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# COMMON GROUND

WINTER 2022

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



C. Sathra

## Year-End Ways to Make a Real Difference

### Leave a Legacy, Plan a Gift.

When you include the Conservancy in your estate plans, you help secure the future of our region's natural resources and rural character for future generations. Planning today extends your impact beyond your lifetime.

**Get Involved — Volunteer!** Tinicum Conservancy would not exist without its volunteers. We need help with mailings, research, event planning, and more! If you prefer the outdoors, we need folks to take part in our River Road cleanups and as volunteer property monitors.

Please contact Tinicum Conservancy at (610) 294-1077 or email [MFell@tinicumconservancy.org](mailto:MFell@tinicumconservancy.org) for questions and more information.

### Double Your Impact with an Employer Matching Gift.

Maximize your Conservancy support with an employer matching gift. Many companies make it easy to double or triple the amount you donate! Check with your human resources department.

**Conserve Your Property.** Preserving your land is a lasting way to contribute to our community.

Please contact our executive director, Jim Engel, at (610) 294-1077 or email [jengel@tinicumconservancy.org](mailto:jengel@tinicumconservancy.org) for questions and a confidential discussion about your options and opportunities.

## JOIN TODAY

Your gift can make a positive impact to help protect your community for your family and future generations.

The Tinicum Conservancy is a private non-profit organization that depends on charitable contributions to protect the environment, steward more than 5,000 conserved acres of land, and educate the community about our mission. Your support is essential to realizing our shared purpose.

Every gift makes a difference. Use the envelope inside or visit [tinicumconservancy.org](http://tinicumconservancy.org) to donate today. *Thank you.*



## Free Consulting Program Helps Upper Bucks Farmers Go Organic

14,000 acres and 166 farms across Pennsylvania, including several in Bucks County, have secured coveted USGA organic certification with the help of experts at the Rodale Institute in nearby Kutztown.

The 70-year-old nonprofit is a longtime leader in organic and regenerative agricultural research and conversion. Since 2018, it's also been a local catalyst for organic conversions through hands-on consulting services offered free of

charge to Pennsylvania residents through a partnership with the state Department of Agriculture.

"Organic conversion offers a lot of advantages for farmers, no matter how much acreage they have," says Sage Dennis, one of Rodale's newest consultants. "It enables soil to retain more water in times of drought, uses 45 percent less energy, releases 40 percent fewer carbon emissions and can even make it more profitable to grow certain crops, especially

grain. A bushel of organic soybeans, for example, sells for three times the price of conventional varieties."

Consumer trends increasingly favor organic products, and the market will continue to grow as schools, hospitals and other institutional buyers make the switch.

Perhaps the biggest advantages are to the land itself. Organic agriculture actively gives back to the soil, enriching and protecting it through the use of cover crops

*continued on pg. 3*





**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

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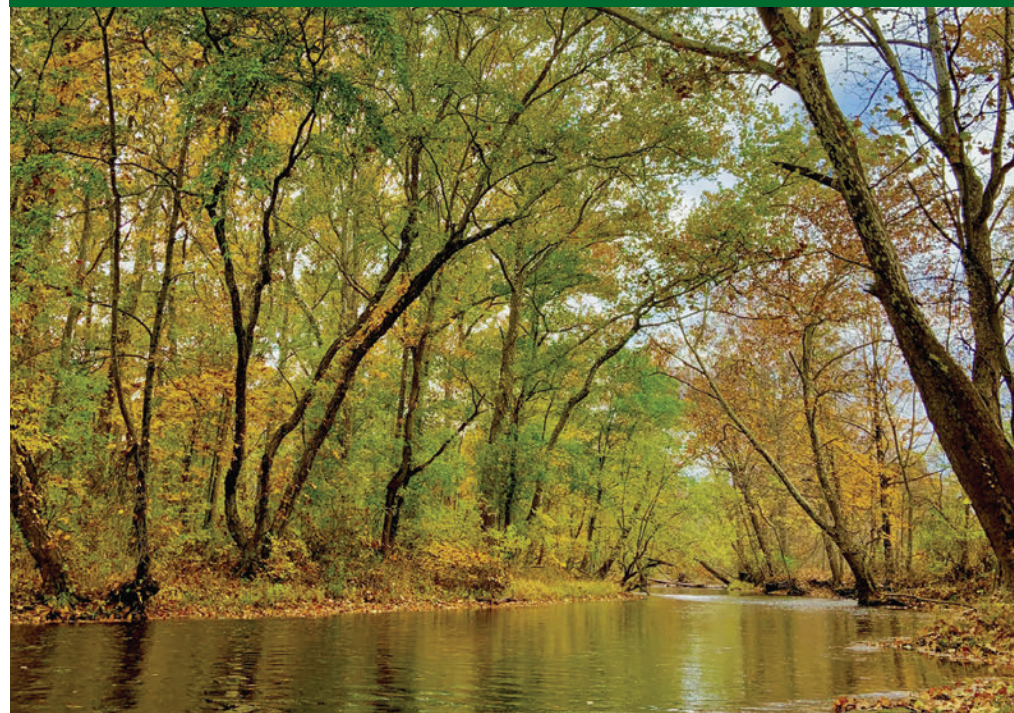
The accreditation seal is awarded to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence.

The Tinicum Conservancy is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization established in 1992. Donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.

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# A letter from our President



Hello everyone, I hope you have been able to get outside and enjoy the perfect fall weather we have been having, and though the weather has been perfect we understand that all is not perfect in our natural world. The broad decline of insect and bird populations is alarming to many of us, and I have been learning about how much we can do to improve the natural habitat of our yards to help reverse these declines.

Doug Tallamy, University of Delaware professor, has written extensively on this very subject and the Frenchtown Bookshop along with Friends of the Tinicum Conservancy donated 15 copies of his book, *Nature's Best Hope, A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard*, to spread the word about what you can do. You can win a copy by sending an email to [mfell@tinicumconservancy.org](mailto:mfell@tinicumconservancy.org) by December 31 for a chance to win one. Winners will be selected at random, and you will be contacted via email if you are one of them.

Tinicum Conservancy measures our impact in acres preserved; Doug measures his by the

impact you can make in square feet and in your yard. I am using his book as a guide along with help from Diane Allison, local naturalist and birder, as I work to convert floodplain fields and hedgerows into the best possible natural habitat for insects and birds.

The results have been visible quickly. The process of encouraging these habitats has had a very positive impact on the function of the floodplain meadow which has improved water quality, reduced runoff and controlled erosion. These habitats are very resilient and can bounce back in weeks — even after being submerged under 7' of water, as I learned after Hurricane Ida last year.

Do you have an area of your yard that is a candidate for a return to natural habitat, an old hayfield perfect for conversion to a meadow managed for habitat, or want some help with understanding how you could do it? Enter for your chance to win the book or call the office and we would love to talk with you more about all of this.

—Neal Feigles

## Free Consulting Program (cont. pg. 1)

between harvests, crop rotation year after year, and “conservation tillage,” which reduces erosion and promotes the build-up of natural replenishment from plant and manure decomposition. Conservation tillage has the added benefit of reducing the release of carbon that soil absorbs and stores naturally. This regenerative aspect of organic agriculture has the enormous potential to slow and even remedy global warming.

For all its advantages, however, organic farming requires much more than discontinuing the use of chemical fertilizers and other agents. It is more labor-intensive and needs annual re-certification by the USDA. It also requires animal feed that is more costly, natural fertilizers, and pest controls that are less powerful and may not be effective in certain conditions, which could leave crops vulnerable to spoilage.

And those fence posts that need replacing? No treated lumber allowed!

“It’s not for everyone,” adds Dennis. “But it’s definitely the wave of the future. It’s vital to agriculture’s long-term sustainability as well as that of our planet and human health.” Rodale advises landowners considering a conversion to organic to ask themselves three questions:

Conventional Farming	Organic Farming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relies on chemical pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) to fight pests, weeds and feed plants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relies on natural principles like biodiversity, composting, crop rotation, cover crops, and animal manure as fertilizer.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses mechanical tilling, with a plow or disc, to turn soil, eliminate weeds and integrate cover crops; leaves soil vulnerable to erosion; is fuel and labor intensive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employs techniques first used thousands of years ago, such as composted animal manure and green manure crops, that are also economically sustainable in today’s world.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Causes increased greenhouse gas emissions, soil erosion, water pollution, and threatens human health.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a smaller carbon footprint, conserves and builds soil health and replenishes natural ecosystems for cleaner water and air.</li> </ul>

1) How much time and money are you willing or able to invest in your farming operation? That’s especially important for those who are not full-time farmers and have other demands on their time and energy.

2) What type of operation do you have or want? There are different criteria for grass and pasture, vegetables, row crops, dairy and other outputs, and the process of achieving certification will vary.

3) What is your market? Are you selling to organic retailers and distributors? Direct to organic-minded consumers? Or are you looking for a customer base beyond those still-niche buyers?

Rodale consultants can help landowners answer these questions through a step-by-step process of learning the benefits and challenges of organic transition and, for owners who choose to move forward, complete the certification process successfully.

To apply or learn more about the program, visit [rodaleinstitute.org/consulting](http://rodaleinstitute.org/consulting), email [consulting@rodale.org](mailto:consulting@rodale.org), or call 610-683-1416. Drop us a line to let the Tinicum Conservancy community know how it worked for you.

— Dennis Lonergan







Kelly Germann, Resource Protection Manager leads a walk of the 88-acre conserved property.



Amy Gerber, Kelly Simcox and Karen Budd

## Conservancy Annual Community Celebration Resumes with Record Crowd

This past month, the Tincum Conservancy resumed its annual Community Celebration after Covid forced a two-year hiatus. Happily, attendance hit an all-time record of 144 friends, neighbors and supporters. Guests gathered at the 88-acre conserved property of Steve McDonnell and Jill Kearney, where they were treated to refreshments and good company along with an update on all the Conservancy's recent successes and conservation projects.

Jim Engel, the Conservancy's Executive Director, expressed his deep appreciation for the community's generosity of time, expertise and financial support. "The positive feedback we received

from attendees was overwhelming," he explained. "This is always a feel good event, but everybody was so happy to finally be able to gather again. It made this year truly special."

A special thank-you goes out to everyone who attended — and if you couldn't be there, we hope you'll join us next year!



Neal Feigles with Travis Hutchinson



Neal Feigles, Conservancy President, discusses exciting future plans for the Conservancy



Neighbors Dennis Lonergan, Amy Holyk, Kirk Wilcox and John Graves



Kelly Germann, Maria Fell and Stana Lennox welcome guests

## Public Gets A Peek at New Conservancy Property

On November 5th, 16 members of the public had a chance to visit the newest Conservancy conservation victory. The 11-acre property lies near the headwaters of Rapp Creek, a major tributary of Tincum Creek. Tincum Creek is an Exceptional Value (EV) status stream as designated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. EV status is the highest designation of water quality in the State. There are only two EV streams in Bucks County: Tincum Creek and Cooks Creek.

Visitors were given background on the property, and Kate Galer, daughter of the late, Harold Galer, spoke briefly about the importance of the property to her family. Kelly Germann, Resource Protection Manager for the Conservancy, lead a walk of the property while pointing out the



Kate Galer (on the right, in black & orange) shares stories of her family's almost 70 year enjoyment of the 11-acre property.

importance and sensitivity of the extensive wetlands.

This property was donated to the Conservancy by the Galer Family and a conservation easement was placed on the property at the same time as the donation. The Conservancy will be selling the protected property in early 2023. The sale proceeds will be used to protect current

conservation easements and acquire future conservation properties. Currently there is a cabin and garage on the property along with a pond and small dock.

*The property is not open to the public but if you have questions, please contact Jim Engel, Executive Director at 610-294-1077 or email [jengel@tincumconservancy.org](mailto:jengel@tincumconservancy.org).*



## The Two Wendys

Wendy Szandrocha and Wendy Ullman both offered to help the Conservancy at about the same time this year. Their timing was perfect. Ullman agreed to serve on the board of trustees, replacing long-time trustee Karen Budd, and Szandrocha took over the role of Events Coordinator, a role held by Betsi Campbell for almost 13 years. Szandrocha and her husband, Doug, moved to Tincum in 2021. Born in Doylestown and raised in the Huntington Valley, she has two children who live nearby. She works in corporate banking and likes being an active part of the community. In her free time, she

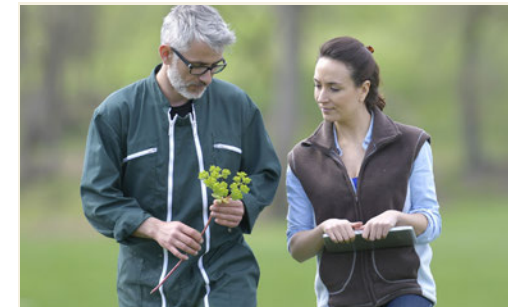
loves cooking and feeding everybody.

"We love this area and all its beauty. Everyone is so nice and friendly," exclaims Szandrocha.

Ullman is also a new resident, but not an unfamiliar face to local residents. After teaching for 30 years at Bucks County Community College, Ullman took a different tack and was elected to the State General Assembly as the region's State Representative from 2018-2020.

Ullman grew up spending lots of time at her family cabin in the Adirondacks. She thinks her fond memories of these summers have a lot to do with why she feels so at home here.

She looks forward to serving the community again through her work as a Conservancy trustee and spending her free time outdoors searching for chanterelles and exploring the woods near her new home.



## Easement Monitors Needed

Interested in volunteering outdoors? We are required by our National Land Trust Accreditation to monitor every conservation easement property on an annual basis. We're always seeking volunteers to help us achieve our goals. Comfort with hiking, talking to neighbors and simple computer skills a must. Please call Kelly at 610-294-1077 or email [kgermann@tincumconservancy.org](mailto:kgermann@tincumconservancy.org) to inquire if this is the opportunity for you.



# Kelly's CORNER: Rethink Your Compost: "Vermiculture" is Easier, Faster & Better!

Autumn is well underway, and gardeners are putting their gardens to bed, bundling dried flowers for winter critters, seed gathering and leaf-mulching. Those ubiquitous seed catalogues are still a few months away from our mailboxes, and few people are thinking about their 2023 gardens. But I am, with every banana I peel, every pot of coffee or tea I brew, and all the mushroom ends, carrot tops, egg shells and onion skins I toss. *My composting-worms do the rest.*

Like many gardeners, I had traditional compost piles for about 20 years, with some form of compost container out by the garden, into which I'd throw all my yard waste and kitchen scraps. Painstakingly, I'd turn it over a few times each summer, checking repeatedly for the small amounts of finished compost I could use. About 15 years ago, I bemoaned the fact that I never had enough compost in the springtime for feeding my new gardens. Why? Because the traditional composting process doesn't work through the winter, due to a lack of necessary heat and lively composting organisms. Throwing all my kitchen waste into the garbage for four months of cold weather just felt wrong, and I hated *buying* compost in the spring!

On a whim, I took a class on "vermiculture" (composting with worms\*), and I have never looked back. I now own seven worm compost bins and I gave away my traditional garden-side composter years ago. I have since taught several classes on vermiculture, have given away thousands of my own worms, and will talk non-stop to anyone that wants to learn about it.



**What is vermiculture?** It is the art and science of composting using specialized worms to decompose your organic wastes. "Vermicompost" is a mixture of decomposed organic matter, bedding and castings (worm manure). Simply, when worms eat organic waste, it is excreted in the form of nutrient-rich fertilizer. Yup. Worm poop.

## Why compost with worms?

Vermicomposting is different from other compost systems because it can be done indoors, requires less maintenance and space and produces large quantities of highly fertile soil amendments much faster. Plus:

- Year-round vermicomposting can continue throughout the winter, because it's not dependent on warm weather. No sacrificing your valuable kitchen scraps to the garbage can in the winter months, so you get more compost, faster!
- A vermicompost bin can be as small or large as you have space for. It can be indoors or outdoors (protected), in an apartment, a closet, basement, garage or under the kitchen sink. (There's little to no odor.)
- Worms really speed up the composting process and significantly reduce the amount of work required. (No pile-turning.)
- Vermicompost is more fertile than the product of traditional composting methods. It results in a phenomenal soil amendment with exceptional plant-growth promoting properties.
- You can easily make compost tea to feed your indoor and outdoor plants.

If you are interested in learning more about vermiculture, feel free to contact me. I'm happy to help you on your vermi-way!

Every gift makes a difference. Use the envelope provided or visit [tinicumconservancy.org](http://tinicumconservancy.org) to donate today. *Thank you.*



**\*Important Note:** There is much scientific evidence that several species of non-native invasive worms can have detrimental effects on our environment, especially forest ecology. Vermiculture worms are NOT the earthworms you find in the garden, see on the sidewalk after a rainstorm, or buy in a bait shop. The **correct** vermiculture worm is a red worm, or red wiggler (*Eisenia fetida*). These worms reproduce quickly and can eat more than their own weight in food each day. There is no evidence that this species of worm is invasive or ecologically detrimental. It's very important to be educated about using and handling the correct species of worms before you become a vermi-composter!

1. Kelly's favorite resource: *Worms Eat My Garbage*, by Mary Appelhof. \$10
2. <http://www.redwormcomposting.com> An excellent resource! You can use the website for info and questions or sign up for their email newsletter. Free sign-up includes a 76-page downloadable/printable Vermiculture Guide (very useful & entertaining!)

## Signs for Landowners

Do you own a conservation easement property with Tinicum Conservancy? Claim your **FREE** sign! Almost 50 of your neighbors have already claimed theirs.



Recently, the conservancy designed a "Private Land, Permanently Protected" sign in sustainable, durable aluminum. These one-sided signs are 12"x18" with pre-drilled holes for attaching to a post, fence or mailbox. We hope every landowner will take advantage of the opportunity to display their pride in protecting a bit of the planet.

While supplies last, Tinicum Conservancy is offering one free sign to any conservation easement landowner, upon request. Contact Kelly at: [kgermann@tinicumconservancy.org](mailto:kgermann@tinicumconservancy.org) or call us at 610-294-1077 to claim yours.



Penn State Extension is providing an amazing online educational series for landowners with smaller landscapes wishing to understand more about their woods, wildlife, meadows, native and invasive species and so much more.

The **Woods in Your Backyard Series** is designed specifically, but not exclusively, for smaller landscapes. Learn how you can positively influence the environment by implementing simple stewardship practices. Registration is open until January 4th. See: <https://extension.psu.edu/woods-in-your-backyard-series>

*Thank you!*

**Community Celebration volunteers/donors:** This event wouldn't have been such a success without the help of the following: Karen Budd, Bonnie Callaghan, Peggy and Tex Enoch, Debra Goldstein, Gertraud Humphreys, Mike Kauffman, Stana Lennox, June Rothkopf, Drew Scott (Geronimo Brewing Co.), Laurie Shea and Kelly Simcox.

**Gertraud Humphreys** for assisting in the office in addition to her volunteering as an easement monitor and a conservancy gardener.

**Dennis Lonergan** has stepped right in and written a couple fantastic articles for this issue of the Open Spaces newsletter.

**Stu Loudon**, who for more than a decade hosted our original set of conservation easement documents for safekeeping.

**Steve McDonnell and Jill Kearney** for graciously hosting the Community Celebration and for covering the cost of the trolley.

**Todd Quinby** for landscaping services at the Galer property to keep it looking nice.

**Wendy Szandrucha** for taking over the Events Committee and running our highest attended Community Celebration ever.

**Garden Crew** that keeps our office garden looking beautiful year-round: Carol Cassel, Corrine Blydon, Gertraud Humphreys and Karen Budd.

*We could not thrive (or even exist!) without our dedicated volunteers. Please call us at 610-294-1077 to see how you can help.*