



2012: A YEAR OF SUCCESS

Fall/Winter 2012
Newsletter

River Fields' record of achievement continues and in the past year – despite an expensive, highly orchestrated effort to undercut its effectiveness – progress has been made on a number of fronts to maintain and improve the quality of life in the Ohio River Corridor.

You are a key part of this success, and your generous support has made it possible. But there is much work yet to be done, and it is only with your help that our small, non-profit organization, which was chartered nearly 54 years ago, can continue moving forward. These are just some of the ways that River Fields continues to make a difference in the life of our community, our nation and our planet.

Have you seen the eagles soaring around the corridor? It is through your support that these eagles have made Kentucky home! Please continue your support by sending a contribution to River Fields today.

Soaring with the Eagles: For the first time in a century, two pairs of bald eagles have chosen to nest and raise their young along the river corridor. With your generous support, River Fields helped preserve the many acres of undeveloped open space necessary to create a habitat that is healthy and can provide enough food for the eagle families. This spring we learned that bald eagles were making a home close to the proposed eastern bridge span. Construction would likely drive them away or destroy their habitat. River Fields began investigating the legal protections for nesting bald eagles. Working with the news media, we were able to focus attention on these majestic birds and rally support. Thanks to River Fields, we hope we'll see the number of bald eagles in Metro Louisville, continue to grow. What a great gift for future generations.



Conserving and Protecting Land for the Future and Forever: As reported in our letter, we have forever conserved more than 2,200 acres through conservation easements. Conservation easements require constant stewardship under IRS requirements. This year's fieldwork for all of the 23 annual inspections is complete! Letters to the land-owners will be mailed by the end of December. All of this is in addition to the magnificent George Garvin Brown Preserve on the river near Prospect, which is a permanent riverine landscape beloved by hikers and dog-walkers. An invasive species, Purple Loosestrife has attempted to take over the property; however, River Fields has been successful in controlling it. Left unattended, this invasive plant could infest not only the preserve but also land throughout the region.

A National Voice for Conservation: The Land Trust Alliance (LTA) invited River Fields' Executive Director and 45 other nationally recognized land trust leaders to Washington, D.C. with the goal of educating legislators on the importance of the need to pass the current conservation easement tax incentive proposal. Meme Runyon was a vital part of the success of the first Land Trust Lobby Day in Washington, D.C. As a result of her many political connections, she arranged productive meetings with leaders of the LTA, herself, and Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, as well as Congressmen John Yarmuth, Ben Chandler and Brett Guthrie. All of these congressmen are co-signers of the Easement Incentive bill. Additionally, her meeting with Chairman Hal Rogers' staff led to his signing onto the bill as well. She also led a panel on lobbying with other Land Trust leaders.



Partnering to Provide State-Wide Leadership in Conservation and Preservation: Through its leadership in the Kentucky Land Trusts Coalition, River Fields partners with other Kentucky land trusts to expand and improve the preservation of land throughout the Commonwealth. The Coalition's goal is to elevate progress and expertise in land conservation best management practices.

Sharing the Beauty of Our Land with Everyone: River Fields has expanded its public tour offerings by 25 percent and plans to continue that growth. Our spring wild-flower walks and autumn tours have been popular and have resulted in more of the community understanding of what River Fields is achieving, how conservation easements are effective, and the importance of cultural and natural resources.



Educating on Development Issues: In February, River Fields educated our members and the public about an inappropriate proposal for a barge-fleeting facility dangerously proposed to be constructed at the foot of Six-Mile Island, blocking the back “Chute,” a heavily used area for recreational boaters. After a concerted effort by concerned citizens and organizations, the company withdrew its permit request. The company recently re-applied for another barge parking lot permit; River Fields wrote another strong legal reply in opposition. And through our e-mail alerts, River Fields rallied numerous members to also voice their concerns.

Raising Questions about a Huge Questionable Transportation Venture: We continue to be very involved in the Ohio River Bridges Project in order to hold our leaders accountable. Our projections about the funding issues surrounding the project were right on track. The “Eastern Bridge” (EB) cannot support itself and will have to rely on financial support from the downtown project, the only part of the project that actually solves the cross-river mobility issues. Updated studies clearly show that traffic demand continues to diminish the need for the EB and will result in a loss of Kentucky jobs. The project poses serious economic justice issues as well. Although River Fields has never taken an official position on tolling, we are very concerned about the economic impact tolls will have on the working poor. We voiced our concerns in a detailed response to the Final Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

For thirty years, since the era when Mary Bingham was president, River Fields has served as a watchdog for the Ohio River Bridges Project, hoping to lessen the most serious environmental impacts of the project. She called the project “folly.”

Local Outreach: In addition to our seasonal walks, River Fields has increased its participation in the community.

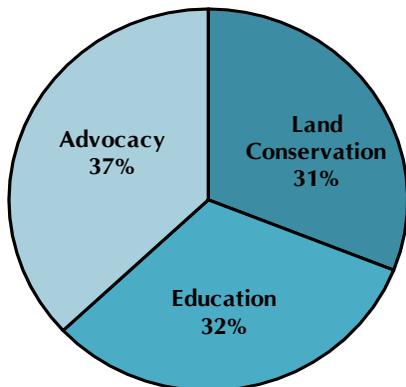


In March, at the request of Dr. John I. Gilderbloom, director of the Center for Sustainable Urban Neighborhoods and professor in the Planning Program at the University of Louisville’s Graduate Program in Urban and Public Affairs, Ms. Runyon taught a class in historic preservation. During the Kentucky Waterways Alliance Earth Day paddle up Harrods Creek, River Fields was one of 14 environmental organizations that staffed a “station” in the water or on the bank of the creek. Over 120 people participated, including Mayor Greg Fischer. In July, at the Sustainability Forum, Ms. Runyon spoke to local conservation activists on the relationship between sustainability and conservation easements.

National Recognition for Our Leadership: Ms. Runyon was recognized in the LTA’s quarterly magazine, *Saving Land*, as a 2011 Landslide award winner. The Landslide award is The Cultural Landscape Foundation’s (TCLF) annual compendium of significant at-risk parks, gardens, horticultural features, and working landscapes. With the theme “The Landscape I Love,” the awards recognized threatened sites and the people working to save them. TCLF recognized Ms. Runyon and River Fields and featured the Wolf Pen Branch Mill Farm and Ms. Runyon for the month of September in their 2012 calendar.



Focus on Being Our Best - National Accreditation: As the legacy of conservation easement advances, land is now beginning to pass to heirs of the original owners creating the need for land professionals to aggressively strengthen the professional standards for land trusts. The LTA is a leader in the land conservation community, acting as a convener, strategist, and representative of more than 1,700 land trusts in the United States. River Fields’ Board of Trustees has adopted the Land Trust Standards and Practices and daily works toward implementation of those exacting standards. It is our goal to become accredited. While many land trusts face shrinking budgets, the LTA is offering an increasing number of highly effective and cost-effective webinars led by national experts. River Fields staff and board members have been active participants.



This chart graphically represents how funds are allocated in our three programmatic areas: Education, Advocacy, or Land Conservation.



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