It’s not surprising that “No Farms No Food” bumper stickers have become a familiar sight. The price of farmland in Bucks County (as in much of the country) is a serious threat to active farming. This is a concern for communities that want a robust agricultural economy and the option to buy locally produced food. For farmers, who may be priced out, leasing land is often the only viable alternative.

Though they aim to own a farm, the leasing approach is one that’s been working well for Joanna and Marc Michini who live and farm on the conserved Municipal Road property of Margaret and Matt Balitsaris.

Joanna and Marc, first-generation farmers, have been successfully running their business, “Purely Farm,” in Tinicum for 11 years, and at the Balitsarises’ since 2006. They sustainably and humanely raise hogs, turkeys, and laying hens.

The Balitsarises bought the highly developable 115-acre “Come Along Farm” for the express purpose of conserving it and it’s important to them that some of the land is used agriculturally. “Why not do interesting things with it?” says Margaret. Plus, leasing the land to farmers can mean good stewardship, as well as food production; direct ecological benefits of farming with sustainable practices include increased soil health, biodiversity, and water quality.

For Margaret, leasing land for agricultural use was “a natural thing to want... continued on page 6
Dear Members and Friends,

The Tinicum Conservancy’s mission, stated on the front page of this newsletter, is to protect our area’s rural character and natural resources through community-based land conservation. Integral to that mission is ensuring the health of our watershed, and that’s partly why we also work to protect land in neighboring townships, especially land bordering waterways that feed into the Tinicum and Tôhickon Creeks and ultimately flow into the Delaware River, providing water for over 15 million people.

I know many of you are already aware of, and have turned your attention to, the proposal to build a new natural gas pipeline, the PennEast Pipeline. Announced in August, the company proposes a 100-mile+ pipeline originating in Luzerne County, and travelling through Carbon, Northampton, and the northernmost corner of Bucks Counties here in PA, before running under the Delaware River through Hunterdon and Mercer Counties in New Jersey, terminating near Pennington/Trenton.

Proponents see the opportunity to unlock the promise of Marcellus Shale, create jobs and provide affordable energy in PA and NJ. Opponents maintain the gas is bound for overseas markets and that this project is made redundant by existing pipelines. Others raise health and safety issues, concerns that the project will adversely impact the water resources of the Delaware River Basin, cut through sensitive natural areas, farmland, and violate private property rights.

In addition to local media coverage, there’s a lot of information available. The PennEast Pipeline website [penneastpipeline.com], has a map of the proposed route, lists upcoming company-sponsored open houses, details the various energy companies partnering in the project, and so on.

The Delaware Riverkeeper website [delawareriverkeeper.org] is a good place to learn more about potential environmental impacts, activism, and community forums around this issue.

I encourage everyone to take the time to understand this proposal and form an opinion. We all have the right, and, I personally feel, the responsibility, to make informed decisions about critical issues like this one and become involved.

“For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children’s future. And we are all mortal.” -President John F. Kennedy, June 10, 1963
MAPPING THE FUTURE: This map shows over 4,500 acres under conservation easement with the Conservancy, 4,200 in Tinicum Township. That’s over 20% of the township’s land, but only about half of the 20-acre+ “priority properties” the Conservancy is working to protect. So as proud as we are of what’s been accomplished, we’re setting new goals, including the protection of key watershed lands in neighboring townships. And we’re looking ahead to 2017 when the Conservancy will turn 25. This map will be greener by then, but imagine how much greener it might be—with the continued support of our members—in another 25 years.
Horridophytes are transforming the Tinicum landscape. The meaning of “Phyte” is plant. “Horrido” should be self-explanatory. Running Bamboo (*Phyllostachys* sp.), though perhaps not the worst of these horrid plants, is becoming an increasingly difficult problem in the township.

The Tinicum Environmental Advisory Council is working on a draft ordinance to control this unwelcome invasive. Rapidly growing bamboo blocks sightlines at intersections and undermines roadway infrastructure. Roadside bamboo bending under the weight of snow makes it difficult for Public Works to clear the roads. Bamboo growing along stream corridors destroys riparian ecosystems. And it spreads unmercifully.

Many communities have passed stringent laws regarding the planting and control of bamboo. Some have banned the plant entirely. Others have levied significant fines for planting it, and, in the case of at least one Long Island town, even jail time.

There are more friendly bamboo species, which do not grow so large nor spread so invasively, and are more appropriate for gardens. For screening (often the reason for planting running bamboo), native evergreen options are available, including pines, hemlocks, yews, hollies, and rhododendrons.

Alas, bamboo is not the only horridophyte in the township. Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*), nearly unknown here twenty years ago, is spreading rapidly, taking advantage of the disturbance caused by Hurricane Sandy. Stiltgrass roots release a chemical that inhibits germination of other species, which, along with the plant’s own prodigious seed production, makes the soil unsuitable for many native plants.

Stiltgrass is an annual, dying back each year. It forms a thick thatch which discourages just about everything except more stiltgrass. It can be controlled by pre-emergence sprays that prevent germination, or post-emergence sprays of the growing plants. These sprays are not completely selective; it may be wise to consult a professional.

Much more evident this summer than last, was a bright magenta colonizer along the canal and tributaries to the Delaware—purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*). Loosestrife has been an especially pernicious encroacher in wetland environments, but during this past season has also spread to drier areas—roadsides, swales and even low-lying meadows. It has a deep tap root that stores food over the winter and gives the plant a head start in the growing season. For this reason, it is difficult to eradicate. Four host-specific insect species have been released in an effort to control it. Eradication is possible where there are only a few plants and management can be long-term. Loosestrife is a problem because it crowds out various native threatened and endangered plants, it does not provide proper food or cover for native animals, and it impedes the flow of water.

One big surprise on the alien invasive scene in Tinicum showed up in at

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**Ecological Notes**

*Legislating bamboo and other tactics in the fight against out-of-control invasives.*

Just five of the many invasives currently challenging Tinicum are pictured. The PA DCNR website’s invasives section is a good resource for further information and has many more images to help identify these and other “exotics.” Go to: dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/plants/invasive-plants.
least two places this year—Paulownia tomentosa or Empress of China. Long a problem in the nearer suburbs of Philadelphia, Paulownia can form dense copses, crowding out native trees and spreading widely. It grows rapidly into a large impressive tree. Sales have been banned in Connecticut, and bans are pending in other states. If you see a young Paulownia on your property cut it down.

The list of local baddies would not be complete without adding Japanese barberry (Berberis thunbergii). Introduced in the mid-1800s, this prickly shrub forms dense thickets that compete with native shrubs and trees. It alters soil conditions to suit itself by increasing pH and nitrate, to the detriment of natives. Removal can be done early in the spring, since barberry leafs out early, making identification easy. Birds do eat the berries, but they are not a preferred food, as they do not provide adequate nutrition. A good native alternative to barberry is ninebark which is a fine food source for birds and a more attractive plant.

Good stewardship would include efforts to get rid of all these horridophytes wherever possible. Don’t even try to look up the word in Webster’s; we made it up.

- Martie Kyde

Opposite: bamboo spreading vigorously along the Delaware Canal; top left: purple loosestrife, like many invasives, can be beautiful, but it impedes the flow of water, among other ills; bottom left: birds eat the Japanese barberry berries, but they’re a poor source of nutrition; bottom middle: stiltgrass has spread rapidly post-Hurricane Sandy; above right: fast-growing Paulownia is often confused with catalpa.

“Working to preserve in perpetuity is a great inspiration. We are not fighting a rear-guard action, we are facing a frontier. We are not slowing down a force that inevitably will destroy all the wilderness there is. We are generating another force, never to be wholly spent, that, renewed generation after generation, will be always effective... We are not fighting progress. We are making it.”


A BIG THANK YOU!
Kimberton Whole Foods’ generous support of the TC means work-day volunteers and property tour attendees have a cooler of drinks and snacks to choose from. We’re lucky to have this great market in our community. Open 7 days a week at 239 Durham Road, Ottsville.
to do.” She grew up in Kentucky where her grandfather’s farm was part of a tradition of such arrangements.

Come Along Farm’s other tenant boards horses, and in the past it has been home to an organic produce CSA. (That means a two-acre garden is lying fallow if any vegetable growers are reading this.) “We’re really interested in helping farmers,” says Margaret. “This is a pricey area and it can be pretty impossible for them.”

Margaret was already a Purely Farm customer when the Michinis and the Balitsarises entered into the current arrangement. The Michinis were hesitant to get into a relationship with a landlord who expected a hobby farm, but “Margaret was very comfortable with the idea of what this would look like and she understood what it would mean to her property,” says Joanna. “It’s a big deal. There aren’t a lot of people who will let you raise hogs on their property.”

Like all renters, the Michinis are challenged to balance how much infrastructure and expense to put into a place they don’t own. Fortunately for them, they raise animals on pasture and don’t require a barn; they’d like one, but can get by with the portable structures Marc builds. Not so fortunately, the pastures don’t have permanent fencing—a hard expense to justify putting in at a rental, but one that would bring Marc “a lot of peace of mind.” Instead, they use temporary electric netting. Similarly, Marc hauls water out to the animals on his four-wheeler—with daughter Clover frequently riding along. It’s picturesque, but an under or above-ground water supply to the animals would bring a big gain in efficiency.

If you ask the Michinis how many acres of land they want to buy for their own farm, they’ll probably say you’re asking the wrong question. “I need a property so we can raise the animals and be able to cover the mortgage and make a living. I would gladly scale down—or up—to own my own property, something I could set up to run efficiently and cut down on the hours it takes for daily maintenance. It’s not really our goal to have full-time employees, to grow that big. In a lot of ways I’d like to be smaller.” He adds, “It would be nice to have more family time and down time to do some of the other things that we like to do.”

In addition to raising the hogs, turkeys, and laying hens, they make and sell broth and five kinds of specialty artisan sausage (varieties include spicy Cervellata, the beet and feta-inflected Purple Rain). But Purely Farm is actually less diversified than in the past—at different points over the years their products have included broiler chickens, lamb, rabbit, ducks, and geese—they may change things up again in the future. “We’re farmers, we can learn to do anything,” says Marc, “but we’re trying to rein in the insanity.” Joanna adds, “And we know we can do certain things really well if we aren’t spread too thin.”

Though owning their own farm remains the Michinis’ goal, the last eight years have been a happy arrangement. “Margaret’s been, really, a sort of fairy godmother,” says Joanna.

Purely Farm’s pork, eggs, and turkey products are sold at Easton, Wrightstown, and the Hunterdon Land Trust Door Farmers’ Markets. For special orders, or to pick up by appointment on the farm, contact them at: 215-317-0889 or purelyfarm@gmail.com.
2014 Membership Celebration

Melissa and Jonathan Reiss

Barbara Murray, Leo MacDonald with daughters Aurora and Iona

Hosts Lisa and David Phillips

The beautiful renovated bank barn at Lisa and David Phillips’ preserved Pipersville property took center stage at September’s Membership Celebration. The weather was great, we had a record turnout, and the potluck buffet was a hit, as usual. Thanks to Lisa and David for hosting and to Maureen Santina for these photos!

Some of the more than 100 Conservancy supporters who turned out.

Supervisor Vince Dotti, Phyllis D’Amico and Executive Director Jim Engel

David and Caroline Rasner

Mary Pucci with Bill Novak

Tinicum Supervisor Rich Rosamilia, with his wife, Kim

June Rothkopf and Paul Wieand with grandson Rafa

Events Committee Members Stana Lennox, Claire Billingham, Maria Fell, Peggy Enoch, and Betsi Campbell
Recent statistics from the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association confirm Tinicum Conservancy continues to be a strong leader in conservation. The association’s Summer 2014 issue of ConserveLand reports that “Land trusts protected Pennsylvania’s special places and landscapes at an extraordinary pace this last decade.”

Some encouraging facts from the last 10 years about statewide conservation generally, and about Tinicum Conservancy, specifically, are:

- acreage protected by conservation easements increased by 98% in the past decade
- PA land trusts increased the aggregate acres conserved by 64%, from 406,980 to 667,148 acres
- Tinicum Conservancy ranks #15 (of 62 out of 80 PA land trusts reporting) in the state for acres protected with 4,574 acres under easement
- Tinicum Conservancy ranks #9 in the state for total number of conservation easements with 109
- 97.4% of Pennsylvanians support recreation and conservation funding
- Our neighboring land trusts, Bedminster Regional Land Conservancy and Heritage Conservancy are also ranked high in acres protected and number of conservation easements held
- Southeast PA also includes Brandywine Conservancy and Natural Lands Trust, both in the top five of the same two categories

As TC goes through the process of renewing our national accreditation, we can be confident that our hard work over the past decade has resulted in a strong standing among Pennsylvania land trusts. Commenting on the rankings, TC President Boyce Budd said, “While we are gratified by our accomplishments, and we thank all of our loyal supporters for helping us to achieve them, one of the facts of the land conservation business is that we are in a race against time. We can never move fast enough, we can never say that the job is done.”

To read more about the past decade’s accomplishments, go to conserveland.org/archive/newsletters and click on Summer 2014.

- Peggy Enoch