil for testing, students quite literally get their hands dirty!

A pivotal part of this course is its community-engaged learning aspect. For my class, this meant we conducted soil research on a local farm to help assess the

long-term benefits of switching from conventional to sustainable agricultural practices. The data collected by my class were added to previous years' data and presented to the farm owners, a project that will continue beyond this year. Changes in soil take years and sometimes even decades to see, and this data gives the landowner a long-term record of their soil health.

The farm my class worked with is permanently protected by the Conservancy. This means students gain invaluable experience in research techniques, working with

the local community, and how the work of the Conservancy is integral to preserving Kenyon's sense of place and protecting the livelihood of local farmers. These three things make this class a star of Kenyon's course offerings.



# A Love Letter to Philander Chase Conservancy

by Mikaela Lancy '23

As an intern at Philander Chase Conservancy, I often felt like I had the best job on campus. Over my three years with the Conservancy, I had some truly unique experiences, including interviewing local landowners, touring farms and meeting farm animals, witnessing prescribed burns at Kokosing Nature Preserve and Brown Family Environmental Center, assisting with green burials, and much, much more. I can't imagine working anywhere else on campus and being able to have the same opportunities.

Another reason I enjoyed my time at the Conservancy is because my supervisors saw my strengths and incorporated them into my work. As someone who is naturally creative, I was happy to write blogs, create materials for community events, take photos for our social media pages, and create a tribute book for our long-time donor, John Woollam '61 H'08. At the same time, I was encouraged to expand my skill set by building relationships with community members and attending working meetings of the Conservancy. Above all, as an intern, I felt that my voice and opinions were valued. The staff of the Conservancy recognized that as a student, I had a valuable perspective that could help the organization grow.

It also didn't hurt that the Conservancy team is made up of some of the most lovely people I've had the pleasure to work with. Although the team may be small, the dedication and passion that Jill, Amy and Khara show daily could not be more apparent. Having worked with each of them personally, I know that they work tirelessly to ensure the organization is running smoothly, and they genuinely care about the wider impact of their work. I've seen the kind and compassionate

manner with which Amy attends to grieving families during green burials at Kokosing Nature Preserve, the gentleness Jill shows when instructing children on how to complete crafts at events, and Khara's ambition to bring awareness to the Conservancy by looking for new events that make connections with the wider Kenyon community. I feel lucky to have been a part of such a talented team.

Finally, I feel proud to know that the work I contributed during my time at Kenyon will leave a lasting mark. The Conservancy's easements will protect the valuable open space around Kenyon and maintain the rural character of the region forever. As I return to campus as an alumna, I'll continue to pass the lush rolling hills of soybeans and corn, the weathered old barns, and the sparkling waters of the Kokosing, just as I remember them. Thanks to the Conservancy, Kenyon will remain the Kenyon I know, and for that I am thankful.



Conservancy interns Jordan Schisler '25 and Mikaela Lancy '23 collect data in the field.  
Credit: Rebecca Keiger, Office of Communications



One of the three ponds at Kokosing Nature Preserve where Siobhan Fennesay, the Philip and Sheila Jordan Professor of Environmental Studies and Biology conducts research with students.

## Learning at Kokosing Nature Preserve with Kenyon's Restoration Ecology Class

by Siobhan Fennesay, Philip and Sheila Jordan Professor of Environmental Studies and Professor and Chair of Biology

Last year students enrolled in the Seminar in Restoration Ecology eagerly took up a project to study the wetland restoration project currently underway at Kokosing Nature Preserve. The class focuses on the theory and practice of ecosystem restoration through readings, discussion, field trips and a class project on restoration design. In class we discussed the challenges of restoration, how human activities can lead to ecosystem degradation, how to plan a restoration project and the tools used to evaluate progress. With the help of Amy Henricksen and Jill Shriver, we spent several fall afternoons learning about the restoration projects underway at KNP, including of the prairie, woodlands, and a wetland. The wetland had been a pond and water feature for the former golf course.

My students were thrilled at the opportunity to work on an ongoing restoration project and to apply what we had been studying in class. They designed a project to study the soils, water quality, and wetland plants located at the site. Working in groups, the students visited the site several times to collect samples and, after analyzing their data, wrote papers on their findings. They found that plant diversity was increasing at the site and that there was no indication of invasive species moving in, which is a common problem in restoration projects. The students also looked at the seeds contained in the soil — these

seeds serve as a “bank” of sorts, and can lead to increases in species diversity over time. Although the number of seeds was relatively low, they found that nearly twice as many species had seeds in this seed bank compared to the plants growing there. This is a good sign, indicating the site will see continuing increases in diversity. Water sample tests showed that the KNP wetland is healthy and water quality was high.

The afternoons spent sampling plants, soils and water also led to some hilarity as we experienced the difficulty of walking and working in mucky soils, and in doing so, uncovered a few golf balls left behind by ill-fated golfers.

In a testament to their enthusiasm, at the end of the semester the students proposed starting a restoration club, to encourage others who are interested to volunteer time and work with the Conservancy on restoration projects. Overall, working at KNP gave students a unique opportunity to see firsthand the challenges of implementing a restoration plan, and the incredible satisfaction that comes with seeing the on-going recovery. I'm excited to partner with Kokosing Nature Preserve and to introduce future generations of students to their work.





# Community Engagement

## What does open space mean to you?

by Jordan Schisler '25

This spring, as part of my work with the Conservancy, I had the opportunity to speak on a panel at the Coalition of Ohio Land Trusts (COLT) annual conference, which the Conservancy hosted at Kenyon. It was an honor to share my experience as a student with those in attendance, including land trust professionals, members of the Kenyon and local communities.

The panel, “Protected Lands as a Research Catalyst,” showed just how much research at Kenyon is tied to the local community, from catching barn swallows in barns across Knox County to sampling soil on local farms.

The most impactful question for me was “What does open space mean to you?” This question stopped in my tracks. I grew up locally and always had easy access to open space, and yet, I hadn’t thought about what open space means to me. And then it hit me — open space is a privilege.

Waking up to birds chirping, seeing the stars clearly at night, being surrounded by rolling green hillsides for miles, and conducting environmental research on land close to Kenyon. These are privileges that come with protected open spaces. The reality is that not everyone has the privilege of open space.

With these privileges also comes responsibility: The responsibility to treat the land and landowners with respect, make our research accessible to the greater public, and keep protecting what we are so lucky to have.

Sitting on this panel allowed me to reflect on my work with the Conservancy, the College and the community and was such an impactful experience. And now, I’d like to know, what does open space mean to you?



Our very own intern, Jordan Schisler '25 was awarded the Dorothy E. and Thomas C. Jegla Award for Biology for her excellent work on an independent project in the yearlong Introduction to Experimental Biology laboratory sequence. The Jeglas were long-time members of the biology faculty at Kenyon, and in 2007 they donated a conservation easement to the Philander Chase Conservancy, protecting their 36-acre Gambier farm in perpetuity.



Conservancy intern Jordan Schisler '25 and her parents at the award ceremony.

## Where the Bodies are Buried

by Khara Strum

The rise in popularity of green burial is evident — just ask Amy Henricksen, our Kokosing Nature Preserve steward. Sales of burial lots at the Preserve in 2023-24 increased by 74% over the prior years' highest sales. With so much interest in green burial, we invited Greg Melville '92 to speak on campus about his new book "Over My Dead Body: Unearthing the Hidden History of America's Cemeteries."

Melville's book chronicles the history of American cemeteries and burial practices, which are both a little bit creepy and very interesting. Melville (and his family) often spend part of their vacations visiting nearby cemeteries where he gathers more data for his ongoing environmental journalism project. As it turns out, cemeteries can be lovely places to take a walk. Like our own Kokosing Nature Preserve, they are often quiet and serene, offering a place for reflection away from the crowds.



Greg Melville '92 and Royal Rhodes, professor emeritus of religious studies, discuss recent trends in American burial practices, including green burial, like that offered at Kokosing Nature Preserve.



Interestingly, cemeteries are not protected in perpetuity despite their residents' long-term tenure. There are examples from all over the country where graves are disturbed to make way for development — including the desecration of Native American burial grounds along the U.S./Mexico border, and dismantling and moving gravesites in nearby Columbus. Melville's book also uncovers the inequity associated with burial practices. African American slaves were often buried in unmarked graves away from the white families they served. This racial divide extended far beyond the limits of southern plantations, as African American war veterans were buried separately from their white counterparts. Even today, the cemeteries of African American soldiers do not receive the same funding for upkeep and maintenance as predominantly white cemeteries.

We were thrilled to host Greg on campus to share his journey as a professional journalist with students and speak about his research and book to the greater community. You can pick up a copy of Greg's book at your local bookstore and watch a recording of his event using the QR code below. Look for an article in the alumni magazine featuring Greg this fall.



Brandi Recital Hall was full on the Thursday Evening in March when Greg Melville '92 spoke about his book.



Greg Melville '92 with staff and interns of the Conservancy. From L to R: Mikaela Lancy, Khara Strum, Amy Henricksen, Jordan Schisler, Jill Shriver.





Faculty interest in having classes visit Kokosing Nature Preserve continues. Here, Amy Henricksen shares the history of the preserve with environmental studies professor Ruth Heindel's Introduction to Environmental Studies class.



Members of the community, including easement grantors and retired board members, gathered for a bird walk led by Khara Strum at Kokosing Nature Preserve. We saw many species of migrants, including rose-breasted grosbeak, common yellowthroat, and a trio of male Baltimore orioles engaged in a territory dispute!



Each year the staff and interns of the Conservancy visit each property. This visit allows us to maintain contact with each easement grantor and ensure the requirements of the easement are being followed. It's always a pleasure to have a landowner join us on a tour of their property, like Jay Dorsey and Beth Waller, who took Amy Henricksen and Khara Strum around their 43-acre protected property where they sustainably graze a small herd of cattle.





### Working Land

A few shots from behind the scenes during annual monitoring, where we often get a glimpse of some of the farm animals raised by easement grantors. The chickens are raised by the Black family on the Black property that was protected in 2020. The sheep are raised on part of the nearly 350 acres protected by the Dudgeons, and the cows are sustainably grazed on the Dorsey-Waller property.







# Reflections

## Remembering Loved Ones at Kokosing Nature Preserve

by Amy Henricksen

Clyde Park and his wife, Betty Ann Park, were married for 42 years before Betty's death on Dec. 11, 2022. In keeping with her wishes for a green burial, Betty was buried in the prairie at Kokosing Nature Preserve. In April 2023, Clyde reached out to the preserve's steward, Amy Henricksen, with a request for assistance related to a very meaningful and personal writing project. Clyde shared that he had written a series of poems memorializing a 42-year love affair with his muse and soulmate, Betty. He was seeking someone to review,

edit, critique and organize his poetry. With the help of the staff at the Kenyon Review, Amy was able to connect Clyde with Emma Johnson '23. Emma, a talented poet in her own right, served as a resident advisor for the Review's Young Writers Program. Emma also worked as Review intern during her senior year, running weekly elementary, middle, and high school outreach writing workshops at Paragraphs Bookstore in Mount Vernon and organizing a poetry festival at Kenyon. Emma and Clyde met at Wiggin Street Coffee in

the week prior to her graduation, and, according to Clyde, "spent a delightful hour discussing rhyme and reason." Emma agreed to assist Clyde via email in an effort to move his project to completion and self-publication. Clyde has graciously shared a copy of his published collection of poems, "Summer of my Soul," with Kokosing Nature Preserve. We are honored to have this work as part of our library. A sample of his work, titled You, is reprinted on the next page with permission.



## REFLECTIONS

A photograph of a field of wildflowers, primarily purple and white, in the foreground. The background shows a line of green trees under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

**You**

by Clyde Park

Because of you,  
the music has a sweeter refrain.  
The flower's more fragrant,  
their bouquet like warm spring rain.

A sunrise paints itself more vivid,  
and grand  
with added warmth,  
to spread upon the land.

The songbird sings notes,  
of a purer strain.  
A poet's verse lilts and rings  
and lifts my heart again.

All of this made more beautiful,  
because of you!







## Staff Highlights

Over the last 25 years, Jill Shriver has worked in various departments at Kenyon, including the Office of Alumni and Parent Programs and the Kenyon Institute. We are incredibly lucky that Jill has made the Conservancy her work home for seven years. Jill possesses immeasurable knowledge of not only the Conservancy but also Kokosing Nature Preserve and the College in general. She ensures that operations run as smoothly as possible and always knows who to call and when to call. She is reliable, dependable and has tremendous follow-through. Jill is the glue that holds the office together and a most amazing team member. Thank you, Jill!



## Board Highlights

The Philander Chase Conservancy Board of Directors welcomed two new members last year. Jefferson Wolfe Tone '88 brings many years of land conservation experience to the board. Tone began his career in Ohio with The Trust for Public Land and currently works and lives in Maine at the Main

Huts and Trails Association. Robert Sykes '68 was a political science major at Kenyon and earned his juris doctor from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Sykes went on to become general counsel for Target Corporation and resides in the greater Minneapolis area.



The board and staff of the Philander Chase Conservancy at the annual October Board meeting held in Gambier in 2022.



## John Woollam Honored with Inaugural Jean Briggs Award

Awarded by the Board of Directors of the Philander Chase Conservancy, the Jean Briggs Award for Leadership in Conservation recognizes extraordinary leadership in protecting the natural beauty, health and vibrancy of the rural lands surrounding Gambier and Kenyon. Jean Briggs was the first landowner to protect her land with the Conservancy in 2003. Her visionary action inspired many others to follow her lead.

John Woollam '61 H'08 has been the Conservancy's most supportive partner, contributing to the protection of over 2,700 acres across 32 properties. In recognition of John's extraordinary leadership in safeguarding the natural assets of our rural community, the board proudly named him the inaugural recipient of the Jean Briggs Award for Leadership in Conservation. John also received a commemorative book highlighting his efforts, with letters of appreciation from landowners, board members and other partners, created by Conservancy interns Jayne Gelman '22 and Mikaela Lancy '23.



## Your Support Matters!

The Philander Chase Conservancy is grateful to the 175 donors who contributed in support of our ongoing land conservation work last year. A gift of \$2,500 currently protects an acre of land and creates eligibility for the purchase of interment rights at Kokosing Nature Preserve. Thank you for supporting the sense of place enjoyed by so many. To learn more about supporting the Conservancy, including through the purchase of interment rights, please contact the Conservancy at (740) 427-5258 or [pchaseconservancy@kenyon.edu](mailto:pchaseconservancy@kenyon.edu).

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Mark Tuel  
Judith VanCamp  
Garrick Vance '04  
Jim and Diane Villars  
Catherine Von Holt '19  
Caryl Warner '55  
Zack Weber '06  
Wendy Webster and Stuart Davidson P'18  
Amy Wheatley '80 H'92  
Zali Win '84  
Matt Winkler '77 P'13 H'00

Dennis Wipper '77  
Sue Woog Wagner '77  
John Woollam '61 H'08  
Daniel and Lisa Yeager  
Bill Yost '68

## Board of Directors

Richard S. Alper '71  
Acting President Jeff Bowman  
Catherine L. Broadhead '96  
Lisa S. Coney '78  
Katherine B. DeCoster '77  
Linda D. Findlay '75  
Anne C. Griffin '78  
William R. Hartman Jr. '86 P'20  
Meredith C. Moore '88  
Neil Mortine  
Robert G. Sykes '68  
Wolfe Tone '88  
Garrick A. Vance '04  
Wendy Webster P'18  
Zali Win '84, Chair  
William J. Yost '68

## Emeritus Directors

Kathryn Batchelder Cashman '73  
Howard B. Edelstein '68  
Cornelia Ireland Hallinan '76 H'91  
Julia F. Johnson '73 H'99  
John R. Knepper '62  
Thomas R. Sant '65 H'13  
Douglas H. Stevens '68 P'89  
John A. Woollam '61 H'08

## Staff Members

Khara Strum, Director  
Amy Henriksen, Project Coordinator and Kokosing Nature Preserve Steward  
Jill Shriver, Office Manager and Student Intern Coordinator

## Student Interns

Mikaela Lancy '23  
Jordan Schisler '25

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