

# The Legacy of BY Brad Paymar John Gray



John Gray in the landscape he loved

John established his business roots in Oregon's forestry industry as one of the earliest employees of the Oregon Saw Chain Manufacturing Company in 1948. Within five years he was president. John parlayed this early success to resort developments, but not just any resorts. John felt strongly that his developments should as much as possible respect the surroundings, blend in with the local environment and connect people to nature. The iconic Northwest resorts Salishan, Sunriver and Skamania Lodge are evidence of this approach.

Next, John played a key role in the creation of Oregon's unprecedented system of statewide land use planning, as a strong voice from the business community advocating for thoughtful development. According to John, "Intelligent land use planning doesn't curtail development; it chooses where it should go." Over the 40 years since Oregon's land use laws were created, John took a leadership role in educating the business community, public and politicians on their value.

When Oregon's land use system was threatened in 2004 by passage of a ballot measure that stripped

It isn't often that you can say one person changed the character of an entire state. In Oregon, John Gray is one of those people. From his birth in rural Oregon in 1919 through his crowning achievements in business and philanthropy, John loved his state and became a strident defender of its natural places.

away many protections, John convened a special study that ultimately resulted in another ballot measure that restored many of the protections. But understanding that the land use system could be threatened again, John reached out to Oregon's land trusts to determine what could be done to more permanently protect the state's great places. After interviewing many of Oregon's land trust leaders and touring their conserved lands, John and his family developed a program to grow Oregon's land trust capacity. He realized that while he could spend his money to buy specific places, his money would receive a far greater return if he invested it in Oregon's land trusts.

Once again, John Gray went big, committing \$10 million over 10 years to support land trust activity in Oregon. The first investment is a \$4.5 million grant to build the capacity of land trusts. This program, managed by the Land Trust Alliance, will transform the Oregon land trust community.

John Gray passed away last October at the age of 93. Recognition of the impact John had on Oregon came from all corners of the state. Now with his investment in the Oregon land trust community, generations upon generations will benefit from John's vision to conserve the Oregon landscapes he cherished.

## Small Farm, Big Conservation

### RUSHTON FARM IS A SMALL FARM WITH AN ENORMOUS IMPACT.

In a single growing season, the farm produces 25,000 pounds of food and feeds scores of families. More important, it is serving as a conduit for biodiversity and conservation, education and sustainable and local food production—all on six acres of land.

Rushton Farm is a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) owned and operated by the Willistown Conservation Trust (the Trust), a southeastern Pennsylvania land trust founded in 1996.

Inspired by a Joel Salatin lecture on sustainable farming practices, Executive Director Bonnie Van Alen wondered if the Trust could establish a CSA to demonstrate its conservation value. The board had initial reservations, but a feasibility study illustrated how the farm could enrich the Trust's mission through education and outreach, and a CSA was born.

Board trustee Alice Hausmann recommended local farmer Fred de Long, whom she thought would be perfect for the project. De Long quickly seized on the unique opportunity and went to work on his first task: find a suitable property. He settled on a six-acre parcel adjacent to a 30-acre preserve owned and managed by the Trust.

De Long and his staff carefully developed sustainable farming practices that would support healthy food production as well as the natural environment. "We designed the farm as a nature preserve, which is pretty unique since, typically, farms are designed solely to produce large quantities of food," says de Long. "We also wanted to make the farm a true community farm, accessible to everyone."

The farm has enriched and energized the Trust's outreach and education programs, attracting a diverse audience and actively engaging those with little access to a working farm. The Trust's growing intern program mentors young farmers interested in sustainable farming practices.

In its third year the farm became economically sustainable, generating double the revenue per acre a traditional farm would generate. In its fifth year the farm is feeding 110 CSA shareholders and donating 10% of its bounty each year to local food shelters.

The Trust purchased adjacent woodlands and meadows to study the farm's ecological impact on surrounding natural areas. Initial findings show an increase in wildlife populations and biodiversity on the farm and adjacent lands—in particular an increase in migratory birds and pollinators.

Rushton Farm crew, with Fred de Long at far right



WILLISTOWN CONSERVATION TRUST

The Trust will use this research to educate the community, farmers and land trusts on the conservation benefits of sustainable farming practices and will continue to mentor and train the next generation of farmers.

De Long has no plans to expand the farm beyond six acres. "We want to demonstrate how a farm of this size can complement and enhance nature, and not detract from it." •

**NICOLE FARAGUNA**, DIRECTOR OF OUTREACH & EVENTS FOR THE PENNSYLVANIA LAND TRUST ASSOCIATION, CONTRIBUTED THIS ARTICLE.

## Ear to the Ground

**Melora Hiller** is the new executive director of the National Community Land Trust Network. The Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation Policy in Michigan has a new executive director: **Jonathan Jarosz**. After five years as the executive director of the Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust, **Joselin Matkins** has moved to the Teton Regional Land Trust as the new land protection director. She has served as chair of the Idaho Coalition of Land Trusts since 2009. The Pennsylvania Land Trust Association honored **Peter Hausmann**, past chair of the Land Trust Alliance, with the Lifetime Conservation Leadership Award. The Western Reserve Land Conservancy (OH) appointed former Geauga Park District Deputy Director **Keith McClintock** as its new vice president of conservation and named Vice President **Eddie Dengg** to head the organization's land preservation efforts in the Utica Point Pleasant shale region. Leaders from the Vail Valley business and nonprofit community recognized the **Eagle Valley Land Trust** (CO) as winner of "Small Non-Profit of the Year" at the annual Vail Valley Partnership Success Awards. **Marie Donigan**, known locally as "the tree lady," is now executive director of the North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy in Michigan. 🌿