



Volume 32
Issue 2



Spring 2023

UPCOMING EVENTS:

April 22: EARTH DAY

We have TWO events scheduled on April 22nd! The international theme of Earth Day 2023 is "Invest in Your Community". Westmoreland Conservancy invests in our community... YOUR community...every day!

At 9AM, meet at the Universal Pedestrian Trail Kiosk at the Morosini Reserve. Have work gloves and sturdy shoes, as we'll be extending the trail around the north rim of the pond. If there are enough people attending, we'll take a second team around to an access point on Rt 66 to attempt to remediate damages perpetrated at the vernal pool site.



LYRID STAR PARTY



The second event of the day will take place at Parking Lot #1 at 8PM. We'll set up a small campfire in the clearing beyond the gate and watch the sky for the Lyrid meteor shower! Bring your roasting sticks and marshmallows!

April 26: ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING & ELECTIONS

Westmoreland Conservancy's Annual Members' Meeting and Elections are Wednesday, April 26th, 2023. The meeting will be held at the Delmont Public Library and on Zoom. Should you choose to attend via Zoom, please send an email to contact@westmorelandconservancy.org so that we can send you the link.

The Members' Meeting will open at 7pm with a review of the proposed slate for the election of our Board of Governors. This election is by our general membership, so please plan to attend. Your voice is important to us. At the close of the Members Meeting, the Organizational Meeting will commence with the Board members electing the 2023 officers. The April Board meeting will then come to order.



May 6: SHADOWS OF THE PAST- A HIKE THROUGH FORGOTTEN



INDUSTRIAL HISTORY

Park at the Flinn Reserve on Boxcartown Road and follow our guide into the not-so-distant past. Check out the history of those riches anticipated by William Penn's heirs in the Denmark Manor area of the Charter. The hike will explore remnants of a bygone era, explained by local historian "Coke Oven Mike" (<https://coalandcoke.blogspot.com/2017/02/export-pa-and-export-mines.html>), and take you through land protected by Westmoreland Conservancy and the Lyons Run Watershed Assn.

*Part of our Westmoreland 250 History Hike Series

www.westmorelandconservancy.org/event-registration

May 14: MOTHERS' DAY BIRDWATCHING

Join Alex Busato for a special Mother's Day birdwatching walk at 8AM at the Morosini Reserve. This walk is limited to 20 participants, so register early to reserve your place!

Or, join us for a casual late afternoon Mother's Day walk to see the birds and enjoy the Morosini Reserve at 5PM. (no limit).

There is no rain date, as these are especially scheduled for Mother's Day Free, Registration required: www.westmorelandconservancy.org/event-registration



May 27: ENCHANTED FOREST

Westmoreland Conservancy invites you to join us at the Morosini Reserve from 11AM- 1PM Saturday, May 27th. Find fairy houses and troll huts in the woods. Learn about the mysterious magic of Nature! Discover all sorts of cool things! Join us at the UPT lot at the end of Morosini Farm Court. Come dressed as your favorite fairy, sprite or woodlands creature! We'll make a fun craft for everyone to take home!

www.westmorelandconservancy.org/event-registration FREE



June 21: SUMMER SOLSTICE WALK

The Summer Solstice is the longest night of the year. What better way to observe this than to enjoy a magical evening outside? Join us at 8:30PM at the Universal Pedestrian Trailhead for an evening walk to the pond and around to the field trails. The waxing crescent moon should make it a relatively dark night, so flashlights may be needed by the end of this evening walk.



June 24: ENCHANTED EVENING 7 FIREFLY WALK



Another summer evening walk... A Family-Friendly Firefly walk. Who can resist seeing these magically glowing little bugs? We don't catch them, but marvel at their light show. And who knows.... There may be some pretty magical sights along the trail as well!

Join us at 8:30PM at the Universal Pedestrian Trailhead Kiosk for an evening walk along the trail to the pond and around to the fields. The longer you stay, the more fireflies you'll see mingling with the fairies. The moon should be reasonably bright, being a not-quite-half-full crescent moon.

You can follow us on our Facebook and Instagram pages, as well as our calendar and newsletter. We enjoy sharing our news, our events, and our plans with you, and you can stay up-to-date with events added AFTER the newsletter publication!

Get to know us! We're good to know!

2023 First Quarter Activities

Winter Walk at Walter 1/21/23



1st Day Hike at King/Potter 1/1/23



Apple Tree Rehab at Morosini 2/18/23



Owl Prowl at Morosini



Woodcock Walk 3/18/23



Vernal Equinox/1st Day of Spring at McGinnis



April 2022 – April 2023 President’s Report

Westmoreland Conservancy managed a very active schedule of events, maintenance days and project cultivation over the past year. This while protecting and improving quality habitat.

- **April 22nd** annually kicks things off with Earth Day.
Ribbon cutting at the Wildlife Observation Blind along the Universal Pedestrian Trail
Earth Day Work Day was at the Flinn Reserves and Boxcartown Road
- **May**
 - Migratory activity is more fun at the Morosini Reserve at the new Wildlife Observation Blind. Our friend Alex Busato led a Birdwatching 101 Walk May 15th, observing some less-commonly seen visitors along the extensive trail system.
 - Enchanted Forest time along the Universal Pedestrian Trail. We believe that exposing young imaginations to the magic of Nature helps to ensure a strong appreciation of the importance of land and habitat protection.

Late May & early June saw three phenomenal Eagle Scout projects completed: two at the Morosini Reserve and one at the McGinnis Reserve. Zachary Posner and Aidan Kelley from Claridge Boy Scout Troop 239 completed the Observation Platform in the eastern field and the Accessible Overlook Platform along the Universal Pedestrian Trail. Darius Colangelo of Murrysville Boy Scout Troop 205 completed the Chimney Swift Tower in the meadow of the McGinnis Reserve. Each project is special to Westmoreland Conservancy and we are honored to have helped these young men achieve their Eagle Awards.



- **June:** Westmoreland Conservancy re-vamped the Morosini Geocache Trail (16 caches) and hosted our annual Caching with the Conservancy event. An *Enchanted Evening* walk was held near the summer solstice to count fireflies and enjoy the moonlit trails on one of the longest nights of the year.
- **July:** WC partnered with Friends of Murrysville Parks (FOMP) for a naturalist-led hike at the Walter Reserve and hosted a Nearly New Moon Star Party to look at the night sky by campfire.
- **August** kept us busy with a walk at the Flinn Reserve, led by Lindsey Praksti, and setting up our tent at the annual Export Ethnic Food & Music Festival! We love our neighbors!
- **September** kicked off the busy autumn calendar.
 - Salamander search at the King/Potter Reserves
 - National Land Conference (Rally 2023) in person in New Orleans, LA
 - Autumn Equinox Walk, celebrating the onset of Fall.
- **October** events
 - Witch Hazel Hike at the McGinnis Reserve
 - Autumn Enchanted Forest at the Morosini Reserve
 - Autumn Excursion at Cooper’s Rock, WV.
- **November:** aside from being the onset of general maintenance work days as the leaves come down,
 - The Opt-Outside Hike across Murrysville along the Don Harrison Community Trail (DHCT).



Westmoreland Conservancy is always ready to partner for recreational opportunities, and

- **December** hosted Murrysville Recreation at the McGinnis Reserve for a Hot Chocolate Hike.

In addition to events, Westmoreland Conservancy has been engaged in management projects at reserves. There are currently two major projects in various stages of planning at the Morosini Reserve, and upgrades to two parking areas.

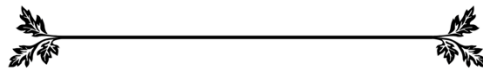
- ❖ **The Pollinator Amphitheater**, in the northeastern field at Morosini, received an initial grant from Eastern Gas to get the project moving. We raised some additional donations, and a generous legacy gift from Diane & David Graft has fully funded the project, which will begin to take shape very soon.
- ❖ **A Nature and Education Center** at the Morosini Reserve is in the early planning stages. An anonymous benefactor has set the groundwork for this project with an extraordinary donation.
- ❖ The **parking lot at the Caywood Reserve** is scheduled for a long-overdue complete re-design this spring
- ❖ **Walter Reserve lot** will be repaired and enlarged at the same time.

- **January's** First Day Hike at the King Reserve was incredibly well-attended, and the Winter Walk at Walter was interesting and educational. We find that the reserves have plenty of magic to share even during the "off-season" months.
- **February** Westmoreland Conservancy partnered with Hollow Oak Land Trust for a board developmental workshop with educator David Allen (Development for Conservation). We also hosted our annual apple tree rehab workshop at the Morosini Reserve.
- **March**
 - Owl Prowl with Alex Busato.
 - American Woodcock Walk, observing a shy wonder.
 - First Day of Spring (Vernal Equinox) was ushered in with a walk led by Lindsey Praksti at the McGinnis Reserve.

As 2023 progresses into its second quarter already, we have Earth Day **April 22nd** scheduled at the Morosini Reserve to complete the trail around the north rim of the pond and will put in some time remediating damages incurred at another location on the reserve. Our Annual Members Meeting & Elections are Wednesday, April 26th at 7PM at the Delmont Library, and all are encouraged to attend. The WeConservePA/Pennsylvania Land Conference is being held in Reading, PA April 26-28th. The business of land protection and conservation continues into another busy year!



Thank you for the experiences and opportunities that come with being part of this organization.
Shelly Tichy



Westmoreland Conservancy Reserves are privately owned lands that are open to the public for permitted use. Dogs are to be on-leash, **NO** motorized vehicles aside from mobility aids.

PLEASE observe **Leave No Trace** sensibilities and **take out anything you take in.**

Do **NOT** leave trash at the reserves.

<https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/>



Westmoreland Conservancy Online:

Website: <http://www.westmorelandconservancy.org> Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/WestmorelandConservancy> Instagram:
https://www.instagram.com/westmoreland_conservancy/

Annual Donations

It's that time of year again! Your donations and support are ALWAYS welcome, however we recommend June 1st annually, since that is the beginning of our fiscal year. Your donations help to support our projects and events. They help us achieve our goals and continue to grow, making nature available to EVERYONE!

- Student (under 18):\$10
- News Recipient.....\$25
- Conservation Ally.....\$50
- Steward Supporter.....\$100
- Resource Partner.....\$500



Your commitment to making an annual donation helps us plan our operating budget, knowing what amount we can expect to receive every year. Any tax-deductible donation of \$25 or more qualifies for free membership. You can renew your annual donation through the site or support us with a new donation. Any donation can be easily managed through our website:
<http://www.westmorelandconservancy.org/donate>
 or mailed directly to Westmoreland Conservancy, 1 Priority Lane, Unit 446, Murrysville, PA 15668.

Westmoreland Conservancy and You. Making the BIG PLANS.

WE LOVE LAND. Land gifts are awesome! We hope that you will talk with us before making such a gift. It's a big step, and we want to make certain that everyone understands one another's expectations. There is no more land being made, so let's work together to protect what we can!

We appreciate all the support you've given Westmoreland Conservancy through the years. There is always an open invitation to attend the monthly meetings and learn more about the "what, why and how" of this organization. Are you interested in helping? Contact us! We always have room for helpful hands to maintain trails. Does your business support community service days? We're happy to provide hours and projects.

As for donations of something other than your time, we have a whole list of those "needed things". The Morosini Reserve receives a lot of attention for being the most universally accessible. It also **requires** a lot of attention. For instance, we will eventually need to acquire a tractor with various attachments to take over effective management of the reserve. Before any of that can come to pass, we need to raise the funds to construct a multi-use building. It must safely store necessary equipment. It will need to have an indoor meeting room and accessible bathrooms. And it should have outdoor pavilion area for events. This will require segmented construction and several years of planning and fundraising. That's for only one of our nine (currently) reserves. As always, your support is vital.

Ultimately, any means you choose to support Westmoreland Conservancy is appreciated. Your time, your expertise, your generosity ALL help keep this organization growing. Because of your support, people can find a place to enjoy nature close to home. And we are grateful.



Spring has arrived and with it came snow. Winters last gasp, but beneath the snow the world is waking up. Skunk cabbage is pushing up through the frozen earth in swirls of purple and green. Onion grass cropped close to the ground by deer grazing. Garlic Mustard adds another hue of green to the forest floor, while above the maples are tinting the treetops in red. Spring is here even if its shy and subtle. Soon spring Peepers and Wood frogs will be calling and chirping through the night. With spring comes the time for Gardening, If your like me you've combed through your seed catalogs all winter plotting and planning what you want to grow. This year I'm trying some new herbs, Meadowsweet, Spilanthes, Marshmallow and Borage, as well as some I saved from last year.

Each variety of plant produces a different type of seed. Dandelions are light and fluffy blowing in the wind. Burdock seeds are Velcro-like and travel far distances in the fur of animals. Some seeds are tiny like Stinging Nettles, Others are large and thick like Passion Flower. Many seeds such as vegetable and flower seeds can be planted directly in the soil but for a lot of varieties of herbal seeds there are three main types of seed preparations to use before planting and germination. They are: Scarification, Stratification, and Light dependent germination. If your not sure what type of preparation a seed needs you can usually look it up online.



Scarification is usually taken care of in nature by birds and animals. After they eat the seeds the acid in their stomachs take off the outside hard layer and when they poop them out the seeds are ready to germinate. To do this process without the aid of mother nature, you can take some sandpaper or a nail file and scrape off the outside layer of the seed until you see some of the inside white of the seed (Its endosperm). This gives the seed an easier way to sprout through its hard shell layer. You can also soak scarified seeds in warm water over night to help them on their way.

Stratification is also a process usually taken care of by nature. When a plant drops its seeds in autumn they fall to the earth and get covered up by dirt and leaves, they spend the winter under the snow, snug and cold and moist. The cold frost gets the seeds embryo ready to sprout when the weather warms again in the spring. To simulate this at home you can put your seeds in a plastic bag with barely moist sand in it. Put the seeds in their bags inside a paper bag then inside the fridge. Two months is often long enough to trick the seeds into thinking it was winter. Some seeds may require a longer cold period.

The third common seed preparation is Light dependent germination. Often these seeds are tiny, they drop from the plant and lay on the surface of the soil. The heat of the sun helps them to germinate. To do this its quite simple, plant your seeds on top of the soil and tamp them into the ground gently not burying them, letting them take in lots of sun and warmth. Be careful when watering this type of seed, use a mister spray bottle to keep them from washing away.

Now that Winter is gone and Spring is here, Go out and Get your hands dirty, watch your Seeds Grow and Grow.

~Lindsey Praksti
from the collected articles.

2022-23 Officers

Shelly Tichy – President
Rob Malley – Vice President
Bob Sloboda – Secretary/Stwd Coord.
Chip Brown– Treasurer/Stwd Coord.



2022-23 Board of Governors

Alan Halperin - Board
Rob Bowman - Board
Joann Reisch – Board
Lindsey Praksti – Board

Westmoreland Conservancy
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Murrysville, PA 15668
contact@westmorelandconservancy.org



Our Vision

To preserve natural, rural, and historic landscapes for Nature's benefit and the enrichment of future generations.

Our Mission

Westmoreland Conservancy preserves, enhances, and connects land, habitat, and green space through acquisition, stewardship, and cooperation with local communities and other organizations.

Schedule of Events

****Watch our Facebook page or sign up for email reminders for work days!****

Please wear sturdy shoes, leg protection and weather-appropriate attire.

Scheduled Events may be canceled in the event of Unsuitable Weather.

04/22 Earth Day at Morosini, 9AM Morosini Farm Road, UPT Lot

04/22 Lyrid Star Party, 8PM Morosini Farm Road, Parking Lot #1

04/26: Annual Members Meeting & Elections 7PM Delmont Public Library

05/06: Shadows of the Past Hike, 10AM Boxcartown Road Flinn Reserve Lot.

05/14 Mother's Day Birdwatching, 8AM **or** 5PM Morosini Farm Road, UPT Lot

05/24: Monthly Meeting, 7PM Delmont Public Library

05/27: Enchanted Forest, 11AM – 1PM Morosini Farm Road, UPT Lot

06/21: Summer Solstice Walk, 8:30PM Morosini Farm Road, UPT Lot

06/24: Enchanted Evening/Firefly Walk, 8:30PM Morosini Farm Road, UPT Lot

06/28: Monthly Meeting, 7PM Delmont Public Library