

The View

*Foothills Land Conservancy's
2015 Spring Newsletter & 2014 Annual Report*



*FLC Exec. Dir., Bill Clabough, tours a recently preserved property in Van Buren County, TN.
Photo courtesy of FLC Land Director, Meredith Clebsch.*

The View

*FLC's 2015 Spring Newsletter
& 2014 Annual Report*



A letter from FLC's Board President...



Dear Friends of the Foothills,

In 2014, FLC celebrated our fourth consecutive 'best ever' record for preserved acreage at 11,700 acres protected! To date, FLC now has a total of over 58,900 acres preserved – projects that span 27 counties in Tennessee with four projects in nearby states. These successes can be attributed to our supporters, you have enabled our organization to grow and expand land preservation efforts across our diverse region.

As Foothills embarks on our 30th year of service as a land trust, we look forward to another amazing year ahead while reflecting on the many milestones that have brought us to where we are today. You can find these highlights listed in a special anniversary article on page 10. Also in this issue is a recap of this past year's land conservation projects, as well as an overview of FLC's land stewardship program and Friends of the Foothills program.

On behalf of FLC's Board and staff, please know that our door is always open to our Friends. We always welcome your ideas, feedback and resources to help us fulfill our mission of promoting, protecting and enhancing the lands of the Southern Appalachian region. All of us look forward to seeing you at our Annual Celebration at Penrose Farm on August 22nd as well as at our many other events throughout the year.

Thank you for being a valued Friend of the Foothills!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Mark King".

Mark King
Board President

www.foothillsland.org

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Mission Statement - FLC is dedicated to promoting, protecting and enhancing the lands and environments of the Southern Appalachian region and promoting the character of the land for the general public, now and in the future.

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Letter from the Director...

Last year was a phenomenal year for Foothills! FLC had a fourth, consecutive record setting year with over 11,700 acres preserved through 13 conservation easement partnerships. This type of success is made possible by our Board of Directors, staff and Friends of the Foothills, all of whom have helped move this organization to a place of continued success and credibility while also advancing the protection of farmland, migrating wildlife, and woodlands across our region. Here are a few FLC highlights of our many successes in recent years:



FLC reached 4 record setting years for preserved acreage – 11,700 acres (2014); 11,200 (2013); 6,600 acres (2012); and 4,400 acres (2011) for a total of over 33,900 acres!

We now have conservation easement partnerships in four nearby states! This includes a 120 acre project off of the Blue Ridge Parkway in Watauga County, North Carolina, completed in late 2013.

In 2014, we worked with landowners on tracts in Kentucky, Georgia, and South Carolina. You can read about these land projects and others beginning on the next page.

Our organization has continued to surpass financial goals over the last five years through strategic investments, diversified income and adhering to appropriate cost measures. Foothills utilizes a local, independent CPA firm for annual audits of all FLC financials.

Last year FLC launched the FLC Properties Foundation, a separate but supporting organization for the Conservancy, which accepts gifts of land, cash, or other assets to establish a fund to benefit land preservation efforts through land conservation, land acquisition and land stewardship programs.

FLC's 30th anniversary is this year! Milestone years are a great time for us to reflect on and celebrate our many accomplishments. It's also a time to focus on the future, sharing the organization's vision and goals with our supporters and regional community. FLC is always willing to provide information and presentations to local civic groups, organizations, clubs, and businesses. Land conservation efforts will continue to focus on the preservation of working farms as well as lands that enhance water quality, view sheds and biological diversity. Now with over 140 conservation easement properties to monitor annually, our commitment to land stewardship is a top priority. You can read about our land stewardship program and learn more about conservation easements on page 9 of this newsletter.

We will be sure to keep you apprised of our efforts throughout the year and, as always, we appreciate the generous and ongoing support of our Friends. Thank you.

- Bill Clabough, FLC Executive Director

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View of the Smokies from FLC's preserved property atop Bluff Mountain in Sevier County. Photo courtesy of Mike Naney.

2014 Land Protection Projects

In late 2014, Foothills Land Conservancy celebrated another ‘best ever’ conservation year with the completion of 13 conservation easements totaling 11,711 acres – projects that span 4 states and cover 8 counties! To date, FLC’s cumulative land preservation projects now cover 58,900 acres within the 5 states of Tennessee, Kentucky, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. Over the past four years (2011-2014), FLC has doubled the amount of acreage preserved through conservation easement agreements compared to all the years prior to 2011.

Multi-State Expansion

Bell County, Kentucky (920 acre tract)

Located close to the Tennessee/Kentucky state line, this newly preserved and scenic property resides along a high ridge on the Cumberland Plateau. The easement is visible to the public from nearby US highways 25E and 58 as well as a number of county roads, and the city of Middlesboro, Kentucky. Adjoining the easement are both federal and state protected lands, including the Shillalah Creek Wildlife Management Area and Cumberland Gap National Historical Park. The easement not only adjoins Cumberland Gap NHP but also provides views from the park’s overlooks. Other nearby natural areas include the Wilderness Road State Park and Martin’s Fork Wildlife Management Area and State Natural Area. This easement protects several sections of headwaters and creeks including Shillalah Creek, Bee Branch, and Devil’s Garden Branch, all of which flow into the Clear Fork and the Upper Cumberland Watersheds. Rock outcrops and boulderfield communities add to the habitat diversity.



Fairfield County, South Carolina (2620 acre tract)

One of FLC’s larger conservation easements to date, this property is an expansive scenic tract just northwest of Columbia, in Fairfield County, South Carolina. The site is mainly forested with the Broad River flowing along one the easement’s boundaries. Creeks, springs, wetlands, ponds, and open fields are also present. Animal species noted or likely to use the tract include resident and migratory bird species, coyote, grey and red fox, black bear, southern flying squirrel, a variety of snakes and lizards, eastern box turtle (two shells noted), and white tailed deer.



Lumpkin County, Georgia (111 acre tract)

This property is located close to Dahlonega, Georgia, and is in close proximity to the Chattahoochee National Forest. Several natural areas, including Amicolola Falls State Park, Anna Ruby Falls Scenic Area, and Unicoi State Park are also close by. This site once housed a granite quarrying operation. A portion of the property borders the Chestatee River. This 50 mile stretch of waterway is popular with many kayakers, canoeists and fisherman and is also highly visible within the site’s viewshed. One of the most crucial resources on the property is the abundance of clean water from the Chestatee River as well as from the various other streams, drainways and associated riparian areas found on the tract. During a site visit, FLC staff observed deer, bobcat, and bear tracks along with abundant sign of beaver, including a small dam.



Tennessee Conservation Easement Projects

Polk County, TN (288 acres)

This 288 tract is completely surrounded by U.S. Forest Service lands. The adjacent Cherokee National Forest (CNF) includes over 650,000 acres in East Tennessee and connects with 531,000 acres in North Carolina's Nantahala National Forest. The property itself includes a variety of habitats similar to adjacent protected lands and wildlife is plentiful. The Hiwassee River, a State Scenic River and a State Exceptional River, bounds roughly 3,000 feet of the tract on the northeast side. One creek on the property, Shadwick Branch, has been noted as an Exceptional Stream by the State of Tennessee for its high quality water and associated habitat. Another conserved property, consisting of 649 acres of forested land held by Foothills Land Conservancy, lies within 10 miles of the property. The old CSX Railroad tracks cross the tract in two areas and essentially surround the property. Currently, the Overhill Heritage Association oversees management of a private excursion train for scenic tours, called the Hiwassee River Rail Adventure, originating in Etowah, TN. These tours, as well as the occasional shipping of freight, including calcite, from Copper Hill, TN, are the primary uses of the railway. Located at a sharp bend of the river just off the property can be found a unique loop of the tracks around Bald Mountain. This is one of only three locations in the US where railroad tracks loop over themselves to gain elevation in limited space. The trestle itself is located within the boundaries of the property.



Grundyl County, TN (755 acres)

This 755 acre property lies within the Cumberland Plateau and Plateau Escarpment in Grundyl County near the small community of Palmer. The tract offers views off to the surrounding Cumberland Plateau toward the Sequatchie Valley, Walden's Ridge, and Tennessee River drainage. The size of the property along with the range of elevation and geology combined with the variations of hydrology, slopes, rock outcrops, multiple streams, seeps and edges provides for an unusually high diversity of natural habitats of both plant and animal species. Tracks of white-tailed deer, turkey, coyote, possum, raccoon and songbirds were observed during a staff site visit. Already protected areas nearby include a number of existing conservation easements as well as Prentice Cooper State Forest and the Cumberland Trail, Grundyl Forest, South Cumberland State Recreation Area with Savage Gulf and Fiery Gizzard Trail, Grundyl Lakes State Park, North Chickamauga Creek Gorge State Natural Area, North Chickamauga Creek Wildlife Management Area and Franklin State Forest most prominently.

Van Buren County, TN (1028 acres)

The 1028 acre tract is located south of the small town of Spencer, TN, and is visible from State Route 111 along its eastern border. Numerous outdoor recreation destinations exist in the area, including the South Cumberland State Park and Fall Creek Falls State Park. Also within ten miles of the property there are at least seven properties with Foothills Land Conservancy conservation easements on them totaling more than 5,400 acres. The property contains a number of water features including ponds, drainways and bottomland wetlands. The conservation of this tract will support the continuity of habitat corridors between these and other extensive open space lands in the region.



Marion County, Tennessee – 6 FLC Conservation Easements

FLC also completed 6 new conservation project partnerships, totaling 4,485 acres, near Tracey City in Marion County, TN. Three of the tracts are 705 acres each with the remaining three easements at 876, 765 and 699 acres respectively. All 6 tracts are contiguous and lie above both the Sequatchie Valley and Indian Creek and offer sweeping views of the surrounding Cumberland Plateau, Escarpment and ridges above Sequatchie Valley. TWRA, as part of its Tennessee's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, considers the Sequatchie Valley one of the most unique features of the Cumberland Plateau. The preservation of these lands from commercial and residential development, including strip mining activity, will also contribute to the long term enhancement of water quality of the Little Sequatchie River, Mill Creek and Little Indian Creek.

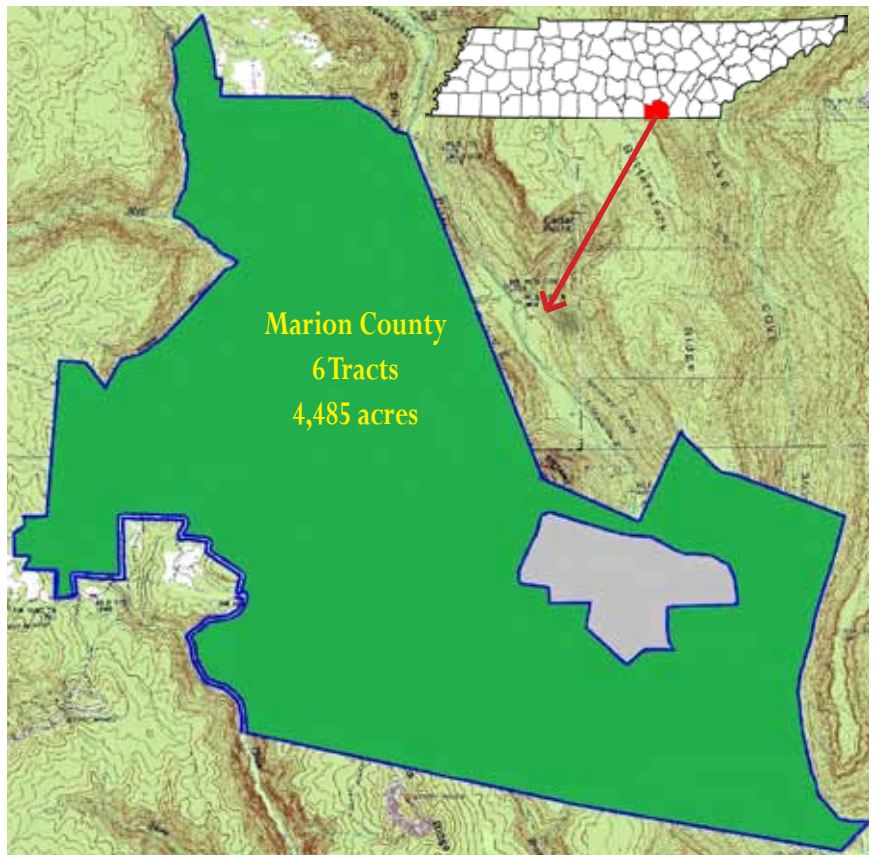
The properties are situated roughly in the center of the 10 areas of the South Cumberland State Recreation Area which total over 20,000 acres. A Cumberland Plateau Heritage Corridor has been proposed by the Alliance for the Cumberlands as part of a National Heritage Corridor. This type of recognition would constitute a National Park Service designation. The preservation of the scenic attributes of the undeveloped property will add significantly to the enjoyment of travelers to these already protected properties and encourage continued tourism in the region.

As part of the region's abundant forestlands, the collective size of these tracts are especially important for ecological continuity and for the support of the unusually rich wildlife and plant diversity present in the Cumberland Plateau region. Protected wetlands are critically important habitat for many invertebrates and other wildlife species such as the amphibians currently struggling due to habitat loss and degradation. Cumberland Seepage Forests and Cumberland Sandstone Glades are two unique vegetation types occurring on the Plateau that commonly include many rare species. Already protected areas nearby include a number of existing private (FLC) Conservation Easements with approximately 3,000 acres immediately adjacent to the tracts, as well as over 10,500 acres in nearby counties on the Plateau.

Other protected areas in the vicinity include the 24,686 acres of Prentice Cooper State Forest which includes the south



Recently preserved wetland in Marion County.



end of the Cumberland Trail, 234 acres of Grundy Forest, over 20,299 acres of South Cumberland State Recreation Area which includes Savage Gulf Natural Scientific Area, Fiery Gizzard Trail, Grundy Lakes State Park, and the 7,737 acres of Franklin State Forest.

These tracts are part of the geographic region where Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia meet, commonly referred to as TAG. Over 15,000 caves are known from this region with many more certainly yet to be discovered. There are at least 6 large caves along Little Sequatchie River; Mandys Cave, Ship Cave, Wine Cave, Dancing Fern Cave, Butterfly Cave, and Sequatchie Cave. Most of these caves are known to support cave-obligate species, (or troglobionts), that require the presence of karst topography (limestone and cave) and pure water to survive. There are limestone bluffs along sections of the Little Sequatchie River where the flora appeared to be especially rich with wildlife cover, and denning sites in the rock crevices are abundant.



**Images from Preserved Properties in
Marion County, Tennessee**

Bottom - Great Spangled butterflies land on a
Blazing Star. *Other Images* - Tributaries, creeks and
wetlands on these preserved properties flow into
and enhance the water quality of the Little
Sequatchie River, Mill Creek and Little Indian
Creek



Centennial Pioneer Farm, Hartsaw Cove Overton County, Tennessee

Millard Oakely's family farm, Hartsaw Cove, is one of only a few 'Centennial Pioneer Farms', indicating the farm is actually older than the state of Tennessee. The farm was originally given as a land grant to the Christian family in 1792; 4 years before Tennessee became a state. The property is located within 20 miles of Cookeville, near Livingston in Overton County, TN.

In December 2014, three tracts on the farm, totaling 1,502 acres, were all placed under one conservation easement with FLC. As it has been for over 200 years, this property is still maintained as a working farm and is currently leased out to Tennessee Tech as the Oakley Sustainable Agricultural Center (OSAC). The OSAC is an experiential learning center for students that offers opportunities for agricultural experiments in agriculture, biology, history, and other fields of study. The property is approximately 60% in open land for agriculture production and 40% in woodlands. Currently, hay production, pasture, and beef cattle are the dominant agricultural activities.

The Property is located in an area rich with natural, historical, and recreational parks and sites. Nearby parks include the Standing Stone State Park, Roaring River Park, the Roaring River Recreational Area, and the Obey River Park and Recreation Area. Within 15 miles of the Property is Cummins Falls State Park, a 211-acre park that features Tennessee's eighth largest waterfall. The Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area and the Catoosa Wildlife Management Area are located within 20 miles of the farm.



A note about Mr. Oakley...

Millard Oakley served four terms in the Tennessee General Assembly, one term at the Constitutional Convention and is a former member of the Tennessee Board of Regents. From 1971-1973 he served as general counsel for the U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Small Business. From 1975-1979 he served as commissioner of insurance and commerce for the state of Tennessee.



He is the namesake of Tennessee Tech University's Millard Oakley STEM Center, which has reached more than 10,000 students, educators and visitors through its hands-on program in science, technology, engineering and mathematics since opening in 2010. Mr. Oakley presently serves on the Tennessee Tech Foundation and the First National Bank of Tennessee, where he is also a principal shareholder.

Top Image - A sweeping view of Hartsaw Cove Farm along with images of the farm's historical designations.

About Conservation Easements...

Questions & Answers with FLC's Executive Director, Bill Clabough
Conservation Easements are the most popular land preservation method for land owners. This is a legal contract between a landowner and a land trust which describes the activities that may take place on a property along with any restrictions in order to protect the land's conservation value. Here are a few common questions that we asked Bill to answer in order to set the record straight about what a conservation easement is and what it isn't.

Who owns the land after the easement is finalized? Landowners continue to own, use and live on the land. They can also sell the property or bequest it to family, friends or a public or private entity.

Why do landowners enter into this type of agreement?

For the love of the land, protection of resources, to keep the land in the family, for tax benefits, etc.

How long does an easement last? In perpetuity; that is, forever. The legal agreement is placed with the property's deed. The current owner and all subsequent owners are bound by it's restrictions.

What kind of property can be protected with an easement? Is there a restriction on how many acres are required? Properties that have significant conservation, historic preservation, and/or scenic values as well as lands that will provide for education and/or outdoor recreation to the general public can be considered for this type of agreement. There are no restrictions on the size of the parcel. Some properties are as small as a few acres and others are thousands of acres.

How restrictive is an easement? To the degree necessary to protect the conservation value of the property - or, as strict as you want it beyond that.

Can FLC answer my tax questions? FLC does not provide legal or tax advice, though our organization does provide information. See the advice of a qualified attorney and a tax consultant familiar with the appropriate subjects.

What else do I need to know? All agreements coordinated through Foothills are customizable, voluntary and approved by a Board of Directors and monitored at least once a year.

For more information, call FLC's office at 865-681-8326.

Land Stewardship - Every FLC land partnership receives an annual site visit - that's quite alot of ground to cover!

As menitond above, FLC works with landowners to permantently protect a property's scenic lands, working farms, and environmental values with a volunteer, customizable agreement, called a 'conservation easement'. As part of the agreement, FLC promises to assist in the stewardship of the property with an annual site visit. These visits begin every January and are mostly completed by the end of March, a characteristically dormant time of year that assists with accessibility and visibility.

With over 140 conservation easement properties to help steward, FLC has brought on a few new faces to assist with these monitoring trips. Visits primarily focus on a variety of tasks such as identifying and observing surveyed boundaries, roads, gates, man-made structures as well as any natural features to the property like creeks, wetlands, and wildlife. GPS units and cameras are used to collect and record data from properties. As part of the conservation easement agreement, landowners are contacted prior to FLC visits and receive a report with any observations and recommendations.

Landowners who enter into a conservation easement with FLC provide the organization with a donation at the time the agreement is finalized. A portion of the money is placed into a land stewardship fund that contributes to the annual monitoring visit. Another portion is designated to go to a legal defense fund, should FLC incur court or attorney related costs when defending an easement.



Top - Bill Clabough, FLC's Executive Director, and the late Emily Davis, enjoy a site visit on her property in Monroe County. Above - FLC Land Director, Meredith Clebsch, records a boundary point in Polk County, TN. Meredith records not only data along the easement's perimeter but any man-made structures or natural features. The tract adjacent to this property has a USDA NRCS Wetlands Enhancement Conservation Easement (indicated by the orange post and white sign).

FLC Celebrates 30 Years of Milestones as a Regional Land Trust!

Through the years...

Photo courtesy of Mark Lewis.

1985-1995

- (June 1985) - We're official! FLC receives a Charter of Incorporation from the State of Tennessee.
- (1993) - FLC's completes first two conservation easement projects.
- (1993) Randy Brown becomes the first Executive Director at Foothills. During his tenure, Randy developed financing opportunities and cultured community relationships in order to secure the completion of large land preservation projects.
- (1995) - Along with many organizational partners and individual supporters, FLC secures a 4,600 acre tract called the Abrams Creek - Chilhowee Bear Reserve. The majority of these acres were donated to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency with the remaining conveyed to the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. TWRA manages and owns the Abrams Creek property, now known as the Foothills Wildlife Management Area. This site has grown to 10,000+ acres.

1996-2006

- (Summer 1997) FLC completes the Cochran Creek campaign, raising \$500,000 to purchase 1,500 acres along the south end of Chilhowee Mountain. The land is then conveyed to TWRA and added to the Abrams Creek acreage (mentioned above).
- (Fall 1998) FLC, TWRA and Ducks Unlimited partners together in order to secure the preservation of 524 acres at what is now called the Kyker Bottoms Refuge, located in Blount County. Kyker is open to the public and managed by TWRA. The refuge features fields, wetlands and thickets used primarily by small game and waterfowl.
- (2002) FLC, The Conservation Fund, TWRA and many other organizations secure the funding and support for a 2,500 acre refuge, called Yuchi Wildlife Management Area. Now owned and managed by TWRA, the area includes wetlands, uplands and riparian habitat along the Chickamauga Reservoir. It's one of a string of refuges and natural areas providing feeding habitat for migrating waterfowl and sandhill cranes.
- (Spring 2006) Bill Clabough becomes FLC's Executive Director

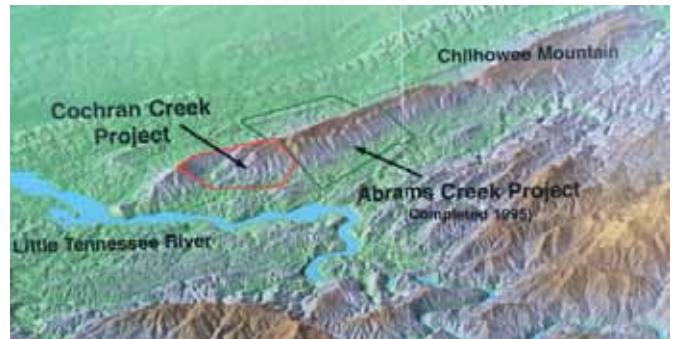


Image of Abrams Creek Project (1995) and Cochran Creek Project (1997) - Blount Co.

2007-2014

- (2007-08) - FLC partners on 38 easements, (5,500+ acres)
- (2009) FLC receives a land donation of 510 acres from the late Marion Oates. The property, which has an FLC conservation easement, is now called the Bluff Mountain Ecological Reserve.
- (2010) FLC's completes the '25 in 25' campaign right on time! The goal raised awareness for land conservation and highlighted efforts to preserve a cumulative total of 25,000 acres by Foothills' 25th year.
- (2011-13) FLC preserves a total of 22,000 acres!
- (2014) FLC celebrates a fourth consecutive 'best ever' record for preserved acreage at 11,700 acres! FLC formally launches the FLC Properties Foundation, a separate but supporting organization.



The late Marion Oates signing her easement on the Bluff Mtn. Property (1999) - Sevier Co.

2015 & Beyond - FLC continues to steward preserved lands while expanding conservation programs across the Southern Appalachian region.



Join Foothills as we celebrate 30 years of service
as a regional land trust!

Saturday • August 22, 2015 • Penrose Farm



Photo courtesy of Randy Purcell.

Casual Dress • Heavy Hors d'Oeuvres (locally sourced menu) • Open Bar & Champagne Toast
Celebration Location: Penrose Farm • 8432 Nubbin Ridge Road • Knoxville, TN 37923

The support of our Friends assists us with land preservation, community outreach and operating expenses.

A special thank you to FLC's 2014 Celebration Sponsors & Host Committee!

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Becoming a Friend... of the Foothills

Thanks to the ongoing and generous support of our Friends, FLC has been able to expand our land conservation programs throughout the diverse and beautiful Southern Appalachian region.

Foothills gladly accepts any and all donations - no gift is too small!

FLC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit and does not receive any financial support from federal, state, or local government. We rely on individual and corporate

contributions to sustain our organization, land acquisition projects, and stewardship programs. A description of our donation programs are listed below. Please call the FLC office at (865) 681-8326 if there are other ways you prefer to support our organization or have questions. Thank you!



Friends of the Foothills

Annual Membership Program

FLC's Friends have the satisfaction of helping widen our reach towards the protection and preservation of our region's cherished mountains, rural landscapes and working farms.

Visit FLC's website to donate online and learn about our partnerships programs with the Combined Federal Program, Amazon Smiles, and Kroger's Community Rewards Program. FLC's Friends can give annually, quarterly or monthly. Benefits include:

- Thank you letter
- Acknowledgement in FLC's Spring Newsletter / Annual Report
- Invitation to all events

Major Gifts

FLC's Conservation Circle

As a Friend of the Foothills we hope you will consider joining our major gifts program, either as an individual or as a business partner. Donors that give annually at \$1000+ will be included as a member of our Conservation Circle. In addition to the Friends benefits, donors will also receive:

- *Tickets to the Summer Celebration*
- *Name inclusion on the Celebration invitation and day-of-event banner*
- *Recognition in FLC's August eNews & Celebration Webpage*
- *Personal invitations and access to all other Foothills activities*

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Planned gifts provide the Conservancy with a permanent foundation for conservation projects including land acquisition and stewardship programs as well as a landowner financial assistance fund. Donations can be designated as restricted or unrestricted and FLC can work with your financial advisor to facilitate any giving method your choose. For those whose passion lies in passing on their love of the land to future generations, we hope you will consider supporting FLC through these options:

- *Naming FLC as a beneficiary in a will, trust, insurance policy, or retirement plan*
- *Providing appreciated assets, securities, or land parcels*
- *Donating land to FLC for the purpose of retaining its agricultural or natural features*



To become a member or to renew your annual contribution please utilize the envelope inserted into this newsletter or visit the 'Donate Now' link on FLC's website at www.foothillsland.org.



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SAVE THE DATE!

June 6th, 2015
Land Trust day
Mast General Store - Knoxville

August 22, 2015
FLC's Summer Celebration
Penrose Farm - Knoxville