

LAMBERT FOUNDATION PARCEL

57 acres in Fauquier County

VOF closed the sale of the Lambert parcel on August 11th with recordation of a deed of conveyance followed by a deed of amendment to open space easement on the 57 acre parcel in Fauquier County.

The net proceeds of \$1,785,297.14 (after closing costs) are dedicated to support work at the nearby Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve. The parcel was gifted to VOF in August 2021 from the Gerard B. Lambert Foundation and the Board of Trustees authorized the sale of the property subject to enhanced perpetual deed restrictions designed to protect the specific conservation values, as well as use of the proceeds.



BULL RUN MOUNTAINS NATURAL AREA PRESERVE

2,350 acres in Prince William and Fauquier Counties

Chesapeake Gateways Grant Awarded

VOF was awarded a grant of \$70,000.00 for our application, “Living on the Edge: Uncovering and Sharing the Stories of Bull Run Mountain’s Diversely Peopled Past”, from the National Park Service’s Chesapeake Gateways program. This funding will enable us to contract with structural historians to analyze a homestead site that sits prominently on our trail system but has remained a mystery as to date built and occupants. We will also contract with a forensic genealogist and archaeologist to assist with furthering our understanding of BRMNAP’s diversely peopled past. Finally, we will bring aboard a seasonal fellow to assist in performing outreach to a variety of Prince William County K-12 groups and to sponsor field trips.



Ongoing Stewardship – Trails, Historic cemeteries, and Native Plant Communities

Our new trail system project, developed in collaboration with DCR, has been opening in phases to prepare for a shift in trailheads that will occur concurrently with the improvement to our parking area, as well as add additional value and utility to the communities we serve. Our volunteer Stewardship Committee, a consortium of Potomac Appalachian Trail Club and VOF volunteers have worked alongside our staff and interns to make this season's impact one of the most productive outputs to date. Significant planning and logistics are in place to ensure that our trail system remains operational, open, and safe throughout the overhaul. In addition, historic cemeteries have been cleaned up in anticipation of some exciting new research and hikes, which pairs well with the intense invasive plant removal that has been occurring throughout the Preserve in anticipation of the natural autumnal seeding event.



DCR's Deputy Director of Operations, Frank Stovall, visits the Preserve

VOF staff hosted DCR Director Matthew Wells earlier this year for a hike and adventure down our planned Quarry Trench Trail. On August 16th, DCR-DNH's Regional Supervisor, Mike Lott, returned with DCR's Deputy Director of Operations, Frank Stovall for an afternoon of hiking our new section of trail along fern hollow and visiting a few of our historic homesteads and cemeteries. Frank has a special connection to Virginia history and it was a treat for him to experience the sites we are preserving and sharing with the public at BRMNAP.



Ground Arthropod surveys and Snake Fungal Disease Swabbing: Interns learn field survey techniques

VOF staff, Herpetological Fellow, Lauren Fuchs & former Field Intern, Erica Lyon, took time to train this season's interns, Mia Pretorius and Julio Montenegro, on animal surveying and proper handling techniques employed here at BRMNAP.

Malaise trap, nets, snake hooks, and pitfall trap techniques were covered, with an emphasis on snake handling and swabbing and arthropodal pitfall trap trainings to improve data collection efficacy and efficiency on our ongoing ecological survey projects.



A Season of Community Engagement

VOF offered a robust lineup of events this summer and fall that engage communities at BRMNAP. The list below is representative of the type of activities taking place:

- June 3rd: hosted a local seniors explorers club for a guided hike of our trail system to introduce them to the natural and cultural wonders of BRMNAP.
- June 18th: hosted a cub scouts group to learn about ecology and invasive plants stewardship
- July 1st: held a wineberry-focused workday. Participants assisted in removal of unwanted patches of the invasive plant and took home as many berries as they could forage. Recipes were shared and pies were made.
- July 8th: staff offered a birding hike focused on our North Section of BRMNAP.
- July 14th: welcomed the Prince William Wildflower Society, a chapter of Virginia Native Plant society to a botanizing hike through a few distinct habitat types.
- August 18th: welcomed the public to experience the Preserve at night, blacklighting for insects on our South Section. Large moths, beetles, and mantis flies were among the many insect visitors.
- August 27th: offered a Pokemon Go trail day for young and old gamers to engage with our trail system and challenged them to learn about real world relationships between nature and their favorite game.
- September 15th: welcomed the Northern Virginia Hiking club for a guided hike of our North Section which included a stop at the recently acquired Eastern Overlook parcel.
- September 16th: partnered with Prince William County's Office of Historic Preservation to offer a cemetery hike that gave participants a look into the history of the Bull Run Mountains as well as the science and policies behind researching and stewarding historic resources.
- September 22nd: staff welcome the Old Rag Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists to an insect blacklighting event to experience the science and beauty of nocturnal insects.
- September 23rd: hosting a mushroom hike where mycologists and novices will join us to discover and learn about native fungi.
- October 5th: we welcome long standing partner, Oak Spring Garden Foundation to host their Reading the Landscape course. Participants take a forensic hike through the North Section

to investigate its peopled history through clues left across the landscape that influence its current ecology.

- October 7th: we host our second annual Descendant's Day, welcoming all descendants of the Robinson-Corum family lineages to join us for a day of connecting with their ancestral lands, genealogy, oral histories, and each other!
- October 14th: we hold our 5th annual cemetery night hike where visitors wear headlamps and experience the preserve habitat at night while learning about native nocturnal creatures, macabre folklore, and historic cemeteries.



HAYFIELDS RESERVE on way to become STATE PARK

1,034 acres in Highland County



Timeline:

- December 2017 - VOF received the Hayfields Farm as substitute land from the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, LLC and Dominion Transmission, Inc. to satisfy statutory requirements

associated with the development of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline through nine open-space easements held by VOF in western Virginia.

- 2020 – State budget directive issued instructing VOF and DCR to review suitability of Hayfields Farm as a recreational area for development as a state or regional park.
- 2021 – DCR publishes report identifying Hayfields Farm as suitable for development as a recreation area or a state park.
- 2022 – State budget directive issued instructing VOF to convey the property to DCR no later than June 30, 2023.
- 2023 – VOF conveyed the property to DCR in June along with a deed of open-space easement to permanently protect the property.

HOUSE MOUNTAIN RESERVE

861 acres in Rockbridge County



Reserve Land Acquisition Updates

VOF recently completed a multi-year effort to add to, and further protect, House Mountain Reserve and to enhance stewardship and the visitor experience. Acquisition of a 7.77-acre parcel adjoining Little House Mountain is the final current outstanding real estate transaction. This acquisition has approved funding from a Forest Core Fund grant. We have a verbal agreement as of September 2023 to acquire from the owner and are moving into the final details in hopes of closing this year.



Land Management

VOF staff and contractor mowed the 5-acre House Mtn saddle in June and August. This mowing has occurred bi-annually for the past 3 years and has made the saddle much nicer for day trip hikers and people staying overnight.

VOF staff and volunteer, Brian McCannon, have been trimming back vegetation on the ridgeline section of the Little House Mountain Trail. Over the years mountain laurel and rhododendron have grown into the trail corridor making it hard for visitors to hike the trail. The parking lot entrance culvert for the Reserve has been cleaned out after being filled with debris from heavy summer thunderstorms.



Recent Events

VMI held two significant events this summer on the property: the annual Matriculation Week hike for new cadets and the College Orientation Workshop camp out at House Mtn. These two events comprise some of the highest visitor use days for the Reserve each year.

