

# New Beginnings... Extraordinary Results



AARGH!  
It's Natural  
Biodiversity!

## LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KRISTIN SEWAK

### DEAR FRIENDS,

As I reflect on 2010, our first year as an independent non-profit organization, the word "extraordinary" comes to mind. As shown by the animated characters from our *PA Invasive species Educational Curriculum Supplement*, not only did Natural Biodiversity produce high quality outcomes, but it did so creatively under challenging circumstances.

First, our new board of directors quickly demonstrated extraordinary qualities by breathing life into the infant organization that emerged from what had been a decade-long program. Staff members demonstrated extraordinary qualities by maintaining their focus on producing excellent programs and projects, in spite of the additional work that was required to form the new 501(c)(3) organization.

A few of the challenges included the need to find new office space and a 100% turnover in support personnel, largely due to the start of a new AmeriCorps program year. Despite all of the obstacles, Natural Biodiversity accomplished the following programmatic outcomes in 2010:

- Implementation of Outdoor Heritage Month, including a calendar of approximately 20 regional events.
- Execution of another successful Outdoor Adventures event for more than 1,100 students that featured a record number of interactive exhibits and activities.
- Receipt of the 2010 Outstanding Environmental Education Program Award, from the Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Educators.
- Institution of a new event, the Allegheny Mountains Native Plant Fest & Sale.
- Completion of 23 detailed, invasive plant management plans for 867 acres of private land.
- Execution of a regional landowner workshop for more than 20 attendees.

- Production of the Juniata Cooperative Weed Management Area Strategic Plan.
- Relocation to a superior and more economical office space, The Russell House Community Center, located in the Moxham neighborhood of Johnstown.
- Convening of our first Annual Meeting on October 27, 2010, attended by 44 friends of the organization.
- Creation of a sustainable landscape design for Sandysvale Memorial Gardens in Johnstown.
- Completion of the *PA Invasive Species Educational Curriculum Supplement* ("BioBullies").
- Presentations at 31 events.
- Recruitment of 71 Founding Members.

This list of accomplishments is even more impressive when one considers that it does not include those related to our organizational development. Read "A New Organization" to learn more about the year's organizational outcomes.

At each critical moment of the year, the extraordinary people who are connected with Natural Biodiversity – directors, staff, volunteers, Founding Members, committees and funding agencies – made these outcomes possible. I'd like to thank everyone for their collective efforts!

As 2011 develops, I expect even more extraordinary results. And I look forward to working with each of you, the valuable caretakers of our bio-diverse region, to accomplish our mission of stewardship.

Best regards,

Kristin D. Sewak  
Executive Director



## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT, JANIE FRENCH

### DEAR FRIENDS,

Natural Biodiversity may be 10 years old, but it experienced a new beginning in 2010. In February of last year, a founding board was selected to lead Natural Biodiversity in becoming incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity. We as board members are charged with the governance of this new nonprofit organization, making sure that it abides by ethical and legal standards in making Natural Biodiversity's vision a reality. Our first task was to define Natural Biodiversity's mission. That mission is: "To heal and support our landscapes and their abilities to sustain themselves and flourish; Engaging citizens and recognizing that they are an interdependent part of the Allegheny Mountains region."

During this formative time, we also came to realize how much we appreciate and value our staff and volunteers. Without this incredible support, we would not be able to function as well as we do or provide the quality programs and services that are offered. Our staff is top-notch and guided by our very talented Executive Director, Kristin Sewak.

I am indebted to my fellow founding board members for their vision and commitment to strengthening Natural Biodiversity. They accepted this responsibility with enthusiasm and commitment. Each member brought a complementary skill set to the leadership team.

The founding board members were:

- Tom Dick - Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society
- Adia Dobbins - Somerset Trust Company
- Janie French - Pennsylvania Environmental Council
- Melinda Hughes-Wert - Nature Abounds
- Andrew Mack - Powdermill Nature Reserve
- Gina Makris - Optimum Health Management
- Dennis McNair - University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown

In October, Natural Biodiversity held its first annual membership meeting, during which three new Board members were elected. We welcome Allison Felix of Saint Francis University; William Gleason Barbin, Esquire; and Daimon Lawrence of CJL Engineering to our team.

In 2011, the Board and staff will focus on building capacity both financially and programmatically for this young organization. We will increase our public engagement to expand our network of citizen stewards. I look forward to the opportunities and challenges 2011 will bring. And I am confident that Natural Biodiversity will remain the leading organization in conservation stewardship.

Best regards,

*Janie French*

Janie French  
President

*The founding Board of Directors for the new organization are: (Seated, left to right) Melinda Hughes-Wert and Gina Makris. (Standing, left to right) Dennis McNair, Janie French, Andy Mack, and Adia Dobbins. Absent from photo: Tom Dick.*



Foiled again! But I'm not done yet! HaHaHa!



This year's been almost as good as an ash tree!

# Current Board of Directors

## OFFICERS

### JANIE FRENCH PRESIDENT

Janie is the Director of Green Infrastructure Programs with the PA Environmental Council and has 28 years' professional experience in working with grassroots organizations on community based planning and water resource sustainability. She has served on the Board of the PA Organization for Watersheds and Rivers and as co-chair of the development committee for PA Trout.



### DENNIS M. MCNAIR, PHD VICE-PRESIDENT

Dennis is a biology professor at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, teaching ecology and physiology. He has degrees in biology and zoology. His research involves ecology of aquatic insects, particularly dragonflies and damselflies. Since its founding he has been a member of the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society and currently is President.



### ADIA G. DOBBINS, MBA SECRETARY/TREASURER

Adia has degrees in music education and business administration with an emphasis in nonprofit arts management. Her professional experience is in the areas of marketing, diversity, human relations and corporate law. She currently keeps an active schedule as a business professional within Somerset Trust Company's commercial lending department and as a freelance vocalist.



## DIRECTORS

### ALLISON FELIX, MSB

Allison is the Director of the Saint Francis University Science Outreach Center, a project director of professional-development programs for teachers, and a director of student outreach programs in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education. She has degrees in biology and is pursuing a doctoral degree in STEM education.



### WILLIAM GLEASON BARBIN, ESQ.

William has been with Gleason, McQuillan, Barbin, & Markovitz LLP since being admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar in 1979, practicing general law and concentrating on matters dealing with local governments, development, permits and approvals. His legal experience includes environmental matters and regulatory issues.



### DAIMON LAWRENCE, MS

Daimon is Director of Marketing at CJL engineering, where he manages corporate marketing, business development and proposals. He has served as a marketing manager for Hayes Large Architects of Altoona and has provided professional public-communications consulting services through DLE for eleven years.



### MELINDA HUGHES-WERT

Melinda is the President of Nature Abounds, an emerging national 501(c)(3) corporation that educates and empowers citizens to sustain their community through environmental stewardship. Prior to leading Nature Abounds, Melinda worked for the National Wildlife Federation and the Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement, better known as EASI.



### ANDREW MACK, PHD

Andrew is the William and Ingrid Rea Conservation Biologist at the 2,200-acre Powdermill Nature Reserve. He has been published in more than 45 publications on ornithology, ecology and conservation; lived in Papua New Guinea where he studied rainforest ecology; and at one time was Collections Manager of birds at the Academy of Natural Sciences.



Wow!  
What a group!



Yeah, they're  
good people!


# A New Organization

After years of existing as an unincorporated program, Natural Biodiversity has become an independent nonprofit corporation, enabling the work of the organization to continue well into the future. After months of board member recruitment and steering committee input, the initial organizational meeting of the Founding Board of Directors took place on February 1, 2010. During the productive meeting, the new Board chose to keep the name "Natural Biodiversity" and to refine the organization's mission statement. The swift Board action enabled Natural Biodiversity to receive its incorporation status from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on February 18, 2010.

Since the organization's inception, Natural Biodiversity Board members and staff have accomplished the following organizational development tasks:

1. Establishment of governing by-laws.
2. Definition of Board, Officer, and committee member roles and responsibilities.
3. Tax exemption status from the Internal Revenue Service, which designated Natural Biodiversity as a public charity under the 501(c)(3) provision of the federal tax code.
4. Registration with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Charitable Organizations.
5. Hiring of three full-time staff members and three temporary AmeriCorps members.
6. Development of Standard Operating Procedures.
7. Recruitment of 71 Founding Members.
8. Convening of the first Annual Meeting on October 27.
9. The obtainment of donations and grant awards totaling over \$450,000 for 2010-2012 operations and programs.
10. Development of a sound 2011 budget.

In 2011, Natural Biodiversity will involve its citizen volunteers, members and other stakeholders in a strategic planning process. Once that process has been completed, Natural Biodiversity will be well positioned to fulfill its mission in focused and effective ways, thus perpetuating its stewardship of the region's natural biodiversity.



This annual report was made possible, in part, by a Cooperative Agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). It may not necessarily express the views of APHIS.



## NATURAL BIODIVERSITY

538 Park Avenue  
Johnstown, PA 15902  
(814) 534-0204

[nbd\\_staff@naturalbiodiversity.org](mailto:nbd_staff@naturalbiodiversity.org)

[naturalbiodiversity.org](http://naturalbiodiversity.org)



*The animated characters placed throughout this report are the creations of illustrator James Hayes.*