

Fall 2016

# Common Ground

*Protecting our rural character and natural resources through community-based land conservation.*



*Henry and Velma Carey, above right, just put their 50-acre farm under conservation easement. Henry is still well known for the quality of the hay he grew, including alfalfa, top right. The woodlands, above left, good agricultural soils, and 680 feet of scenic views along busy Headquarters Rd. are just some of the property's important conservation values. A corn crib is in foreground.*

## Carey Family Preserves Erwinna Farm

"My worst nightmare was that somebody had come and cut down a whole bunch of the trees. Now I don't have to worry about that anymore." Diana Carey's tone expressed a sense of humor, but also her relief and gratitude that the farm on which she grew up would remain a farm in perpetuity, thanks to the Tinicum Open Space Program and generous grants from the Tinicum Conservancy.

Diana's parents, Henry and Velma Carey, had planned to stay forever on their 50-acre farm on Headquarters Road, but matters of health required a move to a facility that could take over some of the ordinary needs of living. Somewhat familiar with conservation

easements, Henry had long ago conserved his father's Carversville farm. Years later, when it came to his own in Tinicum, he hesitated, fearing it would be too complicated and too costly. However, the Careys are determined advocates of farming and lovers of the rural quality of Tinicum, so when Diana raised the idea of preserving the farm, they endorsed the effort wholeheartedly, as did her brother Chris, who lives in Washington state.

Initially, Diana thought a conservation easement might be overwhelming and hard to accomplish because she lives so far away in Japan. But with two visits home and many productive email exchanges, the terms of the easement were agreed

upon and finalized. She credits the help and support of both township and Conservancy for smoothing the way and making the process simple.

Now, the land Henry Carey bought in 1964 to farm and build a family home on will remain mostly unchanged.

Originally the Careys grew field corn, but the deer usually took more than their share. They switched to hay, first timothy, then alfalfa, and finally orchard grass; one of the important conservation values of the property is its good agricultural soil. A half acre of that soil supported "Carey's Berries," the pick-your-own-strawberry business run by Diana to finance her college education in the 1980s. She ran

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# Message from the President



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## NEWSLETTER

Tom Casola  
Hellyn Sher

As I write this, I am sitting in an RV in Zion National Park. Karen and I have been vacationing at several of the national parks here in Utah and in Arizona. We have crossed great plateaus, trekked immense canyons, and constantly marveled at the breathtaking beauty of these places.

This year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The National Park Service. In 1916 Woodrow Wilson signed legislation creating the Park Service “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to... leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” Today, our 412 National Parks attract over 300 million visitors annually.

This year also marks 40 years since the creation of tax incentives to encourage land protection through conservation easements. If the creation of the National Parks was, as many have said, “America’s Best Idea,” then I submit that this was America’s second-best idea. The enormity of these western national parks has caused me to reflect on the work of local land trusts and to consider our impact. Are we making a dent in land conservation?

Places like Zion, Bryce, and the Grand Canyon encompass millions of acres in the western part of the U.S., far from Tinicum. Organizations like ours use conservation easements and other tools to protect smaller parcels closer to home. Land trusts large and small, located in almost every state, now protect a total of over 10 million acres, some 12% of the national parks’ total. How wonderful to vacation out West for a week or two. But consider how much our day-to-day quality of life is enhanced when we live on or near protected open space—to pass by acres of forests and farmland on our daily commute, to be assured of adequate and clean drinking water, to breathe pure air every day.

This is the work that the Tinicum Conservancy is dedicated to accomplishing. This is what your ongoing support enables. As we approach a milestone anniversary of our own in 2017—our 25<sup>th</sup> year—I’m focused on the treasures we have right here in Tinicum and the critical need to preserve them.



“One place understood helps us understand all places better.”

- Eudora Welty

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The Tinicum Conservancy is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization. Donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.

# Vital Volunteer: Heidi Feigles

TC Land Preservation Committee (LPC) member Heidi Feigles loves living in Tincum and can't imagine being any other place, but she wasn't always so sure. Her husband, Neal, had lived on a Pennsylvania farm, but Heidi's upbringing was more suburban and urban than rural. "I was born on the north shore of Oahu in Hawaii, but I grew up in Abington and Allentown, and other more bustling places," Heidi explains. She studied law at Georgetown and practiced labor and employment law in New York City. So the pace and quiet of Tincum took a while to get used to.

But fast forward 15 years and now, Heidi says, "Living in Tincum feels like being on a perpetual vacation." She, Neal (a new member of the Fundraising Committee), and their son, Ethan, a middle-schooler at Germantown Academy, frequently walk and bike the canal path and Tincum's back roads. "There's always plenty to do on the property and in the garden. It



*Heidi Feigles at this year's membership celebration.*

keeps me busy and is very rewarding," she says. That's in addition to her work as an interior design consultant.

Heidi's LPC work includes reaching out to landowners with tracts of land over 20 acres and exploring whether a conservation easement might be appropriate for the land and the landowner. She details

how the Conservancy works alongside the landowner, helping them through the process and seeking funding when possible. As a newer member of the committee, she is learning the ins and outs of land conservation from her more experienced colleagues. The reward is that her dedication and enthusiasm help protect the rural character and healthy environment of our community.

"I want to give back to the community and set a good example for Ethan, who represents the next generation of land stewards," she says.

For his part, Ethan is interested in environmental protection and recently did a school project on native pollinators, which he plans to implement in their garden at home. Clearly, Ethan is getting mom's message!

*- Jim Engel*

## River Road Cleanup News

The dedicated River Road Cleanup Team reports that they have expanded their horizons. Not content to keep the stretch from Headquarters to Jugtown pristine all year long, organizer Graham Place says they've added Jugtown Hill to Bridgeton Hill Road in Upper Black Eddy. The always-great turnout at the quarterly cleanups made the expansion possible, but it also means we can use more volunteers. Email [riverroadcleanup@tincumconservancy.org](mailto:riverroadcleanup@tincumconservancy.org) for more information.

The average cleanup results in close to 20 bags of trash, including evergreen items like hub caps and tires, but cleanups also yield good stories. Here's Graham on the best story from the last one: "A woman had inadvertently left her home cordless phone on top of her car in her driveway and drove away. During our cleanup her husband stopped beside one of our groups and asked if we had, by any chance, found it. The group had in fact found the phone, and it was promptly returned to him. He was amazed."

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Go to [tincumconservancy.org](http://tincumconservancy.org) and click on the NEWS icon.



**Our petition to upgrade the Tohickon Creek's status to Exceptional Value** is still under review with the state DEP. We're told DEP expects to make a recommendation to the Environmental Quality Board whether to accept or deny it "this year." Stakeholder and public comment periods will follow.

Visit [tincumconservancy.org](http://tincumconservancy.org) and our Facebook page where we'll post news as soon as we have it.

# Membership Celebration 2016



*The conserved Sebesta/Tomai property*

Perfect weather, a beautiful location, and the chance to pick apples and make cider drew a record number of supporters to the annual Membership Celebration. Our generous hosts, John Sebesta and Bill Tomai, really went over the top—by pulling out the apple press, letting guests have the run of the conserved property's orchard, and setting everything up for cidering. Thanks also to Events Chair Betsi Campbell for pulling everything together!

*Photographs by Vicki Jenkins & Maureen Santana*



*Hosts John Sebesta and Bill Tomai*



*Boyce Budd explains the mission*



*Apple picking and cider making were a highlight of this year's party*



*Neal Feigles, Barbara deWilde and Scott Sheldon*



*Bill and Ros Cabill*



*Kelly Simcox, Diane Smith, Jayne Kettles*



*Nick and Sharon Forte, Karen Budd, Peggy Enoch, Jim Engel*



*Bob Hanley and Tim Philpot*



*Linda Bisaccia-Ammerman and Fred Ammerman*



*Norm MacArthur, John Graves and Dennis Loneragan*



*Aurora MacDonald with (canine) Bibi Kyde*



*Cindy and John Long*



*Into the apple press...*



*Anna Fike in the apple orchard*



*Dave Maue, Sue Smithers, Dave Gaudette*



*Bartenders Tex Enoch and Jack Halstead*



*Jan Jalenak, John Ordway, Tom Casola*



*Sue Bunkin with Betsi Campbell*



*David Upmalis and Patty Leonhardt*



*Nancy Bousum, Mary Woodruff, and Sugie Weiss*



*Don Woodruff with Marty Weiss*

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the stand and kept the accounts for the small business. “So many people stopped in to talk,” she recalls, “It was such a nice way to get to know people.” She and her brother Chris also helped with the haying.

Henry had raised sheep and chickens and harvested grain crops on his father’s farm in Carversville, but he was also a trained draftsman. Applying to the Warminster Naval Air Development Center for such a job, he listed “Tiller of the Soil, Keeper of the Flock” as previous job experience. The Naval Air Development Center was intrigued; he got the job.

Diana recalls that her mother was a prodigious reader, and that the floors and furniture were always covered with piles of books that family members were reading. In addition to reading and writing poetry, Diana painted. Many of her paintings

won prizes at the Tinicum Arts Festival and other local art venues.

The addition of this farm brings the number of contiguously conserved acres near Erwinna to 1000. Funding for the easement will enable the Careys to enter



*“As a child, this was where I went when I ran away from home,” says Diana Carey, standing next to the farm’s corn crib.*

their preferred living facility without financial worries, prevent the loss of valuable farmland, and preserve for residents and visitors alike the views of woods and fields unchanged since before Headquarters was a paved road.

Diana’s fondest memories are of the woods where she climbed trees and wrote poetry as a child. (She still climbs those trees on her visits home). “My soul is in those woods. I’ll never forget that all my life. It’s part of who I am,” she says. Her hope is that another family with another little girl who climbs trees and writes poetry will find this lovingly preserved property an equally wonderful place to live.

*-Martie Kyde*

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## Embracing the Eel

*What the American eel can teach us about the health of the Delaware—and vice versa.*



*The undammed Delaware is a model river for the American eel. Photograph by Gary Tyson.*

Consider the American eel: snakelike, slimy, with a mouthful of tiny sharp teeth, eels are unlikely to win a beauty contest or appear on anyone’s list of Top 10 favorite animals. Still, they are important nodes in the aquatic food web and serve a vital function in our Delaware River ecology. Eels are, in spite of their expansive range and importance, endangered. The Delaware, Tinicum’s entire eastern border, is the only river on the east coast that offers unfettered habitat for this catadromous (spawning in salt water, living in fresh) species, thanks to its total lack of dams and its management as a National Wild and Scenic River. Management on the unimpeded 330 miles of the Delaware is providing a global blueprint for eel recovery plans from Canada to Central America.

Eels may live for 30 years. The life cycle is complex. Breeding occurs in the Sargasso Sea, between the West Indies and the Azores, probably in early spring, and the transparent leaf-like larvae begin

their passive journey back to the US on surface ocean currents. As they reach the continental shelf 7 to 12 months later, they begin to transfer into “glass eels,” still transparent, but with typical eel shapes. Moving into estuaries on tidal currents, glass eels become progressively more pigmented and freshwater adapted, and are called “elvers.” Elvers migrate into freshwater, traveling upstream over a 3 to 12 month period.

At their final freshwater destination, elvers become known as “yellow eels”—aptly named for their changing color—and at this stage we find them in the Delaware. When mature enough to breed, yellow eels transform into “silver eels,” changing color and many internal features, to prepare for the long journey downstream, into salt water, and back to the Sargasso, their sole breeding ground.

In other eastern rivers, upstream migration is blocked in the estuary or lower river segments by hydroelectric dams. In the Delaware, elvers may travel all the way

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to New York State and into sufficiently unpolluted and unobstructed tributaries along the way.

Why should we care? Eels are nocturnal so we're unlikely to see them, and nature lovers don't seek them out for their melodious song or their bewitching beauty.

We should care for two reasons. Firstly, eels are a vital part of the food web. They are intricately involved in balancing the populations of a diverse range of species, including fish, mollusks, bivalves, crustaceans, many insect larvae and adults, worms, frogs, and even some plants. Young yellow eels keep the larval insect population under control. Older ones control fish and crayfish populations. Smaller ones are eaten by predatory fish and bald eagles.

Secondly, and more importantly, eels sustain the Eastern elliptio mussel, a natural pollution control. These mussels, which filter out silt and other pollutants,

abound in our river only because they are distributed by eels. Adult mussels deposit their larvae in the mucus "slime" that coats an eel's body. These larvae detach at some point, settle to a rocky bottom, and begin their important filtration job. Scientists estimate that the 280 million Eastern elliptios filter the flow six times before it reaches the Delaware Bay. They also keep the bottom free of silt, so that invertebrates can proliferate, and provide food for other aquatic dwellers—including eels. One giant complex, multi-organismal symbiosis!

Eels cannot scale high dams, nor can they safely avoid turbine intakes, as other migratory fish species can. Even downstream of dams, the typical low dissolved oxygen levels provide impoverished habitat. The International Union for Conservation of Nature states that the American eel is at very high risk of extinction. Greenpeace International in 2010 placed the eel on its

red list. U.S. Fish and Wildlife, however, has twice found (2007, 2015) that protection under the Endangered Species Act is not warranted.

Laudatory, but insufficient recovery efforts are underway in both Canada and the United States, including dam removal, special eel ladders, harvest limits, and elver relocation. Much more restoration work is necessary.

Recommendations have been published that are designed to accomplish a full recovery in rivers up and down the coast. Unlike salmon, eels are not wedded to the waters from which their parents migrated, so glass eels returning from Delaware River origins will colonize any suitable river. Thanks to the instincts of a few folks who fought the Tocks Island Dam, and those who designated the entire Delaware a Wild and Scenic River, the future of the American eel depends on its populations in the free-flowing river on our eastern border. That future now looks promising.

*-Martie Kyde*



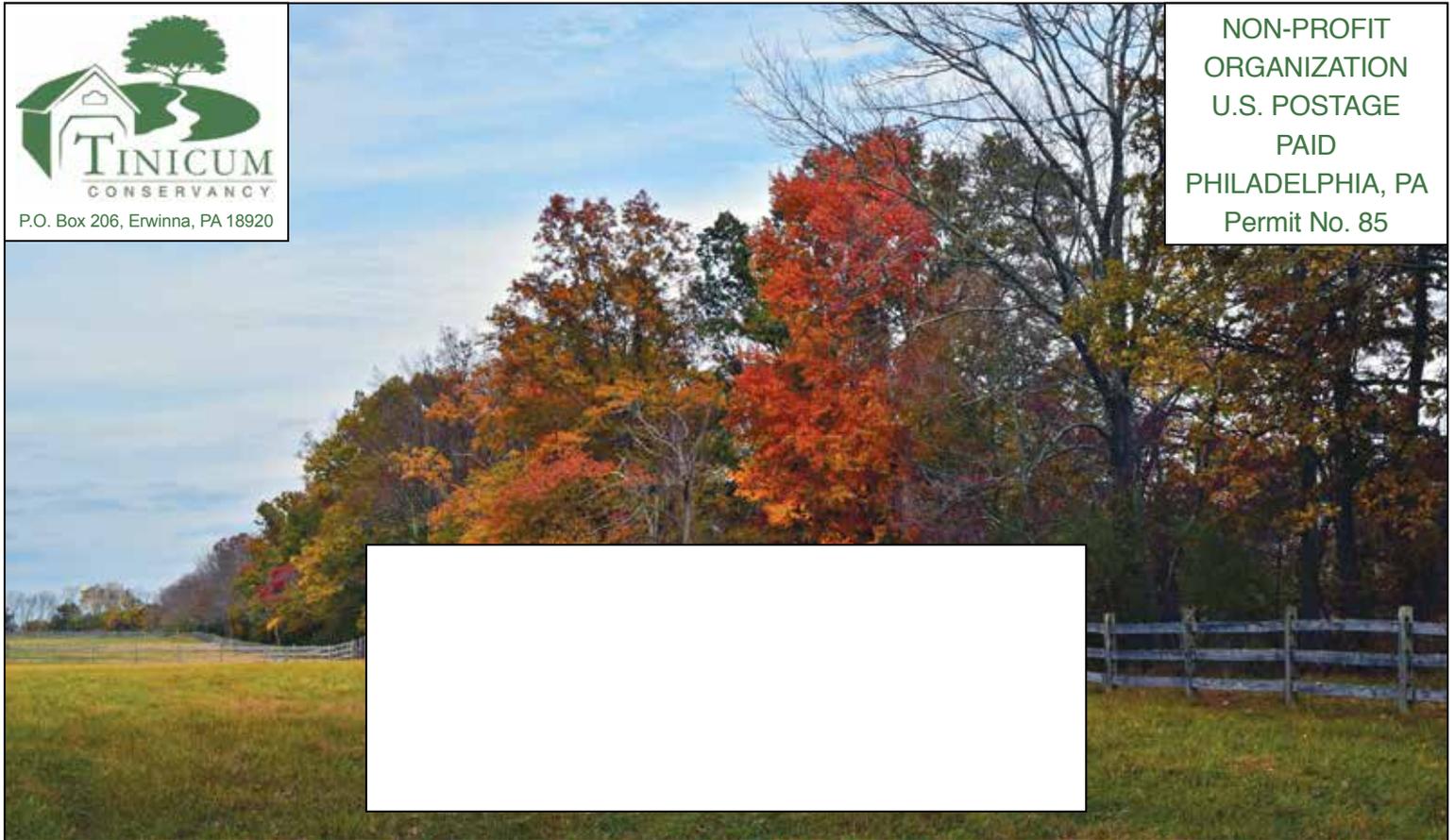
**GROWING EXCITEMENT:** *In September, Tinicum Elementary students transformed a section of their schoolyard into a "pocket meadow" as part of a program that Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve is implementing in local schools. Third graders created the path; fourth graders spread the mulch (above); and the fifth grade did the planting. Bowman's grew and contributed the plants; other materials were donated by Walter's Nursery, Linden Hill Gardens, and Wehrung's Lumber & Home Center.*

*- Karen Budd*



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*AUTUMN LEAVES: Money doesn't grow on trees, but there's an economy to ecology. Fall foliage brings tourism dollars to Tinicum and Bucks County. A conserved Pipersville farm, photographed by Cindi Sathra.*

## Not Yet a Member? Join the Tinicum Conservancy today.

Why join? Membership support is critical to the overall success of the Conservancy. Our success benefits everyone who wants pure water, clean air, beautiful landscapes, and low municipal costs. To protect Tinicum's rural character and natural resources through community-based land conservation, we rely on members. We are a private non-profit organization that depends on charitable contributions to steward the 4,600 acres conserved through our efforts, to protect additional land, and to educate the community about our mission. Annual memberships start at just \$50. Use the envelope in this newsletter or visit [tinicumconservancy.org](http://tinicumconservancy.org) to join today.

## Already a Member? Consider additional ways to support our work.

**Volunteer.** The Tinicum Conservancy would not exist without its volunteers. We need office help with mailings, research, and event planning. We need help with publications (like this newsletter). Or volunteer outdoors—we are always looking for folks to take part in our River Road cleanups (see pg 3) or invasive plant removal. Or join the easement monitor ranks. Monitors make annual visits to walk the properties on which we hold easements. Visit [tinicumconservancy.org/volunteer](http://tinicumconservancy.org/volunteer).

**Make a Gift of Appreciated Securities.** IRS rules allow you to deduct the fair market value of securities held for at least a year, regardless of what you originally paid for them. And you also avoid paying capital gains tax.

**Leave a Legacy, Plan a Gift.** When you include the Conservancy in your estate plans, you help secure the future of Tinicum's natural resources and rural character. Thoughtful planning today can extend your impact beyond your lifetime. Contact Executive Director Jim Engel at [jengel@tinicumconservancy.org](mailto:jengel@tinicumconservancy.org) or 610-294-1077 to discuss estate planning.

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**Conserve Your Property.** Preserving your land is a profound way to contribute to our community. Contact Executive Director Jim Engel at [jengel@tinicumconservancy.org](mailto:jengel@tinicumconservancy.org) or 610-294-1077 to discuss an easement.

