

# Allegheny Valley Conservancy— A Land Trust at Work



photo-Marilyn Black

*by Marilyn Black*

**T**he more than 60 non-profit land trusts in Pennsylvania share a commitment to land protection, stewardship, education and community outreach, typically within a specific geographical area. Land trusts work to protect lands and waters through conservation easements, land ownership, reconveying land parcels to a public agency or another land trust, and promoting responsible land use practices.

Allegheny Valley Conservancy (AVC), formed in 2002, protects natural resources in the Allegheny River and French Creek watersheds. This all-volunteer organization with a six member board monitors conservation easements on 632 acres. It also owns 41 acres open to the public without charge for hiking, camping, kayaking and other recreational activities. Another 190 wooded acres called Buttermilk Bluffs, including 2,000 feet of French Creek frontage, are co-owned by AVC and French Creek Valley Conservancy.

AVC also conducts guided educational programs and events by land trust and partner personnel. By

appointment, students and small groups can take hikes or floats on preserved lands. And, the conservancy is active in streambank stabilization projects to reduce erosion along the river and Mill Creek.

## **Kayak/canoe access and primitive camping area at Dotter**

The first shoreline parcel purchased by AVC is located 4 miles north of Emlenton, on the east bank of the Allegheny River. It was obtained to conserve the riparian corridor and river habitat. Dotter Access is situated on Carls Road off Dotterer Road. A small tributary flows through this scenic parcel. AVC enhanced the site for recreational enthusiasts by constructing a pavilion, a picnic table, a fire ring and stairs leading to the river's edge. Free primitive camping is allowed with a maximum 2-day stay. Campers are asked to practice "Leave No Trace" ethics.

## **White Easement**

Bill White, Venango County, signed a conservation easement with AVC for 152 wooded acres. He said, "In my view French Creek is a historically and environmentally unique and important stream. For those of us who own



Sandy Creek Trail crosses the Allegheny River by means of the deck-covered Belmar Bridge.



Mill Creek enters the Allegheny River through this former railroad arch.

photo-Debra Frawley, AVC

property abutting the stream we have a responsibility to maintain and, as best possible, preserve or improve the quality of the stream.”

## Woll-Nathanson Preserve

In 2019, Ed Woll, California, donated land to AVC near mile marker #5 on the Sandy Creek Trail. “I understand that the word ‘landscape’ has two meanings. One is a beautiful place. The deeper meaning is the place itself—a region understood as defined by its character. It’s the landscape we can wander through. What a privilege it is for us to pass along this land to the AVC. Now, given away, it belongs to everybody and to us no less than it ever did.” Woll and his life-long friend Harvey Nathanson, Allegheny County, contributed their adjoining parcels, totaling 25 acres.

## Allegheny River Clean-Up

Each year, AVC coordinates a work session. Volunteers and partner organizations collect and remove litter, fishing line and other undesired items from the shore and main stem of the Allegheny River. The public is welcome to “get dirty, get wet and have fun!” Trash bags and

containers are furnished to participants. Then, the rubbish is carted off for appropriate disposal.

Debra Frawley, AVC President, knows the conservancy’s mission is broad. “While the AVC’s mission involves promotion of good land use and providing public access through the protection, conservation and management of the wonderful natural resource rich land in the watershed, our goals also include connecting with and educating the public. We thank all who have provided support and participated in events to conserve the natural environment while providing places for all to enjoy,” said Frawley.

For more information, go to [avc-pa.org](http://avc-pa.org), or submit questions to [avcinfo@windstream.net](mailto:avcinfo@windstream.net), P. O. Box 96, Franklin, PA 16323. ☐

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***“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.” Margaret Mead.***

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