

VIRGINIA OUTDOORS FOUNDATION OWNED LANDS ACTIVITIES REPORT

Prepared for the October 2024 Board Meeting

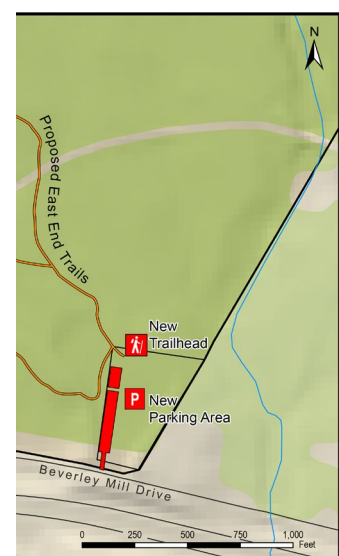
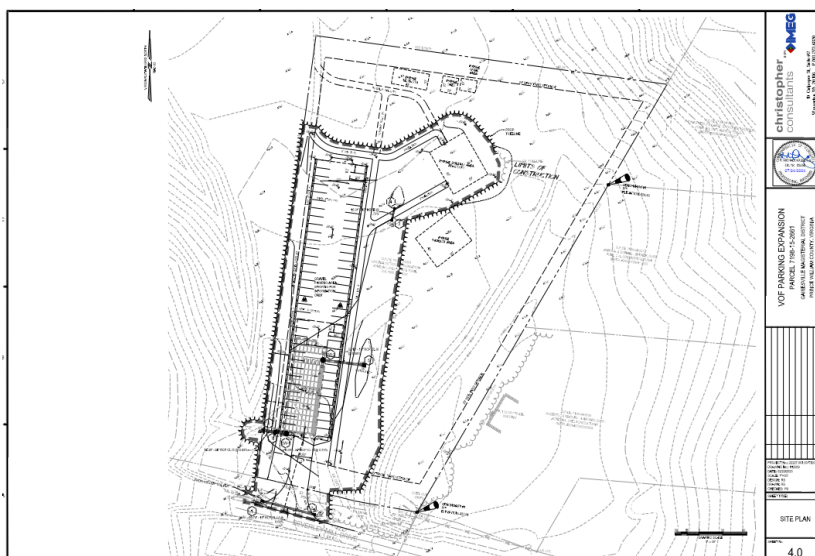
BULL RUN MOUNTAINS NATURAL AREA PRESERVE 2,350 acres in Prince William and Fauquier Counties

Improved Public Access on-the-way at BRMNAP

VOF has been in the process of planning for development of a new parking lot and trailhead at the Bull Run Preserve for over 20 years. This 4-acre area that borders Beverley Mill Road was set aside from preserve status for this purpose, on land that VOF owns (dedicated as permanent open space but not designated as Natural Area Preserve). These improvements will move visitor parking off of a VDOT right of way 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 2024 and we are happy to report that the project now has its final approval by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). On site work and construction is scheduled now to commence March 2025 as the reviews required have pushed us out of this work season based on our contractor's schedule and commitments.

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 and open throughout the overhaul.



DCR Annual Monitoring Visit

As a state-designated Natural Area Preserve, BRMNAP is subject to annual monitoring and inspection to ensure that we as landowners and managers of the property are upholding the restrictive and proactive terms of the designation. Department of Conservation and Recreation's Division of Natural Heritage sent out Regional Supervisor / Northern Region Steward, Michael Lott to perform this event in September to review our boundary line status, invasive species management activities, status of cultural and natural features, and trail standards and infrastructure.



Mr. Lott is in the orange cap, photographed just after inspecting our recent infrastructural improvements. We are pleased to report that VOF had a positive review during this annual monitoring and that DCR is impressed with the land stewardship and public value resulting from the hard work and resources VOF invests in BRMNAP.

Split Rail Fence erected around Robinson-Corum Cemetery

In conjunction with our current trail renovations and cultural history program, visitors might notice split rail fencing begin to surround our cultural history sites. Early inhabitants of the mountain would have used a similar style of split rail fencing, along with stone walls, to mark their property, keep farm animals enclosed, and protect their farmland from unwanted intruders. These rail fences are hand split on site from downed black locust logs and this fence erected around the Robinson-Corum cemetery is extra special as it was done with the involvement, participation, and blessing of descendants and members of the Robinson and Corum families.



NPS Chesapeake Gateways Grant Progress Update

As reported previously, 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 significant progress has occurred this summer and the project is on track for reporting out by year end. The archaeological, historical structural analysis, and genealogical work enabled by this grant has provided a clearer picture of a mystery homestead's site history and occupation through time. While also enabling us to hire a seasonal fellow, Amber Miller, to create educational programming regarding our cultural history for K-12 public schools within Prince William County and the general public.



Outreach Events at BRMNAP

A representative list of this season's outreach events conducted and just ahead at VOF's Preserve at Bull Run Mountains:

- Insect blacklighting survey night: VOF Preserve staff welcomed folks to join our staff to participate in blacklighting for insects, learning about our native insect biodiversity while helping us collect community science data.
- Pokemon Go Day: For young users that may be more comfortable online than outdoors, this event invites fans to get outside to explore the many links between their favorite game and the native creatures that inhabit the Preserve, while playing Pokemon Go on our trail system.
- Ethnobotany and Cultural History hikes: VOF Fellow, Amber Miller, has welcomed folks from special interest groups like the Virginia Master Naturalists, Virginia Native Plant Society, and the general public to come on a journey through the Mountains' history, with a special focus on ethnobotany (how the people here utilized native plants in their daily lives).
- Boy Scout and Eagle Scout training: Local Scout troops have been coming to BRMNAP to learn basic wilderness skills and earn badges by helping with invasive plant pulls and executing trail improvement projects, such as turnpikes and bogwalks.
- Fall mushroom hike: VOF Preserve staff welcome the public out each fall to witness the mycological wonders that emerge following autumn rains. This event is co-led by mycological enthusiast and mayor of Warrenton, Carter Nevill.
- Tuckerman Lichen Workshop: Partnering with The Clifton Institute, New York State Museum, and the Oak Spring Garden Foundation, we are proud to be a field site for the 33rd

Tuckerman Lichen workshop where experts and students alike will gather to learn more about area lichens, including those within BRMNAP.



KOHL'S ISLAND RESERVE

40 acres in Northumberland County

This past July, following the receipt of a United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) grant, Dr. C. Barry Knisley, a Biology professor from Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, VA, contacted VOF for permission to conduct new research on the island's Northeastern Beach Tiger Beetle (NBTB) population. According to researchers, the island's NBTB population has dropped to worrisome levels, however, the direct causes remain unknown. This research project will study NBTB translocation patterns, natural dispersal and colonization and entails placing larvae in the best section of the beach and following them until the following year to assess movements and their ability to provide recruitment.

Island Ecosystem and Species



Kohls Island is one of only five remaining sites of the Northeastern Beach Tiger Beetle, an insect whose historic range stretched from Massachusetts to Virginia. In 1990 the Northeastern Beach Tiger Beetle was placed on the federal list of threatened species. Starting in 2000, Dr. Knisley, a tiger beetle researcher, began conducting surveys of the larval and adult tiger beetle populations on the island and monitoring any potential impact of dredge spoil deposition on tiger beetle habitat.

Kohls Island is one of few remaining intact beach and coastal dune systems on the northern neck.

HOUSE MOUNTAIN RESERVE

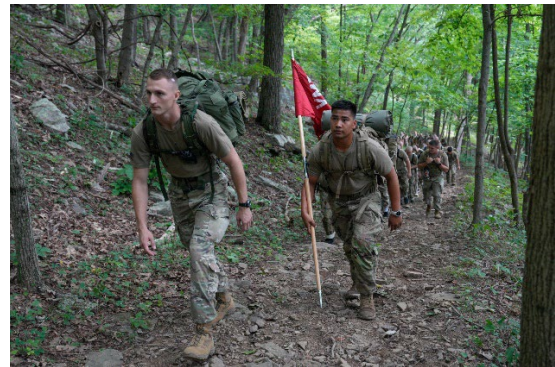
883 acres in Rockbridge County

VOF staff and volunteers continue to maintain the property and the trail system. VOF contributed funds for maintaining the private road (Trail Head Lane), which is the main access point for the property. The planned maintenance projects for this Fall include a second mowing of the saddle meadow, road drainage work, and new, updated signage for the kiosks on the property. The saddle mowing is timed to prepare for peak summer usage and also avoid prime grassland bird nesting season.

The Virginia Military Institute (VMI) had its annual College Orientation Workshop Hike/Camp Out (COW) in August, and the RAT Challenge hike in July. These two long-running yearly events are run by VMI as an essential experience for the new cadets prior to starting their first semester.



Overlook on Big House Mtn



Cadets hiking up the trail on Big House Mtn



COW group camping at the saddle meadow



COW group at the Big House Mtn

ROCKFISH PROPERTY

86 acres in Nelson County

As authorized by the VOF Board of Trustees at the June 13, 2024, meeting the property is ready to be listed and sold with an open-space easement on it to protect its conservation values. The easement itself was approved at the March 27, 2024 meeting. The listing contract has been signed.

The 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. 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 already subject to a VOF open space easement.

UPDATE on VOF LANDS to be transferred to DCR

The adoption of the state's 2024-2026 budget bill included several items regarding the acquisition of lands by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) for planned additions to State Parks and Natural Area Preserves. This budget passage enables the transfers of several parcels held by VOF to proceed and means that conveyances to DCR should be able to be completed by year-end:

- VOF is working on the final due diligence items necessary to enable the transfer of the last parcel (40 acres) of land it owns at Hayfields Farm to DCR to establish a new State Park in Highland County totaling the entire 1,034 acres formerly owned by VOF.
- VOF is also poised to transfer the 56-acre parcel it acquired in December 2023 on behalf of DCR to be added to the Camp Branch Wetlands Natural Area Preserve in Floyd County.