# Enriching Our Connection to Nature and Community through Conservation Burial

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**Enriching Our Connection to Nature and Community through Conservation Burial**

> "Most of us seek something larger out of death–some promise of an afterlife, some assurance of permanence just when that permanence feels most threatened."
>
> - Kate Sweeney, *Encounters in the Customs of Mourning*

One of the oldest forms of body disposition after death is natural burial, in which an unembalmed body is wrapped in a shroud or placed within a simple wooden container and buried in the ground. This paper and its accompanying video (Appendix A) focuses on one type of natural burial ground in the United States: the conservation cemetery. In a conservation cemetery, natural burial takes place on land that is legally protected, sustainably managed, and undergoing ecological restoration (Green Burial Council [GBC], 2019). In most cases, they serve as parks that are open to the public for leisurely activities, gatherings, and ceremonies (Hoffner, 2022). Conventional burial, on the other hand, is burial in which the body is usually chemically preserved with embalming fluid, fully clothed, placed in an expensive metal and hard wood container, and buried in a deep grave lined with another container, called a vault (Harris, 2007). This type of burial usually takes place in either a lawn park cemetery or a garden cemetery. But these cemeteries and the funeral practices they support are becoming increasingly environmentally unsustainable and their origins are arguably steeped in privilege and status (Coutts et al., 2018). Burial in a conservation cemetery is attracting more and more funeral consumers who wish to forgo conventional burial practices for a method of disposition that better reflects their values and lifestyle (Stock & Dennis, 2023).

In this paper, I begin with a historical overview of conventional burial practices followed by an explanation of how conservation burial fits into the realm of natural burial. Then I will discuss legal considerations and opposing viewpoints of conservation burial. Finally, I will describe three conservation cemeteries in the Southeastern United States which I visited in early 2023 as part of this project. Based on the visits and this discussion, I have created a video (Appendix A) which focuses on the features of conservation cemeteries that I argue are most important: attainment of and adherence

to certification standards; a much lighter grave density than a conventional cemetery, which makes the site more similar in appearance to a park than a burial ground; each cemetery is unique but all are community-focused; and, funerals that take place within them are profound and meaningful.

Ultimately, I do not, with this project, argue that conservation burial is right for every family. Funeral decisions are extremely personal, and there are many traditions, values, and beliefs that factor into them. My interest lies in sharing information about one option that not only protects land for future generations, but also has the potential to be an equitable space where all are welcome to connect with nature and each other, in life and in death.

**The Evolution of Conventional Burial Practices**

Before the Civil War, the act of caring for the dead in the United States mostly took place in the home by women, and natural burial took place very soon after death (Kelly, 2012; Mitsuko Marsh, 2021). Embalming, the practice of replacing bodily fluids with chemicals in order to temporarily preserve a body, took root in America in the late 1860s after it was famously used to get about 40,000 fallen Civil War soldiers home to their families–if they could pre-pay around $100 for this service (Fitzharris, 2016). This cost meant that many Black, immigrant, and indigent soldiers' bodies were unembalmed and buried near their place of death instead of being returned to their families (Milloway, 2022). This early embalming fluid contained mostly arsenic and the graves of Civil War soldiers still impact water quality and human health today (Bloudoff-Indelicato, 2015). Although arsenic was banned from use for embalming by around 1900, today's embalming fluid is still made up of toxic chemicals (Bloudoff-Indelicato, 2015); it is usually a mixture of glutaraldehyde and formaldehyde but can also contain methanol or benzene (Callahan, 2022). These chemicals and other materials buried with our dead impact the quality of the soil and underground waters (Żychowski, 2012).

According to Kelly (2012), seeing the enormous earning potential in embalming and death care, mortuary & undertaker services became more formalized by the late 19th century. States began to require a license to practice embalming, and this resulted in a male-dominated profession that largely took death care out of the home and away from families. The use of funeral homes and funeral parlors became quite popular, at

first mostly among wealthy families in increasingly urban areas. While preservation for transport was no longer as necessary, undertakers pushed the idea that embalming was a sanitary measure and a hygienic precaution, even though there is no scientific basis for this sales tactic (Kelly, 2012).

Conventional funerary and burial customs can distance humans from death, a normal component of life that we all share in common. Over time, the dead human body seemed to have become something that needed to be isolated and professionally treated and managed (Kelly, 2012). This is illustrated by the fact that the process of embalming and preparation of the body happens behind closed doors, out of view of the family. To prepare for the burial, cemeterians pre-dig graves using machines and often cover the open grave with material during the graveside service. The act of “closing” the grave is only ceremonial, often just a shovelful or a shake of dry dirt from a handheld container (Harris, 2007; Kelly, 2012). In addition to embalming, undertakers also began to offer vaults as a burial option, and these containers-within-containers were billed as a way to thwart graverobbers and again, erroneously, to keep the living safe from contamination (Kelly, 2012; Sweeney, 2014). Today, many cemeteries have policies that require the use of vaults because they help keep the ground even and thus makes the lawn easier to mow and maintain. However, there have never been any laws that require embalming or the use of vaults (Sweeney, 2014).

Garden and lawn park cemeteries began to appear outside of American cities in the 19th century, promising affluent urbanites space to honor their loved ones while monuments demonstrated their family’s wealth and status (Coutts et al., 2018). These cemeteries grew alongside the modern funeral industry and were often filled with people from the same race, social class, and religion because of segregation laws or ideals, the cost of funeral services, and faith traditions and customs (Kelly, 2012). Conventional garden and lawn park cemeteries typically have three key features: a monoculture lawn, a variety of monuments to the dead, and a below-ground concrete or metal vault (Coutts et al., 2018). Here there is a de-emphasis on plant biodiversity in favor of a focus on ease of maintenance and maximizing the number of burials. These cemeteries and the practices they support are becoming “increasingly unsustainable, economically and ecologically” (Coutts et al., 2018, p. 131).

**The Natural Death Movement & Conservation Cemeteries**

Today, natural burial is often viewed as an extension of one's lifestyle in death (Stock & Dennis, 2023) and one way to reduce the negative impact of final disposition while providing greenspaces for the living (Coutts et al., 2018). A resurgence of natural burial practices took off nearly three decades ago, first by Nicholas Albery and Josefine Speyer in the United Kingdom in the early 1990s, and then by Billy and Kimberley Campbell in South Carolina in 1998 (Freehill-Maye & Pantuso, 2019; Sloane, 2018). In April 2015, there were 109 natural cemeteries in the United States, and as of this writing in May 2023, that number has grown to 355 (Webster, 2023). The natural death movement rejects chemical embalming, the use of fossil fuels for cremation, and nonbiodegradable burial materials, and it embraces a return to a minimalist, more economical approach to burial and other methods of body disposal (Stock & Dennis, 2023). Indeed, funerals have become one of the biggest expenses of our lives and are purchases we do not have a lot of experience making (Kopp & Kemp, 2007). Surprisingly, economic considerations are not at the top of the list of reasons for choosing natural burial (Harra, 2022). Harra (2022) writes: "The goals of the movement encompass broader ideas such as land conservation, fair trade, worker safety, carbon emissions reduction, and habitat conservation" (p. 224).

The Green Burial Council (GBC) is the only organization in the United States that sets standards for certification of natural burial sites. There are three tiers of certification: hybrid, natural, and conservation burial grounds (Green Burial Council [GBC], 2019). Hybrid cemeteries are typically part of existing conventional cemeteries that offer a natural burial option, and these are the standards they must follow: they must permit families to participate in the burial if they desire; only unembalmed bodies or those embalmed with non-toxic chemicals are accepted; no vault will be used; containers and shrouds must be made of biodegradable materials; there is a clearly developed maintenance plan in place; and finally, at least 10% of all plot sales are set aside to establish an endowment fund to ensure ongoing maintenance (GBC, 2019).

Natural burial grounds are the second type of cemetery certified by GBC. Natural burial grounds must follow all hybrid standards and, in addition, they are also required to complete an Ecological Impact Assessment of their site. The results of the report inform

where burials will have the lowest impact on water and soil health, biodiversity, and wildlife habitats. These cemeteries must also limit the size and type of monuments and limit burial density to fewer than 500 burials per acre (GBC, 2019).

The third type of GBC-certified cemetery and the focus of this report is the conservation cemetery. As of this writing, there are only 10 GBC-certified conservation burial grounds in the United States and another 11 that are not, or not yet, certified (GBC, 2023). Conservation burial is the burial of an unembalmed body in a biodegradable container on land that not only has an easement in place to protect it in perpetuity, but also undergoes active restoration (GBC, 2019). Burials that take place on conservation burial grounds must adhere to several standards and protocols so as not to damage ecosystems. In addition to all of the standards listed for hybrid and natural burial grounds, they are required to partner with a government agency or nonprofit organization to conserve, restore, and preserve the land by deed restriction or an easement that is legally enforceable forever (GBC, 2019). A conservation easement is defined as “a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits the use of the land in order to protect its conservation values” and this applies to the current and all future owners of the land (Land Trust Alliance, 2023).

One distinct feature of a conservation cemetery is the lack of standing monuments. Some conservation cemeteries do not allow any type of monument, while others allow flat stones, flush with the ground; others allow a native planting that serves as a grave marker (Hoffner, 2022). This means that monuments in conservation cemeteries not only blend into the natural landscape, but they may also serve as a social equalizer. Here, your wealth or status in life is not reflected in the landscape. In this way, equality, being something many people do not get to experience in life, suddenly becomes possible in death (Feagan, 2007; Clayden & Dixon, 2007).

As mentioned earlier, conventional burial practices and rituals largely conceal the inevitability of decomposition so humans do not associate human burial with ecological processes (Feagan, 2007). Kelly (2012) argues that “the dead body matters to nature in a similar way that, for instance, food waste matters to nature” (p. 38). In natural burial, the body breaks down and nourishes the soil, and the act of decomposition contributes

to other life. This idea of humans incorporated with nature becomes undeniable when one is at a natural burial ground staring into an open, shallow grave lined with a welcoming nest of leaves, flowers, and pine needles.

The emotional profoundness of natural burial rituals is a theme that appears throughout the literature (Sweeney, 2014; Freehill-Maye & Pantuso, 2019; Milloway, 2022; Stock & Dennis, 2023; Harra, 2022) and came up in conversation at each cemetery site I visited. Conservation burial gives people the opportunity to be of service to their beloved one last time. They can shroud their loved one's body in a material that is meaningful to them. If a container is used, children and friends can decorate it with nontoxic paints or markers. The bottom of the hand-dug grave can be layered with flowers to soften their beloved's body landing to its final position. Families can help lower their loved one into the grave and they can participate in the act of filling the grave themselves, one shovelful at a time. Afterward, they can decorate their loved one's grave with leaves, boughs, grass, or other native vegetation. All of this can take place in concert with other funeral customs or rituals that are meaningful to the family.

Visiting a conservation cemetery, which does not resemble a conventional cemetery at all, is a way to improve human health and nature connectedness (Holden & McDonald-Madden, 2018). Lee Webster (n.d.) explains that:

> Conservation cemeteries are a vehicle for transformative experiences that include direct participation before and during a funeral, and ongoing opportunities for engagement through life-affirming activities such as bird-watching, hiking, weddings, baptisms, family picnic days, community educational events, and much more.

The idea of cemeteries as urban green spaces where gatherings and recreation can take place is not new. Burial sites, whether run by a municipality or by the private sector are widely accepted as public places that serve the community (Rugg, 2000). However, their incorporation into urban planning as green spaces that provide ecosystem services is not widely recognized (Quinton & Duinker, 2018; Nordh & Evensen, 2018). Perhaps the impact of conservation and other natural cemeteries in the United States will change that. Green spaces that also serve as cemeteries should be included in the urban

planning process because they benefit the community and the surrounding environment while providing a sustainable way to dispose of the dead.

**Legal Considerations & Criticism**

There is not yet a lot of research on the actual impact of conventional burial on the environment because it has not been occurring long enough for scholarship to develop. Keijzer (2017) concludes that the impact of burial and cremation on the environment is actually quite low compared to other activities during a lifetime. Other scholars challenge the cultural impact of conservation cemeteries. Sloane (2018) argues that conservation cemeteries "challenge virtually every element of the conventional cemetery" (p. 50) and that the absence of personalized monuments or decorations can give the impression that "art does not belong in nature" (p. 50). However, natural burial researcher and author Ann Hoffner argues that funeral rituals and ceremonies do not have to change, they are just being reimagined in an environmentally friendly way (Harra, 2022).

The contemporary death care system generates about $19 billion annually, and nearly 60% of that comes from pre-burial preparation and casket sales (First Research, 2023). While acceptance of natural burial by mainstream funeral directors has been slow (Sweeney, 2014), it stands to reason that the industry will find ways to make natural burial options more extravagant and lucrative in order to balance out the loss of embalming or casket sales due to customers who wish to "go green." The GBC (2022) warns that the rising popularity of natural burial may result in "greenwashing," which is defined as the unsubstantiated claim that a product or service is environmentally friendly. Already there are embalming products in the market advertised as "nontoxic" (Champion, 2023) and hybrid cemeteries can be seen as an option just tacked on to an existing conventional cemetery to appeal to a wider customer base (H. Hannapel, personal communication, March 3, 2023).

There is also the potential that historically excluded communities with established death care practices can be further oppressed or pressured to change. Transforming death care to a system that only includes ecologically sustainable practices could deny people the opportunity to care for the dead in a way congruent to their traditions and values. This could lead to unintended social justice issues (Shelvock et al., 2022).

Space concerns are still valid concerns since burial density is enforced in conservation cemeteries just like in other cemeteries. And while recycling graves after several decades is legal and practiced in other parts of the world, current legislation prohibits the recycling of graves in the United States (Shelvock et al., 2022). One might question how conservation burial grounds can be sustainable as cemeteries if burial density is enforced and graves are not recycled.

**Site Visits**

This project highlights three conservation cemeteries in the Southeastern United States which I visited between February 28 - March 3, 2023. I selected these cemeteries because they were within easy driving distance of each other and are in an area of the country that shares similarities with where I live in the Midwest, namely a lot of rural area, politically conservative ideals, and concentrated areas of urban development. All three cemeteries are operating as nonprofit organizations as most conservation cemeteries seem to be (Hoffner, 2022) and each are founding members of the Conservation Burial Alliance, a non-profit organization that provides education and resources to the public and its members (Conservation Burial Alliance, n.d.).

***Larkspur Conservation at Taylor Hollow, Westmoreland, Tennessee***

The vision for Larkspur began when a small group of people with various backgrounds and interests came together with a desire to create a park for natural burial that would protect land, provide people with a meaningful burial experience, and be a green space for visitors to enjoy (Larkspur Conservation, 2021a). Inaugural Executive Director John Christian Phifer began his career in the conventional funeral industry, but he yearned for a different, better funeral experience for his community, and he found it in Larkspur (Pahl, 2020). In 2014, the non-profit was chartered, and in 2017, a 112-acre parcel adjacent to Taylor Hollow State Natural Area was purchased from a private owner. In 2018, the land was placed under the protection of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and opened to the public (Larkspur Conservation, 2021a). While conservation cemetery status is a future goal, Larkspur has not yet been officially certified by GBC (J. C. Phifer, personal communication, March 22, 2023).

Larkspur Conservation’s site is made up of mixed-mesophytic forest, a cedar glade, meadow and prairie. Dotted with springs in the hollows and hills which feed into a

larger creek that lines the road adjacent to the property, the park sits on what was once a natural shoreline and it is not uncommon to happen upon fossils of coral and crinoids (J. C. Phifer, personal communication, February 28, 2023). Wildlife at Larkspur include white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), bobcats (*Lynx rufus*), Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterflies (*Papilio glaucus*), as well as many bird species, including red-tailed hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*), and cerulean warblers (*Setophaga cerulea*). Taylor Hollow is host to 380 plant species including threatened species such as the Michigan Lily (*Lilium michiganense*) and the Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*), and endangered species such as the Blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia verna*) and the Ozark Least Trillium (*Trillium pusillum* var. *ozarkanum)* (TNC, 2023). There are several active restoration projects in progress at Larkspur. Examples include: thinning the forest of larger, dominating trees and replacing them with more diverse species; prescribed fires of the cedar glade to encourage the growth of ground-cover plants; and, the removal of invasive grasses from the meadows and prairies (Larkspur Conservation, 2021c).

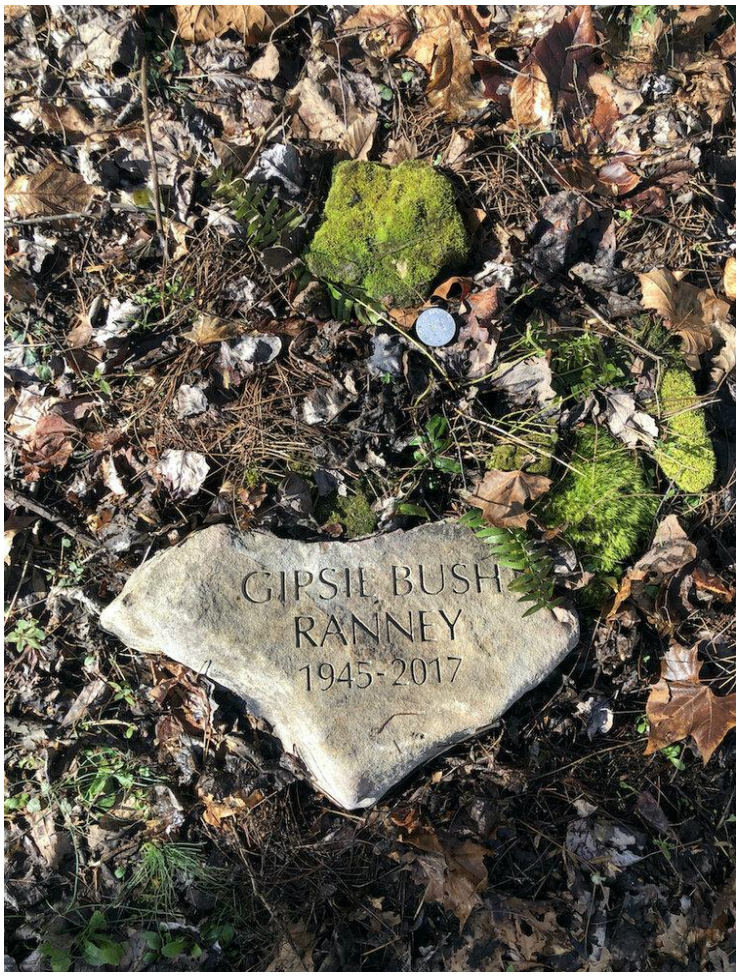
Each grave at Larkspur is physically marked by a simple metal pin. If the family wants a stone, Larkspur chooses a native stone and limits the inscription to the person's name, birth year, and death year (Figure 1). All stones are flush with the ground. Graves can also be located by GPS. The Larkspur website has a list of names as well as a search function which leads to a page with information about the deceased individual and a map that guides visitors to the grave site via their smartphones. As of now, the graves are confined to a few select areas. This way, the sites are easier to maintain, for instance, when tree limbs fall (J. C. Phifer, personal communication, February 28, 2023). There are well-maintained walking paths throughout the site and visitors can pick up a trail map at the wayfinding sign near the parking area (Figure 2.)

Current burial prices are $4000 for whole body natural burial and $2000 for burial of cremated remains, which are treated with a neutralizing agent before burial. These prices include perpetual maintenance and land conservation fees. Larkspur also offers for sale shrouds and the option to choose a live memorial planting of a native species (Larkspur Conservation, 2021d). The staff at Larkspur visit funeral homes hired by the families they serve in order to provide education on how to care for bodies that will be

interred at Larkspur, including how to shroud the body. Since opening in 2018, over 173 burials have occurred, and the land is used as a nature preserve by neighbors, nature photographers, wildflower enthusiasts, dog walkers, birdwatchers, hikers, and families of individuals buried there (J. C. Phifer, personal communication, February 28, 2023). Companion animals may be buried at Larkspur but only if they are connected to a human who is, or will be, buried there. Whereas the adjacent Taylor Hollow State Natural Area is only available to use with advance permission (The Nature Conservancy [TNC], 2023), Larkspur is open from dawn to dusk every day of the year (Larkspur Conservation, 2021b).

**Figure 1**

*Pin Marker and Stone at Larkspur Conservation*




*Note.* Photo of standard pin marker, and a native stone with inscription. Photo by J.C. Phifer.

**Figure 2**

*Welcome Sign at Larkspur Conservation*


*Note*. Wayfinding welcome sign which includes a guest book, map, and information about the natural features of the site. Photo by J.C. Phifer.

***Carolina Memorial Sanctuary, Mills River, North Carolina***

Carolina Memorial Sanctuary (CMS) was founded in 2016 by Caroline Yongue, a death educator and director of the Center for End of Life Transitions (CMS, n.d.a). It is a project of Anattasati Magga, a non-profit Buddhist community in nearby Asheville, North Carolina, and the conservation easement is held by Conserving Carolina (Conserving Carolina, n.d.). CMS is just over 11-acres and has had the most burials of the three sites visited with over 200 whole body burials since its inception (E. Willey, personal communication, March 1, 2023). It is one of the 10 GBC-certified conservation cemeteries in the United States (GBC, 2023).

There are four main habitats on the property: woodlands, wetland overlook, meadow, and creekside. One major restoration project was the wetland restoration. Unbeknownst to CMS when they acquired the land, part of the property was made up of wetlands that had been covered for many years so farm animals could graze. Since

state law dictates that whole body burials must take place a minimum of 100 feet from a water source, the discovery of the wetlands meant less land for burials; however, CMS's commitment to the restoration of the wetland has resulted in an increase in biodiversity of plants and wildlife which has proven to be extremely beneficial to the ecosystem (E. Willey, personal communication, March 1, 2023). Other restoration projects include invasive species removal, streambed stabilization, a designated pollinator area, and nest boxes which support small bird populations. Native animal species include: spring peeper chorus frogs (*Pseudacris crucifer*), snapping turtles (*Chelydra serpentina*), and red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), and birds like the belted kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*), great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*), and the red-bellied woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*). Prominent plant species include blue flag (*Iris versicolor*), tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), crane-fly orchid (*Tipularia discolor*). The sections of the grounds are named after various species of plants and wildlife (Figure 3).

The cost for whole body natural burial at CMS is $3,500-4,500 and $1,850-2,050 for burial of cremated remains depending on which habitat is chosen (CMS, 2023). CMS not only allows animal companions to be buried on the site, but there is a special Pet Memorial Garden for this purpose. Animal companions can also be buried in a family plot near their humans. Each grave or future grave is marked by GPS and with a metal pin, and while memorial stones are included in the burial fee, engraving is not included. All stones are native to Appalachia, fit within certain size parameters, and are flush with the ground (Figure 4; W. Bahr, personal communication, March 1, 2023). Many people visit the site to walk their dogs, birdwatch, hike, and otherwise commune with nature, and in addition to funerals, the space is available for wedding ceremonies or other celebrations (CMS, n.d.b).

**Figure 3**

*Dragonfly Sign*


*Note*. Sections of Carolina Memorial Sanctuary are named after various species of native plants and animals. Photo by Gina Sheridan.

**Figure 4**

*Native Stone Options*


*Note*. The memorial stone “gallery” at Carolina Memorial Sanctuary. Photo by Gina Sheridan.

***Bluestem Conservation Cemetery, Cedar Grove, North Carolina***

Bluestem is an 87-acre site about a half hour north of Durham, North Carolina that was founded by two conservation specialists, Heidi Hannapel and Jeff Masten. Both co-founders had previously taken on the role of care partner to dying loved ones, experiences that shaped their lives, careers, and thinking. Together they visited conservation cemeteries around the country before establishing Bluestem as a way to "[think] about the land in a generous and loving way, just like we treat the families we serve" (H. Hannapel, personal communication, March 3, 2023). They began developing their ideas for Bluestem seven years before the land was identified and purchased, and nearly eight years before it opened to the public as a nature preserve and burial site in 2022. This time was spent fundraising, scouting and procuring land, conducting an ecological assessment on the selected site, infrastructure development, community outreach, the creation of a maintenance schedule, volunteer recruitment and management, and much more. The conservation easement is co-held by the Triangle Land Conservancy and the Eno River Association (Callahan, 2022).

At Bluestem, half of the land is forest and half is made up of fields that were previously used to grow tobacco, corn, and soybeans (Callahan, 2022). There are pockets of community spaces within the woodland area which are free of graves and are used for quiet contemplation, walking, rituals, and small gatherings. The web of walking paths are intentionally laid out so that those gathering for funerals can have their space, while also giving visitors on the periphery the opportunity to be amid the sights and sounds of nature, and also a witness to the sanctity of death.

There are nine fields on either side of a wide walking path, and it is in these fields that most of the burials take place. Restoration projects at Bluestem include returning former agricultural fields to native grasslands by plantings and prescribed fires, creating a system of stormwater management and erosion prevention, restoring forest habitats, and installing water-quality buffers (Bluestem, 2023). Much of the work is being done with the help of an impressive cast of volunteers, 90 people who support the cemetery in a variety of ways (H. Hannapel, personal communication, March 3, 2023). This author observed the camaraderie of the volunteers present during the site visit; as they finished up work for the day, they expressed pride about what they had accomplished, and they

also reminisced about a special gathering for volunteers which they had recently attended.

Whole body burial at Bluestem is $5,200 and burial of cremated remains is $2,200, both of which include opening and closing the grave, perpetual care and land conservation fees, and a grave marker (Bluestem, 2022). There have been at least 11 burials to date and they have a pre-need waiting list that is two months long. They plan to offer burial for companion animals in the future. Being the newest of the three cemeteries visited for this project, Bluestem has not yet been certified by GBC, although it is a future goal. Flat flush stones are allowed as grave markers, however, there is a focus on communal memorialization rather than individual memorialization. In other words, the place itself *is* the memorial, it is a sanctuary shared by all (J. Masten, personal communication, March 3, 2023).

**Figure 5**

*Bluestem Sign*


*Note*. The welcome sign highlights Bluestem's main restoration project. Photo by Gina Sheridan.

**Figure 6**

*Recent Grave*

*Note*. A recent woodland grave at Bluestem. Video still by Travis Sheridan.

## Conclusion

Funeral choices and details are extremely personal decisions people make for themselves and their loved ones, often during a time of emotional upheaval and distress. I do not, with this paper, argue that natural or conservation burial is right for every family, but it is an option that is not yet mainstream and may still be unknown to many people. My interest lies in empowering funeral consumers with information so they can make the most informed decision for themselves. There are many paths forward for natural burial and no one-size fits all. In addition, there is still room for much more scholarship on the social aspects of conservation cemeteries and other natural burial grounds, and much-needed research on the environmental impact of various types of burial.

This project has allowed me the opportunity to make connections with conservation burial professionals and to create a video (Appendix A) which focuses on the most important features of conservation cemeteries: attainment of and adherence to certification standards, graves that blend into the landscape, a community-first philosophy, and the ideal environment for a powerful and heartfelt funeral ceremony. Each conservation cemetery highlighted in this project has its own origin story,

champions, challenges, design features, and management which all shape a visitor's perceptions and experience. Though each site is unique, they share the same goals with other conservation burial grounds: they combine the principles of land conservation with natural burial in order to fund the preservation of land for future generations, and in doing so, they provide a beautiful place for people to commune with nature and each other.

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## Appendix


Six Things to Know About Conservation Burial

https://youtu.be/Zjo74NYqJIY