

# Lower Shore Land Connections

Spring 2025

LOWER SHORE  
LAND  
TRUST

*Photo by Margot Resto*



# Table of Contents



## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Chair – Dr. Mike Lewis  
Vice Chair – Dr. Judith Stribling  
Treasurer – Bruce Robson  
Secretary – Elise Trelegan  
Anthony DiPaolo  
Colin McAllister  
Dave Saveikis  
Glenn Irwin  
Rick Pollitt, Jr  
Merry Mears  
Byron Beauchamp  
Steve Marsh

## **STAFF**

Matt Heim - Executive Director  
Jared Parks - Director of Land Programs  
Frank Deuter - Stewardship Coordinator  
Beth Sheppard - Agriculture Outreach Specialist  
Margot Resto - Executive Administrator  
Brooke Orr - AmeriCorps Program Specialist

*Lower Shore Land Trust*  
*100 River Street*  
*Snow Hill, MD 21863*  
*443 234 5587*  
*LowerShoreLandTrust.org*

 @LowerShoreLandTrust

 @Lower\_Shore\_Land\_Trust

## Small Spaces, Big Impact Spring 2025 | Land Connections

It's been a dynamic start to the year at the Lower Shore Land Trust! From planting vibrant pollinator meadows and conserving important natural areas to launching new websites and connecting with our incredible network of supporters and volunteers, each effort—big or small—has made a meaningful difference.

This season, we've been especially inspired by how even the smallest spaces can have a big impact—whether it's a pocket pollinator garden or a newly protected habitat. In this newsletter, we're excited to share some of the stories and milestones that are helping bring the theme Small Spaces, Big Impact to life.

- **Restoring Newport Bay:  
Lower Shore's New Drainage Initiative..... 2**
- **The Goldilocks of Parks: Shumaker Park.....3**
- **Gardening is an Art Form.....5**
- **Dividing Creek Wildlife Sanctuary:  
Where Wonder Grows.....7**
- **Firing Up Conservation:  
Revitalizing Pirate's Wharf Park.....9**

# Restoring Newport Bay: Lower Shore's New Drainage Initiative

Matt Heim

The Lower Shore Land Trust (LSLT) is excited to announce its involvement in a major watershed restoration initiative in the Newport Bay Watershed, funded through the new Whole Watershed Grant Program. The project is led by the Maryland Coastal Bays Program and this significant investment by the State of Maryland supports a multi-year, collaborative restoration effort aimed at improving water quality, enhancing habitat, and building climate resilience throughout the watershed.

Newport Bay is one of the most ecologically diverse—and challenged—areas in the Maryland Coastal Bays system. The Whole Watershed Grant will fund critical projects such as stream and wetland restoration, stormwater infrastructure upgrades, and marsh revitalization. These efforts aim to reverse nutrient loading, sedimentation, and flooding that have long impacted the health of the bay and its tributaries.

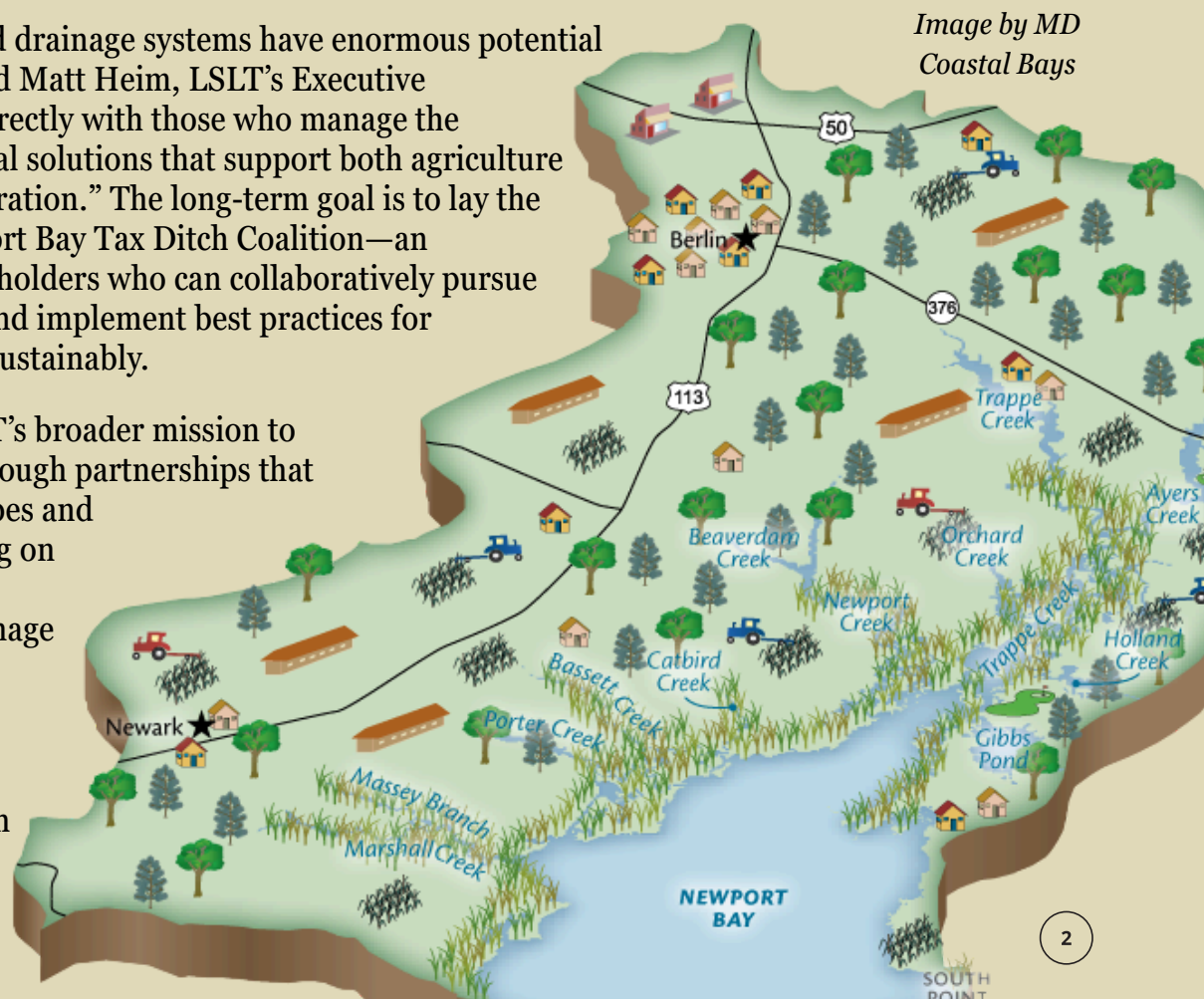
As a key partner in this initiative, LSLT is taking the lead on engaging with Public Drainage Associations (PDAs), which manage a vast network of agricultural drainage ditches that connect farmland to local waterways. These systems play a vital role in shaping the flow of water—and pollutants—throughout the watershed.

Despite their importance, PDAs have historically had limited involvement with conservation organizations. LSLT's outreach will work to bridge that gap. Through one-on-one meetings and group discussions, LSLT will bring together PDA managers, landowners, and restoration practitioners to explore opportunities for improving water quality and habitat within these drainage corridors.

“Our region’s ditches and drainage systems have enormous potential for ecological uplift,” said Matt Heim, LSLT’s Executive Director. “By working directly with those who manage the land, we can find practical solutions that support both agriculture and environmental restoration.” The long-term goal is to lay the groundwork for a Newport Bay Tax Ditch Coalition—an organized group of stakeholders who can collaboratively pursue funding, plan projects, and implement best practices for managing ditches more sustainably.

This work is part of LSLT’s broader mission to support conservation through partnerships that strengthen both landscapes and communities. By focusing on underutilized areas of restoration, such as drainage infrastructure, the Trust continues to lead with innovation and impact.

Stay tuned for updates on this initiative and future opportunities to get involved.





# The Goldilocks of Parks: Shumaker Park

Brooke Orr

In 2025, we've been asking staff to highlight some of their favorite places on the Shore to get out and connect with nature. Our Americorps member, Brooke Orr's, shared one of her favorite spots, Schumaker Park:

Everyone has those places that just make them feel safe. Whether it's in your hometown or another country, these places make us feel more connected to ourselves. In my hometown, that place for me is Black Hill Regional Park. I've spent so many summer days paddleboarding, painting, and reading there that it almost was a second home. Not only did it create a space for me to practice my hobbies, but it also helped connect me with nature. It made me grounded on days that felt so chaotic. I relied on this public space as if it were a friend's listening ears.

When I first moved to Salisbury, I found myself far from the comforting familiarity of Black Hill Regional Park, and I realized I needed to find a new place that could offer the same sense of peace and connection. This snowballed into a month long interview process where I was the employer and the parks in Salisbury were the interviewees. Some may say I had too much time on my hands, and I'd say I'm passionate about nature before reluctantly agreeing with them.



*Images from  
Black Hill  
Regional Park.*





The view from my favorite spot in the park - the swinging bench.



Loblolly pine needles that fell on me due to scurrying squirrels.



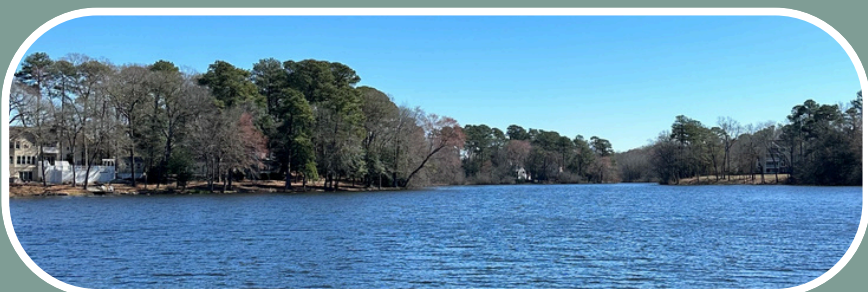
A Blue Heron on the dock along Schumaker Pond.

# Schumaker Park (cont'd.)

Nonetheless, I would spend a lot of my time between classes and weekends going to different parks and rating them all in hopes to find a park that felt like Black Hills Regional Park. Despite my efforts, none of the parks I visited seemed to match the tranquility of Black Hill Regional Park—there were always too many people, or they lacked the scenic water and trails I loved. But then, one day, as I was driving, I made a wrong turn and stumbled upon Shumaker Park. Only ten minutes from my apartment, I wondered how I hadn't found it sooner.

The park had just the right amount of people. Not a ton but some I could watch playing disc golf or walk trails. It had a beautiful view of Schumaker Pond, where I've often observed families teaching their children to fish or kayak from the swinging bench overlooking the water. However, the thing I found most interesting was the ginormous loblolly trees that towered over me. They reach so high they make you feel like a miniscule ant, with squirrels who climb all over easily due to the deep fissures in the bark. (I've been hit by falling tree debris a time or two because of these busy little mammals) As I sat there being shrunk down to the size of an ant I noticed the things worrying me that day had shrunk as well. It was this day in 2022 that I had realized no more "interviews" were needed. I had found my special spot.

Finding Schumaker Park marked the beginning of countless peaceful moments, whether I was reading, paddleboarding, or simply enjoying the shade of the towering pine trees. It reminded me of the importance of having a place where we can connect not only with nature but also with ourselves. In a world that often feels chaotic, these special spots offer us a sense of grounding and belonging. I'm grateful for the parks that have become part of my journey, and I hope you, too, find a place that offers you the same peace and connection. Whether it's Schumaker Park or a hidden gem of your own, I encourage you to seek out a space that helps you feel grounded and at home.





# Gardening is an Art Form

Beth Sheppard

Much of our work at the Lower Shore Land Trust focuses on land stewardship and the co-benefits of habitat species preservation, restoration and our community connections to the natural world around us.

We don't often have a singular event which casts a light on our creative side. Yet, in our residential spaces we find amazing art creations worth admiration. "Small Spaces, Big Impact" is this year's Pollinator Garden tour theme. Properties range from tiny 1/8 acre raised beds, to larger double lots with layered landscapes and pathways. All residential gardens are within a 1-mile radius in the town of Berlin. The garden tour is Saturday, June 7, 2025 from 8:30 am until 4:30 pm. Rain or shine is what we usually suggest but if necessary we have Sunday, June 8th as a Rain Date.

Our plein air artists arrive on Saturday morning with a blank canvas, while our garden hosts have been planning and designing their garden portraits for months, years, even centuries. Where an artist sets their easel is an intriguing part of the garden inspiration.

Art and gardening blend together beautifully: some projects as an empty canvas, while others require total reconstruction. There is a range of character, whether it's a new home site or an inherited historic property situated amongst mature hardwoods. Whether the canvas is framed with a single specimen tree or sweeps of ornamental grasses, blooming shrubs or an array of seasonal native flowers each individual garden reveals the paint medium of one's choosing to make the space their own. Like an artist planning what to pack along with the easel, paints and brushes, a gardener makes a plan of action, observing sun and shade, soil and water resources and lines of sight to get the most impact.

*Photo by: Beth Sheppard*



# Gardening is an Art Form (cont'd.)

Trees are the foundational layer, houses or other structures get worked around, complemented, screened, or honored. The drape of a vine, bend of a branch, or a pathway leading to intrigue; these all add elements, textures and depth of field. As much as a gardener may try to plan with perennials, curves and borders, success in the garden is often an accidental inspiration.

The fluid change of pace in a garden moves from an early spring ephemeral explosion of redbuds and daffodils then spreading into a heavy summer serendipity of colors like bee balm, asters, coneflower and clethra summer sweet.

From start to finish we value the stewardship found in one's back, front or side yard. We celebrate these spaces as an opportunity to go big for our pollinating insects – bees, wasps, butterflies, moths and bats. The table is set for feasting; every gardener has their own integral guest list of songbirds, reptiles, box turtles and rabbits (oh dear).

Stewarding the land is a creative balance between conservation and creativity. This balance is crucial. Yes, there can be roses (but give up the dusting and sprays please) and there can be sentimental ornamentals but yank out troublesome invasives like Chinese wild privet, oriental bittersweet, Japanese wisteria.

While an artist captures a breeze or dewdrop, they find a way to preserve a momentary inspiration. I might soak in bright moments like shafts of spring sunlight shining patterns on the farm fields or the golden hues of sassafras or spicebush blooming along a wooded edge. Better yet, when I visit a friend's garden there is a connected community in the space. That is what makes our Annual Pollinator Garden Tour so special.

Please join us this summer for the celebration of one small town's gardens and the art within.

*Photo by: Beth Sheppard*



Get tickets here:





# Dividing Creek Wildlife Sanctuary

## —Where Wonder Grows

Margot Resto

In early May, I had the pleasure of visiting LSLT conservation easement landowners Earl and Barbara Dolan to learn more about their story and what led them to conserve their beautiful land. They graciously welcomed me into their home and shared the journey that brought them to protect 205 acres of forest and wetlands behind Courthouse Hill Road, along Dividing Creek near Pocomoke City—a place they’ve thoughtfully named Dividing Creek Wildlife Sanctuary. The drive alone felt like an escape, winding down a sun-dappled, tree-lined path that opened into a peaceful, hidden haven. Though just minutes from town, the property feels worlds away. Stepping out of my car, I was instantly enveloped by nature’s beauty—a space clearly shaped by care, passion, and deep respect.

Barbara’s connection to nature began early. As a child, she spent every day outdoors, exploring the woods and playing in secret fort hideouts. That love of nature followed her through life—from planting her first garden at 16 years old to earning degrees in Agronomy and Plant Pathology. She spent much of her career alone in fields, studying plants, watching the sun set in the solitude of open spaces. Yet, even as a young girl, she noticed development creeping in and felt an ache for the wild places she feared would disappear.

Earl’s love for the land came later. Raised in the city, he always felt something was missing, though he couldn’t quite name it. Appraisal work brought him to the Eastern Shore, and he quickly fell in love with its quiet charm. A hunting invitation from a business contact opened the door to a deeper connection with the land. Earl eventually sought his own slice of nature to hunt on, and a friend helped him locate the very property he now calls home. Once intended for a trailer park, it sat undeveloped (except for some timbering done in the 1970’s) until Earl negotiated to buy it. He was determined to keep it protected from development, wild and unspoiled.





# Dividing Creek Wildlife Sanctuary

## – Where Wonder Grows (cont'd.)

While Barbara was interested in exploring a conservation easement, Earl was cautious. He didn't want restrictions placed on his land, or anyone telling him what he could and couldn't do with it. But with encouragement from his wife Barbara, former LSLT Executive Director Kate Patton, and The Nature Conservancy's Eastern Shore Director, Liz Zucker—who assured him the process was flexible and respectful—they worked through every concern, up front. Together, the Dolans and LSLT crafted a customized easement agreement that honored their vision, which included a stipulation to the allowing the Dolans to clear up to 10 acres of woods for agriculture or a food plot if they ever chose to do so and provided financial support to enhance the sanctuary they loved.

Today, Earl and Barbara enjoy the fruits of their labor - a property teeming with life: Pink Lady's Slipper wild orchids, 91 bird species, butterflies, bees, snakes, turtles, frogs, deer, foxes, and even the occasional river otter, which astonished Barbara, seeing one on land, for the first time in her life. She was walking with her dog when they came upon it: "It just stared at us, then wandered off into the creek. I was stunned. I had only seen their heads when they were swimming in the creek. I did not realize how big they were!" She even has her own deer stand, just for viewing wildlife. Barbara shared that after learning about native plants at the 2014 LSLT Native Plant Sale, she began incorporating native plants into her gardens to provide a food source and shelter for beneficial pollinator insects, and it's become a "booming meeting place for so many bees, butterflies and very hungry Monarch caterpillars!"

Earl has many treasured memories of hunting and exploring his woods and caring for his land (including the discovery of a cemetery dating back to the 1800's). He has endless gratitude for all the friendships he's gained with other landowners and farmers in the area who share the same reverence for the tranquility around them.

Earl and Barbara agree that having the easement with LSLT has been a positive experience and a great working relationship that has only enhanced their land and their lives. Earl shared that "it's something that all landowners should look into to see if it could fit their needs. It's not one-sided – it can work in their favor." Barbara, who was the 2024 LSLT Volunteer of the Year, said, "I've met so many people and participated in so many fun and meaningful events since we started working with LSLT. I'm grateful."

They say that when it is time for the "Next Great Adventure" they will be content with the knowledge that they gave their hearts to this special piece of Earth, and they hope that future inhabitants will have the same veneration for the gifts it has given them. Their land is not just a home, but a legacy—a place where nature is protected, cherished, and shared. As Barbara says, with joyful, childlike wonder, "Look at all the wonderful surprises I get to discover every day, just by walking through these woods. What else do I need?"





---

# Firing Up Conservation: Revitalizing Pirate's Wharf Park

Brooke Orr

---

On March 11th, a key step in the ongoing habitat restoration efforts at Pirates Wharf Park took place as the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) conducted a prescribed burn across sections of the park's grassland. This carefully planned and controlled burn is part of a larger collaborative effort between Wicomico County Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Department, the Lower Shore Land Trust, and ShoreRivers, all working together to revitalize the unique grassland habitat along the Wicomico River through the Delmarva Restoration and Conservation Network.

Prescribed burns are a vital tool in grassland management. By reducing invasive species, clearing away dead vegetation, and enriching the soil, these burns create the ideal conditions for native plants to thrive. This latest burn at Pirates Wharf Park lays the groundwork for an exciting next phase — a native seed planting scheduled for later this month.

The upcoming planting, led by the Lower Shore Land Trust in partnership with Wicomico County Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Department, will focus on establishing a biologically diverse meadow filled with native pollinator flowers and grasses. This effort aims to create a vibrant habitat that supports a variety of native species, from butterflies and bees to birds and small mammals, reinforcing the park's role as an ecological gem along the Wicomico River.

By fostering these grassland habitats, the partnership is not only enhancing the park's natural beauty but also strengthening its ecological resilience. Native meadows play a crucial role in supporting biodiversity, improving soil health, and providing critical food and shelter for pollinators and other wildlife.

*Photo by: Brooke Orr*





# Firing Up Conservation: Revitalizing Pirate's Wharf Park (cont'd.)

Visitors to Pirates Wharf Park will soon have the opportunity to experience the transformation firsthand as the newly planted meadow takes root and blossoms over the coming seasons. The Lower Shore Land Trust, along with its partners, remains committed to conservation efforts that protect and restore the Lower Shore's natural landscapes.

For more information about ongoing conservation projects and how you can get involved, visit the Lower Shore Land Trust website or follow us on social media. Together, we're growing a healthier, more vibrant future for our community and its wild spaces.

Photos by: Brooke Orr



This is what the new ground cover is expected to look like - a diverse native habitat for pollinators.



Photo by: Jared Parks







*Lower Shore Land Trust protects and restores natural resources, wildlife habitat and working lands to support and connect healthy and vibrant communities.*

*We envision a future where the unique rural character of the Lower Shore remains a vital defining characteristic of our communities where farming, nature, and people thrive.*

# 5th Annual Pollinator Garden Tour 2025

Get tickets here:



Saturday,  
June 7th

If you value the land, wildlife, and communities of the Lower Shore—and the people who work every day to protect them—I hope you will consider making a contribution to our mid-year campaign. Your gift fuels our efforts and inspires our team to keep fighting for the places we all cherish.

The Lower Shore Land Trust thanks you for your generosity !

