



Beaty Park

LAND AND GREENWAY UPDATE

Making the Difference PERMANENTLY

DLC is creating green landscapes for a healthier, more balanced, and attractive community *By Dave Cable*



The Conservancy gives each of us, through donations and volunteering, powerful opportunities to make a lasting difference in our community. This is particularly true in the case of supporting our land conservation and greenway efforts that create permanent green landscapes for a healthier, more balanced, and attractive community. Investing in DLC is a great way to contribute to a trusted organization that delivers tangible, local results, including valuable offsets addressing climate change.

Land Conservation Update & Pipeline

In February, we finalized the last phase to permanently conserve the Chester Farm, 209 acres of historic farmland in the Rocky River corridor. This project, made possible by a generous grant from the NC's Environmental Enhancement grant program, protects the land from development through a conservation easement. This land's extensive conservation values include water quality, wide-ranging wildlife habitat, prime farmland, and rich tree canopy.

But the real story is Frank Chester himself, a dear friend and extraordinary conservationist who made the magnanimous decision to forego the land's full

market value and conserve it—forever. When Frank died suddenly at 86, about six weeks following the project's completion, he had achieved his legacy wish to protect his granddaddy's farm, which he loved.

DLC's land project pipeline is full, with 10 projects covering 900 acres. Conservation easements have been proposed, as requested by either the Town of Davidson or Mecklenburg County, on two large public land holdings: Abersham Park and West Branch Nature Preserve. Both projects are key to the conservation vision and plan for the West Branch corridor.

There are several additional projects in the West Branch corridor in various stages of completion for a total of another 206 acres.

In addition, we are leading a large-scale collaboration of community NGOs and government partners to purchase a regionally significant farm as a future nature preserve. This project, currently under negotiation, offers profound benefits to our community and our ecosystems. The Conservancy is investing \$250,000 in the project, which will also feature a leg of the Carolina Thread Trail.

continued on page 3



Davidson Lands Conservancy is a local land trust dedicated to conserving and stewarding land and to promoting a conservation ethic. DLC advances its mission with education and through programs of land conservation, trails and greenways, urban forestry, and preservation of wildlife habitat.

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Our Four Pillars of Success

- **Conserve & Steward Land**
- **Preserve & Enhance Tree Canopy**
- **Expand Greenways & Trails**
- **Preserve Wildlife Habitat**

DLC LEADERSHIP

Dear Conservancy Friends



Inspired by DLC's professionalism and regional impact, I joined the Conservancy Board about two years ago. At first, I knew little about the inner-workings of the Conservancy, the board's deep involvement, and the extensive behind-the-scenes collaborative leadership that make this small organization so effective. Now I have experienced DLC's thoughtful approach to its mission within a culture of gratitude and collaboration, and I am truly proud to be part of this team.

Since the DLC Board's 2020 strategic review, the organization is positioned to be a mission-driven leader in local conservation, committed to making our community healthier, more attractive, and a better place to live. DLC's broad and ambitious platform makes this possible, not only by conserving and stewarding land, but also by protecting and expanding our tree canopy, enlarging our greenway system, and protecting and restoring wildlife habitat. Cindy and I particularly appreciate DLC's strategic approach to advancing conservation, seeking to bring balance to growth, not stop it, helping our community thrive in sustainable ways for the highest possible quality of life for the region.

The board launched the Now & Forever Campaign to meet the community's conservation needs and DLC goals. We are well on our way toward our \$1,750,000 target.

Local conservation work is hard and expensive, requiring broad, generous, and sustained support. I am personally working to expand our current corporate partners and encourage other corporations to check out DLC's new corporate engagement opportunities to see what sparks interest.

The support of strong corporate partners will be vital to sustaining our regional impact through Now & Forever. We are deeply grateful to them, as well as the community and conservation donors and volunteers who make DLC's work possible.

— Scott Tew
Vice President for Sustainability
at Trane Technologies

Thank YOU!

The work of the Davidson Lands Conservancy is only possible because of strong community support, for which we are exceptionally grateful. Through monetary gifts and volunteer time, we have advanced critical conservation work over the last year. Consider making a donation directly from your IRA or consider DLC in your estate plans.

LAND AND GREENWAY UPDATE *continued from cover*

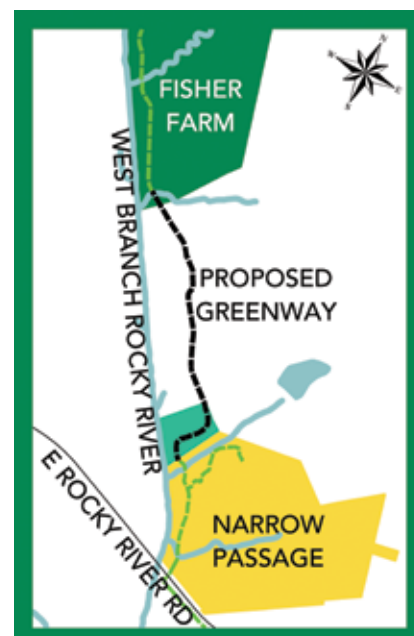
Greenways & Trails

The West Branch greenway, the primary focus of our greenway efforts, is critically important to the community and region. This planned half-mile greenway section will connect Fisher Farm and Abersham Parks lying to the north with Narrow Passage, River Run, and the village of Davidson located to the south and west. This missing section of the West Branch greenway is designated on Davidson's publicly adopted master plan and is Davidson's highest priority proposed greenway section.

This leg of the greenway is planned as a part of the Carolina Thread Trail,

the 15-county interconnected system of trails across the region. Eventually, the greenway is planned to extend north from Abersham to the trail system in Iredell County and up to downtown Mooresville.

The Conservancy has worked for years to find the best path for the planned West Branch greenway—one with little or no impact on any property or property owner, ecosystems, wetlands, or trees along the corridor, while being physically possible and thoughtfully designed to provide a natural and positive experience for users.



UPDATE Now & Forever Campaign

During the past two years, 12 Davidson residents opened their homes to gatherings of over 200 neighbors to hear Dave Cable and several DLC Board Members share DLC's vision for the future.

That vision emerged from a three-year strategic plan that identifies a mission focused on four pillars essential to the future of our community: Conserving Land, Preserving Trees, Expanding Trails & Greenways, and Perserving Wildlife Habitat.

Hearing strong feedback and enthusiasm from these neighborhood meetings, DLC launched Now & Forever, a campaign to secure these pillars by 2025, with a goal of \$1,750,000 in additional resources.

DLC Board Member and Chair of Now & Forever John Griffith said, "Thanks to our committed donors, Now & Forever stands at \$1,400,000 in gifts, pledges, and annual-giving commitments. With their support, donors are testifying to the importance of DLC's Four Pillars, helping to preserve central aspects of the community they love."



Toward that end, Griffith has announced a corporate phase to Now & Forever, led by Scott Tew, a DLC Board Member and Vice President for Sustainability at Trane Technologies. Tew began the corporate phase by hosting a gathering of corporate and business leaders at Trane offices. Cable is working with Tew to engage corporations and businesses, to ensure that DLC can meet the goals of Now & Forever by the end of 2024.

Griffith added, "We stand ready to engage individuals, organizations, businesses, and corporations who are interested in learning more about the Davidson Lands Conservancy and this initiative to claim a future we all desire."

"Thanks to our committed donors, Now & Forever stands at \$1,400,000 in gifts, pledges, and annual-giving commitments." —John Griffith

Partnering for Conservation

WILDLIFE HABITAT

DLC proudly highlights its strong and enduring partnership with Williams, an energy infrastructure company, as a crucial corporate ally and Wildlife Habitat Sponsor. Williams has been instrumental in the preservation and protection of natural areas in Davidson through its commitment and generous financial support.

The bond between DLC and Williams was exemplified in a recent volunteer event held at Fisher Farm Park. Fifteen dedicated volunteers, including DLC Board Member Gordon Clark and volunteer leader Andy Kane, joined forces with DLC and the Town of Davidson Public Works to tackle invasive plant removal. This noteworthy undertaking was part of Williams Volunteer Week, during which more than 1,100 Williams employees actively engaged in community projects nationwide.

DLC Executive Director Dave Cable said, "Williams' commitment to our mission has made a positive impact on the environment and the local community. We are profoundly grateful and look forward to continuing this collaboration, safeguarding and conserving Davidson's natural area for future generations to enjoy."



Williams employees volunteer to tackle invasive plant removal at Fisher Farm Park.

TREES DAVIDSON

Your rare, large, or physically unique tree could be a DLC Treasure Tree! Nominate your tree at davidsonlands.org to recognize remarkable specimens of cultural and historical significance in our community.

TreasureTree is a DLC program made possible by generous support from **Trane Technologies**.



INTERN SPOTLIGHT

Charlotte Welsby, Davidson College '25

This summer, I enjoyed the diversity of experiences that DLC has offered me, such as education, administration, and implementation of plans to promote biodiversity. As a Davidson junior majoring in Environmental

Studies with a Data Science minor, I am finding my niche within these fields. DLC has helped me hone my skills in environmental education and data management. Helping with the re-accreditation process opened my eyes to the complexities of nonprofit organizations and the level of structure needed to run a successful nonprofit.

DLC's work protects and preserves wildlife while teaching future generations about the importance of conservation in general and easements in particular. As populations grow globally, we must consider ways to preserve nature while making room for all our valued community members. One of the answers to this complex dilemma could lie within land conservation.

"I am grateful for this opportunity to advance my skills, and I will remain curious and passionate about the environment and the future."

Creating a Prairie FISHER FARM

Bees, butterflies, birds, and small mammals are biodiversity supergenerators

PHOTOS BY JOHN MACKAY



Fisher Farm is a 200-acre treasure of diverse habitats maintained for passive recreation and preservation of natural lands. While stunning in its current condition, Fisher Farm holds profound potential to be restored with a diverse array of native plants and animals to promote wildlife and a stronger, healthier ecosystem.

A knowledgeable, talented, and enthusiastic group of DLC staff and volunteers joined forces with Davidson College biology professors Kevin Smith, Susana Wadgymar, Chris Paradise, and retired ornithologist Mark Stanback to form the Wildlife Enhancement Collaborative, an effort to enhance wildlife biodiversity at Fisher Farm and Abersham Parks. This team of experts assessed the needs and restoration potential of the park and created a master plan to tackle this project over the next decade.

Central to the vision for the park is creating a prairie with native flowers and grasses to attract and host all sorts of bees, butterflies, birds, and small mammals. Native prairielands are invaluable for wildlife and can serve as super-generators of biodiversity.

Creating native prairies requires focus and expertise. Best practices are evolving. As a first step, the Collaborative has

created a schedule of steps, the first of which is to remove the fescue, dallis grass, and other invasive plants. The techniques applied are unique to the location. Often experimental plots are needed to take full advantage of the native seed bank in the soil. Seeding is likely required but may not be necessary if the native seed bank is robust. Once established, successful maintenance includes rotational mowing and/or burning, periodic removal of invasive plants, and over-seeding.

Work at Fisher Farm is also underway to remove invasive plants from the forested areas in the park. Last spring, an enthusiastic group from Williams partnered with DLC and the Town's Public Works department to clear a major section of a key wooded area. This fall a contractor will remove additional areas of invasive plants.

The Collaborative's work at Fisher Farm is made possible by generous support from Williams, the Conservancy's Wildlife Habitat & Conservation partner.

For more on Wildlife Habitat and other DLC programs, visit davidsonlands.org.

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*Southern Conservation
Partners generously supports
DLC's education programs*

Summer at the FREEDOM SCHOOL

The children we met at the Freedom School love playing outside and were eager to explain all their favorite playground games. However, the concept of getting dirty and “playing” to learn about the planet and climate crisis were new experiences to some of the scholars.

Paris, a rising fourth grader, was not the most enthusiastic about going outside in the hot, sticky weather to get muddy. By the end of the week, she was ankle-deep in pond mud to catch fish—and encouraging her friends to do the same.

The Freedom School, a summer program at the Ada Jenkins Center, serves to maintain literacy levels for young students during the summer, while providing enrichment experiences. DLC’s



Students of the Freedom School at Roosevelt Wilson Park.

partnership with Ada Jenkins allows volunteers to teach ecology lessons focused on ecosystems, life cycles, and climate change intervention. Our goal is to familiarize children with learning outdoors and to nurture curiosity and care for the natural world.

Children were more curious about climate change and potential solutions by the end of the week, and were excited to tell their friends and siblings about pollinators, food webs, and life cycles—and catching fish while standing in pond mud!



NATUREFEST 2023

A Journey into the NATURAL WORLD

Connecting with the wonders of the natural world

nature enthusiasts of all ages. This educational event showcased 15 exhibits and activities, providing a unique chance to connect with the wonders of the natural world.

NatureFest included crafts, live animals, fishing, native plants, animals and trees, pollinators, school science projects, and other conservation attractions. As a free annual event, DLC’s NatureFest encourages curiosity, exploration, and environmental awareness for all members of our community.

Participants enjoyed interactive exhibits and hands-on learning about local nature and ecosystems. Children were thrilled to interact with live animals like screech owls, snakes, and a blue-tongued skink. They also observed native plant, animal, and tree species while discovering the vital role of pollinators. One young

student said, “Fishing during NatureFest brought back wonderful memories of visiting my grandfather’s farm.”

Cindy McIntosh, a DLC Board Member and NatureFest Chair, said “Seeing the joy and curiosity on the children’s faces was magical and emphasized the power of nature education.”

Thank YOU!

NatureFest 2023 received generous support from the Davidson Garden Club, a loyal supporter of the Conservancy. DLC extends gratitude to the NatureFest volunteers, exhibitors, and partners who played a crucial role in the event’s success. Special thanks are given to Carolina Raptor Center, Davidson College, DK8 School, North Carolina Wildlife Federation, North Carolina Native Plant Society, Town of Davidson Parks and Recreation, WOW, Bartlett Tree Experts, Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation, Stephen Hughes, Woodlawn STEAMfest, Schiele Museum, Mecklenburg County Beekeepers, and My Monarchs.

BOOK REVIEW

Braiding Sweetgrass

INDIGENOUS WISDOM, SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE, AND
THE TEACHINGS OF PLANTS, BY ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

By Charlotte Welsby

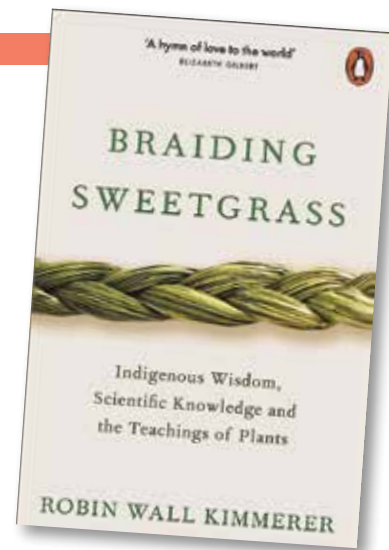
Complex and deeply meaningful, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* sheds light on relationships of connectivity, gratitude, and reciprocity with the world around us. Robin Wall Kimmerer's poetic style asks you to bask in every word, phrase, and chapter to grasp the full meaning, awakening readers to our position as humans within all living things, all while stretching our understanding of "living things."

Kimmerer describes the creation story of the Potawatomi people: Skywoman fell to Earth, and on her way, grabbed seeds to plant. The first to bloom was sweetgrass, becoming one of four sacred plants in Potawatomi culture. Akin to the love and care present when one braids another's hair, the action of braiding sweetgrass shows respect and compassion for Mother

Earth. This story and practice by Potawatomi to feel connection with and responsibility for the land sets the scene for the book.

Importantly, Kimmerer discusses the grammar of animacy, the idea that English language structure allows us to treat the land, plants, and animals as "other," whereas the Potawatomi language, for example, speaks and treats everything as living, breathing, and moving together.

Braiding Sweetgrass asks us to prioritize lessons from the plants, animals, and landscapes in the same way that we prioritize microscopic complexities, to awaken a "wider ecological consciousness" that is vital to our place on Earth.



The Schenck's Creek corridor stretches from Lorimer Road to The Pines and offers crucial habitat connecting wildlife, shelter, water, and food sources. DLC has initiated a pilot program to engage neighbors in strengthening stewardship of their properties that will enhance the habitat and biodiversity of this ecosystem in the heart of Davidson.

Amidst increasing urbanization, DLC's aim is to preserve and

PRESERVING & ENHANCING WILDLIFE HABITAT

Schenck's Creek Pilot Program

enrich healthy ecosystems and diverse wildlife habitats. Davidson is fortunate to have hidden treasures like the Schenck's Creek, nestled along small streams and teeming with wildlife. Through the Schenck's Creek Pilot Program, DLC educates neighbors about the corridor's ecological value and provides land-management best practices for habitat and wildlife. Participants will receive materials, knowledge, and advice in exchange for their commitment to this cause.

For this program, DLC will focus on the four elements of habitat needed by all wildlife: food, water, cover, and places to raise

young. By removing invasive plant species and planting native species, participants will create a more diverse and abundant food supply for wildlife. The preservation of water features and establishment of native vegetation will provide ample cover and places for wildlife to raise their young.

By the end of this pilot program, DLC envisions a connected, well-managed corridor that provides the necessary elements for wildlife to thrive. Learning from the pilot will be applied to other corridor efforts. Together, we can make a significant difference for our shared environment for generations to come.

DAVIDSON LANDS CONSERVANCY



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Thank YOU, Katie Noble!

In August, DLC bid a bittersweet farewell to our Educational Programs Director, Katie Noble, who takes her legacy of conservation education at DLC into her next chapter as an environmental science teacher at the Community School of Davidson.

Katie had a remarkable impact on DLC, advancing conservation knowledge and understanding and inspiring passion for the environment in both children and adults. For the last four years, she has led DLC's educational programs, with a positive effect on many aspects of the Conservancy's work.

"I've been so fortunate to be a part of this organization's expanding education footprint and am excited to follow DLC's continuing impact on local conservation."

She supported and professionalized World of Wonder programming, igniting enthusiasm for nature in children with her warmth and delightful personality.

"Conservation and education are my key passions, and my four years at DLC allowed me to engage with the public creatively and form lasting relationships within our community," Katie said.

"I have great hope for the future of our planet, seeing the wonder, curiosity, and love of nature shared by the children I've engaged with through DLC outreach and education initiatives."

Thank you, Katie, and congratulations on your next chapter in education!

