

# OWNED LANDS ACTIVITIES REPORT

## Prepared for March 2024 Board Meeting

### BULL RUN MOUNTAINS NATURAL AREA PRESERVE 2,350 acres in Prince William and Fauquier Counties

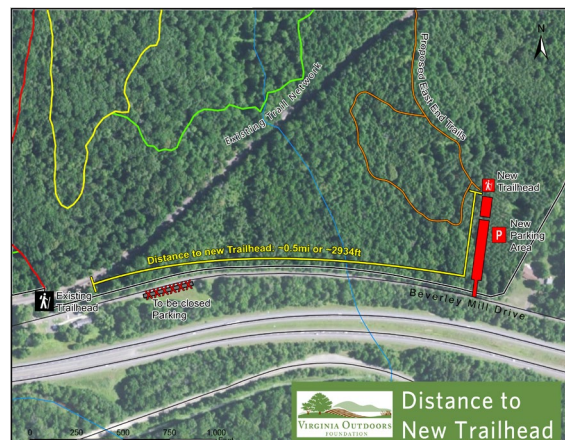
#### National Park Service (NPS) Chesapeake Gateways Grant Activity

As reported last quarter, VOF was awarded a grant of \$70,000.00 by the National Park Service’s Chesapeake Gateways program for our application, “Living on the Edge: Uncovering and Sharing the Stories of Bull Run Mountain’s Diversely Peopled Past”. We are happy to report that archaeological and forensic genealogist contracts have been awarded and the Structural Analysis contract for the log house is out for bid. In addition, our next Black and African-American History (BAAH) fellow, Amber Miller, is in the process of onboarding. The contractors will provide a clearer picture of certain homestead site’s history and occupants through time. Our new fellow will assist in distilling this information into educational outreach materials and work to welcome and engage students from surrounding public schools.



#### Infrastructure Improvements at BRMNAP

BRMNAP is in the process of developing a new parking lot and trailhead, on land that VOF owns (dedicated as open space but not designated as Natural Area Preserve). This 4-acre area that borders Beverly Mill Rd and the Preserve proper was set aside from preserve status for this purpose. These improvements will get our parking off of a VDOT right away and enable staff to be able to secure access behind an automated gate. We anticipate the new parking area will create a much more welcoming user experience, while also providing greater site security.



In conjunction with the new parking lot and trailhead repositioning, the trail system is being updated to provide greater sustainability, and public enjoyment. The parking lot construction project went out for bid and was awarded in early January. Onsite preparations and construction should commence in March. The trail system renovations are ongoing and led by our staff with

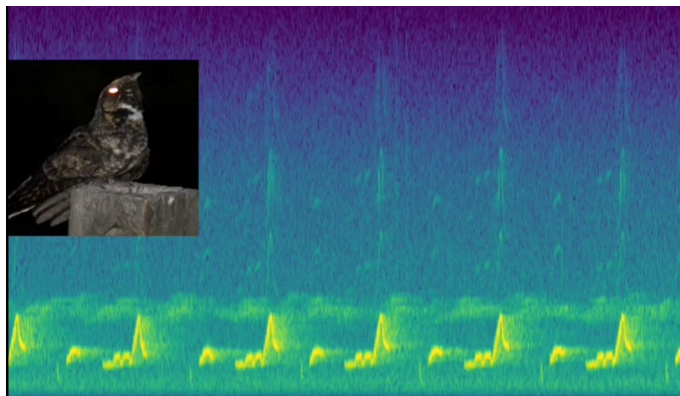
assistance from our volunteer VOF Stewardship Committee, a consortium of Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, and VOF volunteers. Significant planning and logistics are in place to ensure that our trail system remains operational, open, and safe throughout the overhaul.

### **BRMNAP Research Updates**

Staff have been facilitating several research projects with partners that are helping us improve understanding of our Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve (BRMNAP). The information resulting from these efforts will enable us to better steward the preserve, while underscoring the possibilities and wonder that this living laboratory and open-air museum holds.

Notable ongoing projects –

1. Brook trout reintroduction efforts and stream monitoring is being performed by a consortium of K-12 students, led by Trout Unlimited, and supported by other commonwealth advisory agencies and universities (DCR, DWR, GMU).
2. Smithsonian Ornithologist and VOF Research Associate, Jacob Saucier, has recently been utilizing the VOF Research Outpost (located within Jackson Hollow section) as a hub to document some previously undescribed behaviors of a cryptic symbol of truly rural landscapes, the eastern whip-poor-will.
3. Dr. Ben Kligman is a post-doctoral researcher and VOF Research Associate who is currently studying Waterfall formations fossil deposits from the Jurassic-Triassic boundary that tells us what the landscape, flora, and fauna looked like 200 million years ago here in the Bull Run Mountains.
4. George Mason University doctoral candidate and VOF Herpetological Fellow, Lauren Fuchs, is working to finalize her study on the impacts and conservation implications of snake fungal disease within BRMNAP's native snake populations.
5. Four research projects that utilized BRMNAP were presented at two different national and international conferences this year, two at the Society for Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP) and two at the Entomological Society of America (ESA).



## **BRMNAP Outreach Updates**

A season of outreach ahead at VOF's Preserve at Bull Run Mountains:

- There was a big turnout for the recent spotted salamander emergence and migration event, where members of the community came out to gather at one of our vernal pools to experience the rare two-night event where the largest native salamander species comes from under the forest floor to travel to a vernal pool in which to breed.
- A promising trout release season is ahead with many participating trout-in-the-classroom schools (K-12) beginning to schedule their visits to introduce brook trout fry into our mountains' trout bearing stream – Catharpin Creek.
- Conservation Assistants, Deneith Reif and John Lenox, gave an hour presentation at a well-attended speaker series thanks to an invitation from some local partners, the White House Farm Foundation, Leopold's Preserve, and the Bull Run Mountains Conservancy. Showing the intertwined nature of VOF's diverse conservation programs, this invitation came as an indirect result of our VOF Go Grant program.





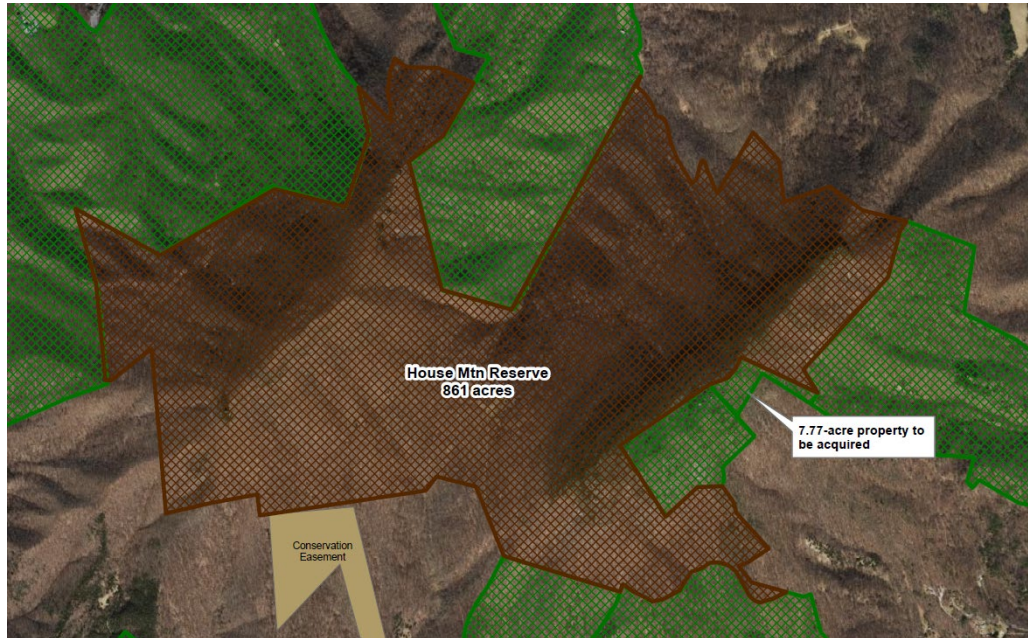
# HOUSE MOUNTAIN RESERVE

869 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. In December of 2023 VOF acquired a 7.77-acre parcel adjoining the Reserve on the west and north with funding from a Forest Core Fund grant. Although small, this parcel is adjacent to the existing Little House Mountain Trail and is an essential addition to the Reserve that enables the trail to remain in its preferred and historic route.



## Land Management

VOF staff and volunteer, Brian McCannon, have continued to clear and maintain the trails through the fall and winter. As of the end of February, the main access road and trails on the property are clear of trees and passible by visitors to the Reserve.

## **HAYFIELDS RESERVE (on its way to become a 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 plans for the development of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.
- 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 finding Hayfields Farm suitable as a future state park.
- 2022 – State budget directive issued instructing VOF to convey the property to DCR no later than June 30, 2023.
- 2023 – VOF conveyed property to DCR in June. Retains deed of open-space easement.
- 2024 – Budget amendment introduced to address the 40-acre parcel owned by VOF.



## **ROCKFISH PROPERTY**

### **86 acres in Nelson County**

This property was acquired as substitute land resulting from a 2017 agreement with the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, LLC to satisfy statutory requirements associated with the proposed development of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline going through nine open space easements held by VOF in the western part of the state. The deed of conveyance to VOF specifies that the property must be permanently protected under the Open Space Land Act. An adjacent parcel to the east, also fronting Rockfish River, was acquired by The Conservation Fund as mitigation and is subject to a VOF open space easement. VOF discussions and negotiations with Nelson County to transfer the property so that it could become a public park were unsuccessful. **Staff recommend that VOF's Board of Trustees consider a resolution (see next page) to authorize the property to be listed and sold with an open-space easement on it to protect its conservation values.** The proposed terms for the open space easement are presented in the Conservation Project section of this board book Central Region. There are no tax benefits associated with this conveyance.





**RESOLUTION**  
**VIRGINIA OUTDOORS FOUNDATION**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES AUTHORIZES SALE OF NELSON COUNTY LAND**

WHEREAS, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) owns a certain parcel of land donated with the requirement that the Property be managed according to the statutory purposes for which VOF was created pursuant to Chapter 525 of the Acts of 1966, Chapter 18, Title 10.1 Sections 10.1-1800 *et seq.* of the Code of Virginia, and that any future conveyance of the Property would assure the protection of the Property as open-space in perpetuity; and

WHEREAS, the parcel is known as the “Rockfish Property,” 86.017 acres of land along the Rockfish River in Nelson County, and was conveyed to VOF as replacement land to satisfy the requirements of Virginia Code Section 10.1-1704 as part of an application by The Atlantic Coast Pipeline, LLC, which planned a gas pipeline route affecting land subject to easements held by VOF; and

WHEREAS, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline was never constructed and the VOF open space easements that were intended to be impacted by the construction of the gas pipeline were never converted from open space; and

WHEREAS, VOF staff approached Nelson County, local and regional outdoors groups, park authorities and state agencies in an effort to transform the property to a public park, recreational river access, or public open space but was unable to secure a partner or potential new owner and manager/operator for the property; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation has other owned lands of high conservation value that are planned for retained ownership and that have management needs that could benefit and be funded in part by proceeds from the sale of the above parcel; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation Board of Trustees this 27th day of March, 2024, that the Executive Director, in consult with the Chair, will list the Rockfish Property with a realtor to be made subject to an open-space easement containing perpetual deed restrictions designed to protect the specific conservation values in perpetuity and may accept an offer for the 86.017 acres on terms and conditions the Executive Director and Chair deem reasonable, the proceeds from the sale to be dedicated to support and benefit work on other properties owned and to be retained by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation minus a 5% recovery of administration costs and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Executive Director is authorized to execute all documents and take all actions necessary on behalf of the Foundation to accomplish such offer, sale, and allocation of proceeds.

ADOPTED by a vote of \_\_\_\_\_ for and \_\_\_\_\_ against

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ATTEST: Brett Christina Glymph, Executive Director



# CAMP BRANCH WETLANDS NATURAL AREA PRESERVE ADDITION

## 56 acres in Floyd County

The VOF Board adopted a resolution to authorize the acquisition of parcels for State Natural Area Preserves on behalf of DCR at their October 2023 meeting. This request for assistance to DCR was driven by the time sensitive nature of each acquisition and funding availability via VLCF grants awarded in December of 2022. These acquisitions expand the Camp Branch Natural Area Preserve and enable the establishment of two new Preserves, in Rockingham and Montgomery Counties. VOF completed the acquisition of 56 acres adjacent to the Camp Branch Natural Area Preserve on December 20, 2023.

