

INTERVIEWS – NEWS – EVENTS (INE) ©2018

INE Note: All links are at the end of the interview.

<p>PTLT UPCOMING EVENTS: SIX DELI LOOP BICYCLE TRIP! SEPTEMBER 15, 2018; 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM. (This event is FREE this year)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">>>>><<<<</p> <p>KAYAK FOR CONSERVATION, OCT. 20, 2018 (\$25.00/person) (RAIN DATE OCT. 21, 2018)</p>
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INE: Welcome all. Today I'm very lucky to interview Frank Allen, President of Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust (PTLT), a nonprofit organization located in Maryland that is dedicated to conserving, preserving and protecting land and natural resources throughout the five tidal counties in which the Patuxent River runs.

INE: Hi Frank. Thank you for agreeing to this interview. Tell us a little about yourself.

FA: I am a retired physicist who lives on a ten-acre organic farm with my wife, Christina, close to the western shores of the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. I grew up on the side of a hill by a gravel beach in New England so early on became captivated by nature – and by human's impact on it. In the next town to ours were land sanctuaries owned by the Trustees of Reservations, the first land trust in the world. Those folks hooked me on land preservation.

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Frank Allen, President PTLT, at Accokeek Park, Land Trust Alliance Conference

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INE: What is the purpose of a land trust?

FA: Land trusts conserve land from development or other degradation through outright purchase or through acquisition of conservation easements which strip development rights from the land and impose conservation restrictions “in perpetuity”. (We merely take development rights and impose conservation restrictions – the owner is still the owner).

The land must meet strict standards to be acceptable for preservation, factors such as quality of farm soils, existing wetlands and streams, plant and animal species present. The land trust community in the U.S. has protected over 50 million acres to date.

As the Land Trust Alliance, the umbrella group for land trusts in the country, says: “Land tells the story of America. Historically, it shaped us as a people; today, it is the key to a healthy and secure future for all Americans. It provides pure drinking water, healthy food, clean air and places to reflect and recreate. Conserved, well-managed land also provides protection from natural disasters, such as floods and drought, while absorbing carbon and keeping it from the earth’s atmosphere.” Note the reference here to “well-managed”.

Key to the charters of all land trusts is that all of our properties, whether owned outright or held through deeded easements, are properly cared for. PTLT holds only conservation easements. Each easement imposes certain unambiguous requirements for land management on the eased property. Annually we monitor those properties to assure that these terms are met. If not, we stand by to enforce the terms – in the courts if necessary.

INE: What inspired you to get involved with the Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust (PTLT)?

FA: I already mentioned how the Trustees of Reservations hooked me on the land trust movements. Shortly after my wife and I moved to Southern Maryland, I looked to see if there was a land trust here – one had only recently been established. I applied to join - and have been a member since.

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INE: What are a few of the key accomplishments PTLT hopes to complete this year?

FA: Protect roughly 500 hundred more acres of property (about 6 more easements). Continue knocking off key items required for Land Trust Certification, including development of additional policies and procedures. Pass a formal audit.

INE: What are some of the most notable landmarks achieved?

FA: For our accomplishments this year, I am proud to state that we have successfully closed on 4 easements to date, and that a major accounting firm in Washington is providing pro-bono assistance to prepare us for our audit.

INE: What are the advantages for a landowner to preserve their property?

FA: Many property owners really love their land and want to see it protected forever, so they like the fact that the land protection requirement deeded in the easement passes on to all future land owners. With oversight from the IRS and state attorneys general, this type of land protection is almost impossible to undo.

If the property owners donate an easement, they can write off the value of the donation as approved by the IRS over a period of up to 16 years. If they sell an easement, of course they get the cash. The value of the land drops after the easement is in place, so there can also be an advantage in estate evaluations. We strongly recommend to all owners who are considering sale or donation of an easement to work with their accountant, estate attorney, and the like.

INE: Can anyone volunteer, or do they need specific skills?

FA: We welcome a wide variety of volunteers. Our most popular openings are for annual monitoring of our properties (“You mean I get to hike on this private land?”) and participation in our “weed warrior” team – clearing vines on winter Saturdays at local parks.

Others help with our outreach planning and activities, such as staffing booths at public gatherings or helping out at kayak or bicycle trips. Any non-profit will tell you it’s harder to get volunteers with the skill set and grit to join the board or help with the gritty details of managing our business.

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Beautiful day on the Patuxent River

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INE: What is your favorite quote?

FA: I am Groot

INE: How can readers discover more about PTLT?

FA: Website: www.Patuxent-Tidewater.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Paxtidewater/>

To Register for Upcoming Events: <http://www.patuxent-tidewater.org/> About PTLT page.

Donations: <http://www.patuxent-tidewater.org/> About PTLT page.

How you can help: <http://www.patuxent-tidewater.org/support/>

Volunteer and Opportunities: <http://www.patuxent-tidewater.org/board-and-staff/>

INE: Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to take part in this interview. Best of luck and much success for the future.

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INE: To suggest more interviews for INE – provide event news – or suggest a general topic you would like to read on this blog, please add your name to our contact form with a brief note in the comments box found at www.lcoakes.jimdo.com.

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We are also on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/laara.oakes.9>

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INE Note: answers are provided by the interviewee and are not altered by INE unless the response is deemed inappropriate for a general audience.