



Over the past year, River Fields has focused on projects that look to the future. From acceptance into the TerraFirma legal defense insurance program, to preservation of African-American historic resources as part of the Bridges Settlement, to stewardship of 2,200 acres preserved with River Fields' conservation easements, River Fields has focused its work around **sustainability** and **permanence** in **land conservation** and **historic preservation**.

You are truly a key part of this success, and your generous support has made it possible. However, there is much work yet to be done, and it is only with your help that our small, non-profit organization, chartered nearly 55 years ago, can continue moving forward through the next 50 years. We invite you to read about some of the ways that River Fields continues to make a difference in the life of our community, our nation and our planet.

**Settlement Agreement Protects Natural and Cultural Resources:** The Bridges Settlement Agreement between River Fields, the National Trust for **Historic Preservation**, the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) has greatly minimized the impact of the Bridge Project on **historically** significant properties and important natural resources in Kentuckiana. The Settlement was possible because tolling required simultaneous construction of both bridges.



Merriwether House  
Photo by James Archambeault

The Settlement Agreement requires the creation of a \$1.7 million **Historic Preservation** and Enhancement Fund administered by the State **Historic Preservation** Officers of Kentucky and Indiana through grants to local governments and qualified non-profit organizations for rehabilitating, preserving, and enhancing **historic** properties and districts within the areas affected by the Bridges Project. The Agreement lists projects that are eligible for grants from the Fund, which include, among others, grants for the protection and interpretation of notable African-American sites in Eastern Jefferson County, including the Jefferson Jacob School, a **historic** Rosenwald School, and the Merriwether House, a **historic** Steamboat Gothic-style house, owned by the same family for five generations.

The KYTC will also develop an African-American Heritage Interpretive Plan for the Jefferson Jacob School, Jacob School Lane and the James Taylor Neighborhood, which was developed for and by African Americans in the early twentieth century.

Additional **historic preservation** projects will include the relocation of **historic** homes in Jeffersonville (one of the oldest cities west of the Alleghenies); the development and submission of nominations to the National Register of **Historic** Places for the Colgate-Palmolive **Historic** District, Jacob School Lane, James Taylor Subdivision and Village of Harrods Creek; the nomination of Upper River Road as a National Scenic Byway; and installation of **historical** markers for the Utica lime kilns in Indiana. The reality of simultaneous construction of the bridges and this signed agreement fulfills many of The National Trust's and River Fields' concerns about the Project and furthers River Fields' mission of protecting and preserving the natural, cultural and scenic resources in the Ohio River Corridor. Without the simultaneous build our major issue would have been unresolved.

**African-American Heritage Interpretive Plan:** As required by federal law, the Louisville Southern Indiana Ohio River Bridges Project created many **Historic Preservation** Plans that further document the history and the **historic** buildings of one eastern and three downtown neighborhoods affected by the bridge, and make excellent suggestions for further **preservation** of the history for future generations. As part of the Settlement Agreement, signed in January 2013, the Bridges Project will create one more plan, an African-American Interpretive Treatment Plan for the Prospect/Harrods Creek Neighborhood. River Fields and the National Trust are monitoring the settlement process and advocating for a high-quality of work products.



Neighbors, landowners, and historians at the Jefferson Jacob School

**Focus on National Accreditation—The Path to Permanent Land Conservation:** River Fields has also taken the first step toward applying for accreditation by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission: registering for Accreditation. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission ([www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org)), established in 2006 as an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance (LTA), is governed by a volunteer board of diverse **land conservation** and nonprofit management experts from around the country. The River Fields Board adopted the Land Trust Standards and Practices and is working daily toward implementation of those standards. In January 2014, River Fields will submit an application indicating our interest in joining the class of 2015 accredited land trusts.



Edyalmoor  
Photo by Rosalind Streeter

**Conservation Management Plans for Perpetual Conservation:** With your help, we have conserved more than 2,200 acres through owned property and **conservation easements forever**. We take great care with these lands. River Fields' newest employee, Laura Humphrey-Mattingly, Land Management Plan Coordinator, is developing property management plans for River Fields' 65 acres of fee properties, most of which is open to the public. This critical work is a requirement for inclusion in TerraFirma's insurance pool (more information on TerraFirma

in section below). These plans increase the sustainability and permanence of our fee properties.

**Prospect/Harrods Creek Neighborhood Plan:** River Fields has been working with the Prospect/Harrods Creek Neighborhood Association on a neighborhood plan that could limit destructive rezoning and incongruent construction in the historic neighborhood. This plan should enable this unique neighborhood to be more sustainable and to protect itself against unwanted and unsympathetic construction. The historic African-American neighborhood includes the historic neighborhoods of the James T. Taylor Subdivision and Jacob School Lane.

**Regional and National Recognition:** As a representative for the issues we care about, what we do is important to the national conversation on conservation. River Fields was recently highlighted in two pages of the Land Trust Alliance' Annual Report for national advocacy work on conservation issues. LTA has asked River Fields' Executive Director, Meme Sweets Runyon, to work with congressman and senators on maintaining the conservation easement enhance benefit.



Upper River Road Scenic Byway  
Photo by Rosalind Streeeter

In the spring, the Kentucky Environmental Quality Commission (KY EQC) presented River Fields with an Earth Day Award for our significant contributions to the environment and our leadership with the Ohio River Bridges Project. The KY EQC recognized that River Fields advocates for smart planning in the Ohio River Corridor and continues to be a source of information on issues that affect public policy and the environment. The Executive Director of the Environmental Quality Commission, Arnita Gadson, is a long-time member of the River Fields Board of Trustees. For more information on either organization, please visit [www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org) or [www.eqc.ky.gov](http://www.eqc.ky.gov).

**Partnering to Provide State-Wide Leadership in Conservation and Preservation:** Through its leadership in the Kentucky Land Trusts Coalition (KLTC), River Fields partners with other Kentucky land trusts to elevate professional expertise in land conservation best management practices. In the past, the KLTC has focused on fundraising, stewardship and development. However, this past fall, River Fields coordinated a webinar on board governance. The webinar "Growing and Strengthening your Land Trust Board" was well attended by most of the major land trusts in the commonwealth and many River Fields Board Members, all thinking about the basics of "keeping the promise of perpetuity."

**A Celebration in the Country at Gingerwoods:** River Fields' annual fundraising event was held this year at Gingerwoods, a historic building and the previous home of Green-castle Baptist Church, which is closely tied to many African-American historic sites that received preservation funding as a result of River Fields' work on the Ohio River Bridges Project. The night was a great success and Gingerwoods was the perfect place for River Fields' friends and supporters to gather and celebrate our recent accomplishments! **We nearly tripled our revenue at this year's event** and held it in a historic building, surrounded by land that is preserved forever by one of our conservation easements, the Wallace Farm easement. This 600-acre working farm is preserved from development permanently and is the largest in Jefferson County.



Trustee Von Purdy with Gray Henry, Heather McHold, and Laura Lee Brown;  
Photo by Ralph Holman

**Acceptance into Terrafirma Conservation Defense Insurance Program:** River Fields has taken a major step towards protecting all River Fields' easements permanently by joining Terrafirma conservation defense insurance program sponsored by LTA. It is part of LTA's national plan to build a formidable defense in ensuring conservation permanence and allows River Fields to insure the costs of upholding conservation easements and fee lands if they are violated or legally attacked. Acceptance in the Terrafirma insurance program insulates River Fields from draining the endowment to pay legal fees. It will also make additional professional help available if legal challenges arise.

This program has been initiated in response to a growing number of attacks on land trusts. Although most land trusts have had relatively few legal challenges, conservation easements and other conserved lands are increasingly under attack across America. Many attacks come from utility companies, adjoining landowners, developers, and trespassers. Research shows that as property values rise, incentives to disrupt or void easements grow as well. Just because a land trust has never had to fund major litigation in the past does not mean that it will be so fortunate in the future. River Fields is the only local and regional land trust in this area that was able to meet the high requirements of the program.



Dave French, River Fields Stewardship Coordinator, leading the Fall Color Walk  
Photo by Joe Abell

**Enthusiastic Attendance of Educational Events:** River Fields hosts annual educational walks on two of our conservation easements — Wolf Pen Branch Mill Farm and Edyalmoor. The spring Wildflower Walks and Fall Color Walk are held on Wolf Pen Branch Mill Farm, the extraordinary property that so perfectly represents our mission to preserve and protect natural and cultural resources. The Edyalmoor Tour leads visitors through a historic landscape and the headlands for Goose Creek. Our educational events attract people from all walks of life, even foreigners visiting from other countries. **This year two-thirds of all fall events attendees are new members!**



  
**RIVER FIELDS**

The Starks Building  
455 South Fourth Street, Suite 990  
Louisville, KY 40202-2525

