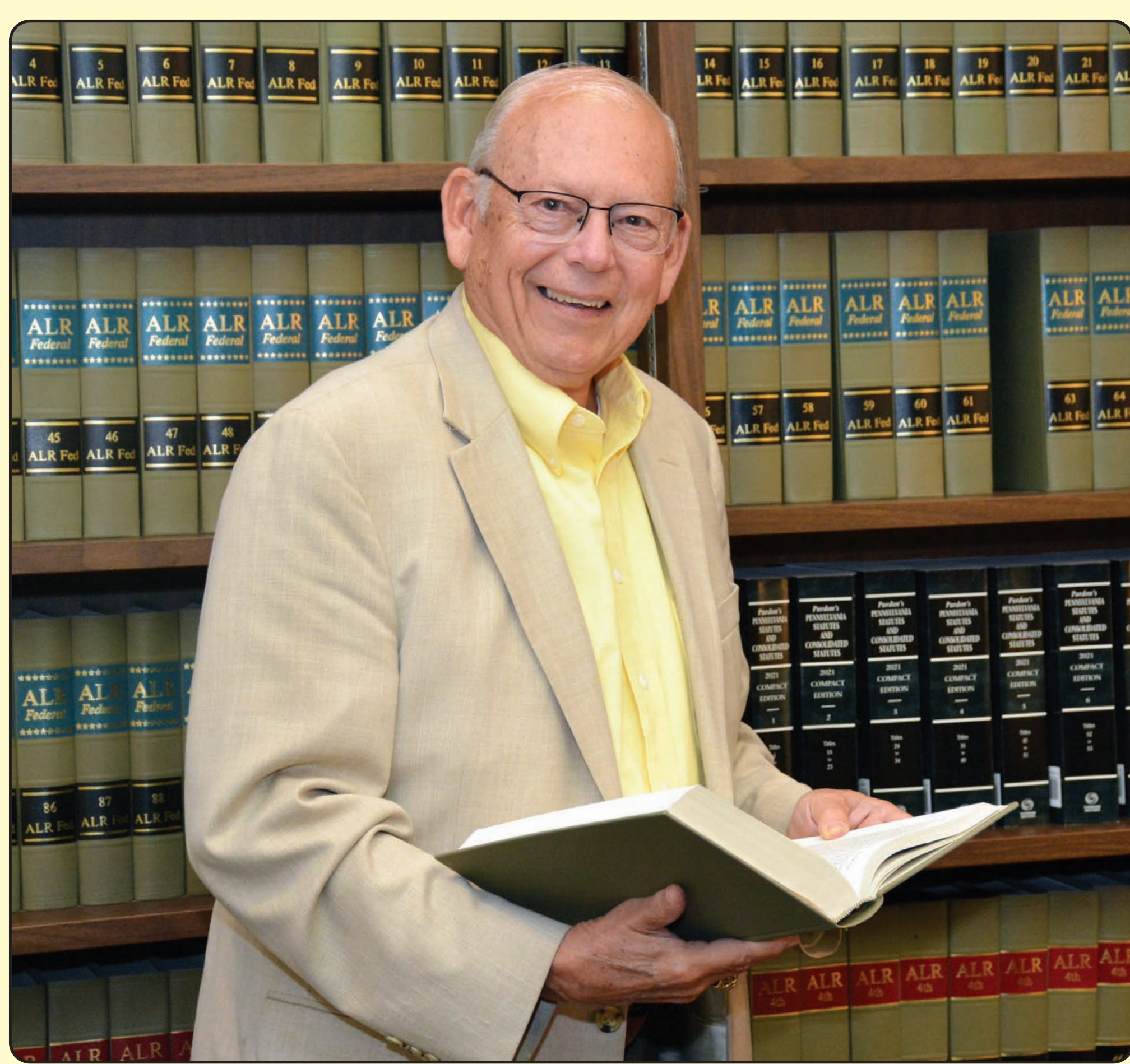


2025

J. Roy Houston Conservation Partnership Award

John N. Ward, Attorney at Law



John Ward's love for conservation began as a young boy, growing up in Oakmont. He fondly recalls summer days spent exploring the woods near Plum Creek—building forts and treehouses with friends, catching butterflies, and turning over rocks in search of salamanders and crayfish. Those early adventures outdoors sparked a lifelong appreciation for nature and conservation.

That appreciation carried into his adult life, where John became a trusted legal guide for many of our region's conservation partners. After graduating from Duquesne University School of Law in 1972 and serving two years of active duty in the military, he began practicing law in Westmoreland County in 1974. Over the decades, he built a strong relationship with the Westmoreland Conservation District (District), working alongside staff while representing various clients whose projects intersected with conservation efforts.

Throughout his career, John has focused on areas of law that include commercial and industrial development, eminent domain, tax assessment appeals, municipal and redevelopment authorities, real estate transactions, and estate planning. He has represented key organizations such as the Redevelopment Authority of Westmoreland County and the Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation (WCIDC). His work with WCIDC often involved acquiring large parcels of land for infrastructure

development across the county—including projects in East Huntingdon, Hempfield, and South Huntingdon townships—many of which



At the Westmoreland Land Trust dedication of the Otto and Magdalene Ackermann Nature Preserve - above: John leaves a tribute. below: Land Trust board members in attendance, l-r: Karen Jurkovic, Alex Graziani, Lisa Smith, Mike Kuzemchak, Mark Bowers, John Ward, Virginia Stump, John Albertson (for Representative John Pallone), Betsy Aiken, Ted Kopas, Vince Quatrini, Jr., Chuck Duritsa, John Lohr, Tony Quadro, Malcolm Sias, Bruce Corna, Jr., Larry Larese.

brought him into close collaboration with the District.

John has long believed in finding the balance between progress and preservation. He enjoys the challenge of guiding economic development in a way that respects and protects the natural beauty of Westmoreland County. He's felt fortunate to work alongside District staff. In John's words, District staff "truly care, are motivated, and work with, not against you," and he's been grateful for the way they help projects succeed while still protecting the environment.



Accepting registrations and donations with fellow volunteer Liz Hawk during a Westmoreland County Parks and Recreation March for Parks fund



Stopping at the Twin Lakes Park waterfall to chat with a photographer while walking with law firm partner Barbara Christner.

Though he's not one to seek recognition, John has played an essential role in supporting numerous nonprofit organizations over the years. He was a key figure in helping the Westmoreland Land Trust achieve its nonprofit status, and most recently, he actively provides critical legal support to the Turtle Creek Watershed Association. Thanks to his persistence and skill, a complex, long-standing land acquisition was finalized—clearing the way for the construction of one of Pennsylvania's largest mine drainage treatment systems.

He's also been active with the Regional Trail Corporation, helping secure easements for trail systems throughout Westmoreland and Allegheny counties, including portions of the Great Allegheny Passage.



The Westmoreland Conservation District's Pedaling for Conservation tour along the Great Allegheny Passage

John's hope for the future is that local governments and the District will continue working hand-in-hand, each contributing their strengths to ensure smart development while preserving the county's natural treasures. He believes that collaboration and understanding are essential to building a better future for the community and environment.

To the District, John has not only been a trusted advisor but a true friend of conservation—generously offering his time, insight, and legal expertise, often for little or no compensation. His ability to make complex legal language clear and approachable, paired with his kind-hearted nature, has made him an invaluable ally.

We are honored to recognize John Ward as a cherished partner and advocate for conservation.

Westmoreland Conservation District