

ABOUT THE VIRGINIA OUTDOORS FOUNDATION



The Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) was created in 1966 by Virginia's legislature "to promote the preservation of open-space lands and to encourage private gifts of money, securities, land or other property to preserve the natural, scenic, historic, scientific, open-space and recreational areas of the Commonwealth." VOF now protects more than 915,000 acres across Virginia.



ABOUT BULL RUN MOUNTAINS NATURAL AREA PRESERVE

The Bull Run Mountains are the eastern-most mountains in Virginia. The Virginia Outdoors Foundation's Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve is approximately 2,350 acres that serves as a living laboratory and open-air museum in the backyard of our nation's capital. The Preserve contains 10 different plant community types and a plethora of regionally uncommon and threatened plant and animal species. In addition to the biodiversity, the Preserve permanently protects dozens of regionally important cultural history sites that tell the story of the land's diversely peopled past. In 2002, this land was dedicated by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation as a Natural Area Preserve to protect the unique ecosystems and cultural resources found here. As the owner and manager of the Preserve, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation is committed to protecting the mountain's significance and sharing it with the public through managed access. The Bull Run Mountains were an early hotbed of scientific activity, and the Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve continues to serve as an important site for scientific research. We have a data-driven approach that is critical for our ability to effectively balance public use with our duty to preserve a healthy, natural ecosystem. With three different sections, the Preserve is an active and dynamic resource, hosting K-12 school groups, university students, and researchers throughout the year.

A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

At the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, we believe that conserving land means creating meaningful opportunities for people to connect with it. At the Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve, we made exciting strides in 2024 to deepen public engagement and protect the region's unique natural and cultural resources. Construction of a long-anticipated parking area and trailhead is moving forward, with final approvals secured and groundbreaking planned for 2025. This project will improve visitor access, enhance site security, and support long-term sustainability of our trail system and invasive plant management program. We also advanced research through a National Park Service Chesapeake Gateways grant initiative, uncovering new insights into the Preserve's diverse cultural history while developing place-based educational programming for local schools. These and other milestones highlighted on the following pages reflect our ongoing commitment to stewardship, accessibility, and community connection. We thank our volunteers, partners, and supporters for making this work possible.



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RESEARCH



Tuckerman Lichen Workshop

This past September, our friends and partners at The Clifton Institute co-hosted the 33rd Tuckerman Lichen Workshop with James Lendemer from the New York State Museum.

Named after the father of North American lichenology, Edward Tuckerman, this workshop brought specialists together to study lichens in Northern Virginia and to help amateur lichenologists and graduate students hone their skills. We were thankful to welcome these experts to explore our quartzite-dominated habitat to look for lichens that specialize in growing on this stone, such as the globally rare Alabama shield lichen that is only found on select vertically sloped quartzite outcroppings throughout the eastern United States.

Whip-poor-will Project

Smithsonian ornithologist and VOF research associate Jacob Saucier is utilizing the Preserve to research whip-poor-will behavior and is providing guidance on habitat enhancements that would better support this rare inhabitant. The photo at right shows when staff from VOF and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Heritage Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve visited the bird collection to learn more about the native species we host at both preserves.





Bull Run Mountains during the Jurassic-Triassic

Research on the Preserve's waterfall formation led by Dr. Ben Kligman (Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History) and Dr. Paul Olsen (Columbia University) is uncovering what life was like 200 million years ago during the Triassic-Jurassic boundary. In these pictures, Dr. Kligman presents Preserve fossils being prepared for study within the Smithsonian's public fossil lab to VOF and VA Department of Conservation and Recreation's Division of Natural Heritage (DCR-DNH) staff.



RESEARCH

Brook Trout Reintroduction

This past year, we reached the eight-year mark of collaboration with Trout Unlimited's Trout-in-the-Classroom program and a consortium of schools on our Catharpin Creek brook trout reintroduction pilot project. This program set out to explore the viability of a self-sustaining brook trout population within the Preserve after a stream metric study showed that this stream may be a viable host. Over the course of these eight years, a total of 22 preschool and K-12 classrooms came out to the Preserve to assist in monitoring stream health, removing invasive plant species, and planting native willows to increase stream shade. They released an impressive 2,924 individual brook trout fry.

After many promising years of catching summer-surviving individuals, VOF staff were worried that recent drought years may have gotten the best of this effort and requested the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) to perform an electrofishing survey of Catharpin Creek to determine survival. Five species of fish were found: fantail darter, rosy-sided dace, black-nosed dace, fall fish, and green sunfish. Unfortunately, no surviving brook trout were found, and it was determined by DWR staff that current stream flow, sediment load, and temperature discourages a naturalized population.

While disappointing, this experiment was a worthy and valiant effort, and we thank all of those who contributed. We still plan to offer stream monitoring and other activities but will be diverting trout releases to streams that could sustain a possible long-term population.



INATURALIST YEAR IN REVIEW





The biodiversity inventorying completed by Virginia DCR-DNH back in the late 1990s defined the Preserve's plant communities and provided insight into the biodiversity that laid the foundation for VOF land holdings to earn their designation as a Natural Area Preserve. Research into our natural communities is ongoing today by our staff, visiting researchers, and a diverse team of community scientists who document their observations by uploading them to iNaturalist. The iNaturalist application enables anyone who visits the Preserve to record their species observations and contribute to the understanding of our biodiversity.

Every year VOF research associate Michael J.W. Carr compiles a year-in-review for the Preserve's iNaturalist project, where he presents statistics and highlights notable observations and contributions. We are excited to share that this past year more than 200 new species were recorded on iNaturalist within the Preserve!

To view the iNaturalist project and read the year-in-review report use the QR code below. We also encourage everyone to use iNaturalist to record there observations, whether within the Preserve or your own backyard.

2024 STATS

- 2.096 Observations
- 939 Research-grade observations
- 910 464 Species recorded
- 59 Observers
- 367 Identifiers

TOP OBSERVERS FOR 2024

- 1. @saucierj
- 2. @izafarr
- 3. @theblokehardforoak
- 4. @w293766628_w
- 5. @jeffdc







Boger Family Reunion at Jackson Hollow

The Jackson Hollow Fishing and Recreation Club once occupied what is now the Jackson Hollow section of the Preserve from the 1950s until Hurricane Agnes flooded the dam of the recreational area's lake in 1972. Without a lake, the recreational offerings ceased and the land eventually became a part of the VOF holding's that make up the Preserve. The facility that once offered local families the chance to recreate now provides outdoor educational experiences to local K-12 students.

On a guided hike last year, we were fortunate to connect with Sandy Harrington, a descendant of the former owners. Sandy then encouraged her uncle, Doug Boger, and others from the Boger family to reconnect with the land they grew up visiting during their childhood summers.

Doug Boger is the son of the former recreational club's owners, David and Margaret Boger, and we were fortunate enough to host his surprise 80th birthday gathering here with four generations of over 20 Boger family members. All gathered in the Outpost, the former Boger house. They shared oral histories, family lore, and photos, and the family explored the familiar landscape that once held the campground, pool, and clubhouse.



Winter Lecture Series

Leopold's Preserve, the White House Farm Foundation, and the Bull Run Mountains Conservancy kindly hosted a winter lecture series where VOF conservation assistants Deneith Reif and John Lenox gave a public presentation on the grassroots conservation work within the Bull Run Mountains through the past, present and future of the Preserve.



Insect Black Lighting Night

We welcomed folks to the North Section of the Preserve on a warm August night to observe and document the many species of nocturnal insects drawn to the ultraviolet black lights that staff set up around the stone house. Highlights this year included the nut and acorn weevil (Genus Curculio) and the eastern hercules beetle (Dynastes tityus).

Descendant's Day and Family Cemetery Fence Construction

VOF hosted the 3rd annual Corum-Robinson Descendant's Day that connects descendants of all ages to their historical home place here within the Bull Run Mountains. The Corum-Robinson matriarchs and patriarchs who remember growing up here shared memories that connected younger generations with their family history.

Every year, new connections are made and the family continues to help enrich our understanding of the Preserve's past. This year, 73-year-old Lonnie "Shy" Robinson was able to return to the family place to share his oral history. He illuminated the family movements in the mountains from his remembrances as a kid. He described orchards, family hunting trips, and denoted the necessity of being a capable problem-solver if one was to live on this land. Poet Wayne David Hubbard, who has written on the Bull Run Mountains as a part of Writing the Land Poetry Project, graciously joined this year to read his poetry in honor of the family event.

Before this year's event, Corum descendants, Kelisia and Isaiah, joined us in stewardship by helping erect a split rail fence around their family cemetery!







Folk Music Fellows, Herb and Hanson

We are pleased to announce that our first artistic fellows, American roots duo Herb and Hanson, are reviving the rich musical history of the Bull Run Mountains. Utilizing traditional songs and folklore that were documented during the 1930s by Works Progress Administration worker Susan Morton, our fellows took time this year to immerse themselves in our mountains' musical traditions, study the folklore, and spend enough time within the hollows to bring this project to life. They are in the studio now and we hope to share their work with the public sometime this upcoming year!



Oak Spring Garden Foundation's Reading the Landscape

The Preserve is honored to host Oak Spring Garden Foundation's "Reading The Landscape" course. Each year their field day practicum at the preserve is an essential part of the week-long workshop led by historical ecologist Michael Gaige. This workshop brings its participants on a multidisciplinary journey of discovery, forensically interpreting "rewilded" natural environments to understand how a landscape was once utilized by people through the many subtle landscape clues left behind.

2nd Annual Pokémon Go Day

With our 2nd annual Pokémon Go Community Day, Preserve staff bridged the gap between the mobile-phone game and the real-world connections Pokémon has to the natural sciences with a scavenger hunt, battle challenges, and prizes to participants. This was an opportunity to connect the younger generation and a different set of visitors to appreciate and connect with the natural world. Many participants this year even dressed up for the occasion!





Leopold's Preserve Fall Festival

In September Leopold's Preserve threw a Fall Festival in partnership with the White House Farm Foundation and the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust providing local environmental organizations a chance to connect with the community. VOF Preserve staff hosted a booth that presented a display of some of our natural and cultural artifacts and provided kids' activities like coloring and matching games.

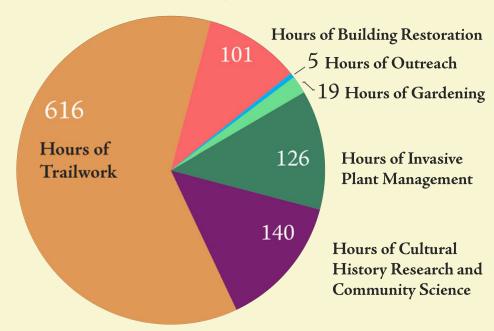


Invasive Wineberry Pick-and-Pull Day

For the second year, VOF invited the public out to collect berries from the Preserve's invasive plant: Rubus phoenicolasius, or wineberry, and take them home to eat fresh, make pies, or turn into jam. This invasive plant management event is one of the few exceptions to the "no foraging" rule at the Preserve. With less competition from invasive plants, native plants such as blackberry brambles can thrive and feed wildlife in their place.

In 2024, 98 Volunteers Contributed 1,007 Hours



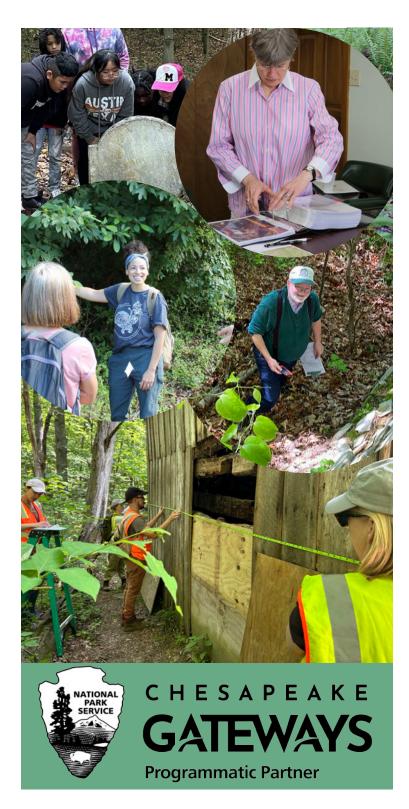


Living on the Edge: Uncovering and Sharing the Stories of Bull Run Mountain's Diversely Peopled Past

The U.S. National Park Service's Chesapeake Gateways Program awarded a \$71,712 grant to the Preserve to enable us to further investigate our mountains' historic communities and share this unique history with local Prince William County public schools and other members of our community.

These funds enabled us to:

- Contract a forensic genealogist to find the earliest Robinson family member to arrive in the Bull Run Mountains and construct an accurate and complete family tree.
- Hire a seasonal fellow to contribute to research and form a narrative and educational activities based around the historical facts uncovered by this research and the process of discovery. We engaged two 4th and 5th grade cohorts from Prince William County public schools both in the classroom and through on-site field trips. In addition, we offered several guided hike opportunities for the general public and interested special interest groups.
- Contract an archeologist and historical archivist to further investigate the African-American post-emancipation "quarry neighborhood" that once existed along Catlett's Branch.
- Contract a team of researchers to perform a historic structural analyses of one of our home sites that has evaded definitive answers as to its history.



Historical Architectural Analysis of Fern Hollow Trail Mystery Structure by Mead and Hunt



The only standing historical structure left on the South Section of the Preserve is along our Fern Hollow (green loop) trail and it has remained a mystery despite attempts to decipher its past.

Thanks to NPS Chesapeake Gateways funding this past year, VOF was able to contract Mead and Hunt (formerly Dovetail Cultural Resource Group) to become the final contributor to our grant team by investigating the mysterious structure that we now know was erroneously linked through local folklore to the Corum family. We

now know that the home site had many inhabitants throughout its life, but whose earliest history most likely attributes its construction to the Chapman family before becoming known as the Bleight house after the 1880s by the folks who lived in the area up until the 1960s.

The Mead and Hunt team was led by primary investigators Adriana Moss and Dr. Kerri Barile Tambs, who shed light on the history of this structure by documenting and analyzing its material components, performing archival research, and pairing those lines of evidence with oral history contributions from Robinson family descendant's Lonnie "Shy" Robinson and Shirley Robinson Harris, who remembered visiting family members who once lived there when they were children.

Forensic Genealogical Contractor, Phyllis Scott

Genealogy is the process of revealing an individual's familial history by building out a family tree and backing those assertions by referencing historic documents such as census data, slave inventories, land records, deeds, and wills. Phyllis Scott is a local forensic genealogist that specializes in creating family trees that are as accurate as possible and legally defensible. Due to the history of enslavement in Virginia and the lack of documentation in records before the 20th century, discovering the history of early African-American families presents descendants and interested researchers with a notable challenge.



Despite these challenges, we are pleased to share that Phyllis successfully traced the origins of the original Robinson family patriarch, Alfred Robinson. Tracing him from his youth through early enslavement records that placed him under the ownership of the Thompson family within the small town of Somerville in southern Fauquier County, to an eventual transfer to his enslavement on property located in the surrounding environments of the Bull Run Mountains, possibly rotating between Smith family farms within the historic communities of Bethel, Blenheim, and Chelsea. After his emancipation in 1863, Mr. Robinson stayed on as a paid laborer for the family that once enslaved him before arriving here in the Bull Run Mountains to establish his homestead around the turn of the 20th century and live out the rest of his life as a free man.

Archeological and Archival Contractor, Patrick O'Neill

Selected as our Archeological and Archival Research Contractor, Patrick O'Neill helped our staff learn more about the rich history of an area of the Preserve that once hosted a post-emancipation African-American "Quarry Neighborhood" that popped up along Catlett's Branch after the American Civil War.

Patrick serves as the president of the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Archeological Society of Virginia (ASV) and began contributing to our



collective understanding of western Prince William County when he first assisted the Turn the Mill Around Foundation with their investigation of the Chapman Mill and surrounding parcels over 15 years ago.

Patrick then joined us at BRMNAP in 2018 as a volunteer by leading an ASV volunteer team to pair his unique land patent research with an on-the-ground surface mapping effort that helped tease out the history of the South Section's cemetery complex along the eastern portion of our green trail.



Cultural History Fellow, Amber Miller

Rounding out the grant team, interdisciplinary researcher and VOF Fellow Amber Miller filled in our understanding of the Preserve's cultural features by pairing them with an ethnobotanical lens that detailed how people historically lived off the land, while also enabling Prince William County elementary students to experience an educational program created around these discoveries and our research process.

Amber did so by developing an educational program that had stations along the trail with activities that taught students about the cultural history of the Bull Run Mountains, how to identify native plant species, and about their traditional uses. She also gave an introduction to the study of folklore and a field primer that allowed students to perform their own archeological study of a historical home site. With the support of VOF staff, Amber ran these educational stations along the trail system over two weeks, sharing this Preserve and teaching a combined 227 students from Chris Yung and Buckland Mills elementary schools.

In addition to these field trips, Amber offered a series of guided hikes to local special interest groups (such as local chapters of the Virginia Master Naturalist program and Virginia Native Plant Society) and to members of our local community.

VOF's Preserve is Granted a Garden

The Fauquier and Loudoun Garden Club graciously awarded VOF with a \$5,000 grant to install a biocultural and pollinator garden around the North Section's Stone House. This garden space and improved meadow now holds over 500 total native plants representing 49 different species that are important for pollinators, such as short-toothed mountain mint and golden alexanders. The utility of this installation quickly became self-evident with an abundance of pollinators inspecting our work and feeding from these fresh blooms!



The biocultural aspect of this project was preserving heirloom apple and pear trees that were remnants from historic fruit orchards. These historic survivors now have some biosecurity with the grafting of scion samples from the historic trees onto fresh rootstock and planted around the Stone House. We are very grateful to our funders at the Fauquier and Loudoun Garden Club and the five volunteers who helped us with the installation of this feature.

Homestead Stabilization Project: Down's Cabin

The Bull Run Mountains contain storied remnants of old homesteads in various conditions. This past year we kicked off our Cultural History Stabilization project that was modeled after Historicorp's program following a visit from one of their staff, Ian Osborne.

Our Deputy Director, Leslie Grayson, selected the Downs' cabin, a still-standing 19th century home with hand hewn beams and a stone foundation, for the pilot project. Then VOF staff along with a team of volunteers (Pat McIlvaine, Redmond Manierre, Alex Green, and Xavi Barreda) added collar ties to the rafters, diagonal bracing to the walls, and improvements to the foundation and entry steps.



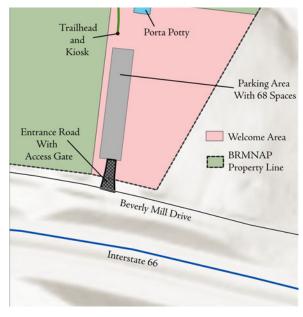
Finally, brush was removed from around the base of the building to reduce the risk of fire. Though most structures are beyond the ability to enable full historic renovations, we aim to take stabilization steps to ensure as many cultural history sites remain in stable condition for as long as possible.



New Parking Lot & Trailhead are Coming!

After unexpected delays, construction is underway to create a more welcoming parking lot and trailhead here at the Preserve. This will significantly improve how the public will be able to interface with the Preserve by increasing visitor safety and confidence, as well improving site security and stewardship potential.

Please stay clear of the construction area and do look forward to new trails and other site improvements being unveiled once this process is complete!



Split Rail Fencing



Split rail fences were once a common sight throughout this region during the colonial period, as it was the fastest method to fence off an area wherever there was an abundance of appropriate dense and rot-resistant trees, such as the American chestnut or black locust. When considering solutions to enclose our cultural features here at the Preserve, modern fences did not fit the aesthetics of the mountain and were not cost efficient. In

addition, split rail fences, done in the worm or zig-zagging style, made the fencing stable without

when fencing around cemeteries with uncertain boundaries. Our fence rails are constructed within the Preserve from salvaged black locust that were once shaded out by natural forest succession. Luckily, locust is a naturally rot-resistant wood so long-dead downed trees are abundant and were reorganized this year to line three cemeteries along our trail system, with plans to eventually act as a barrier to denote and protect all appropriate cultural history sites. We would like to thank our Stewardship Committee and the Boy Scouts of America for contributing to our split rail project in 2024.







Eagle Scout Fledges at the Preserve

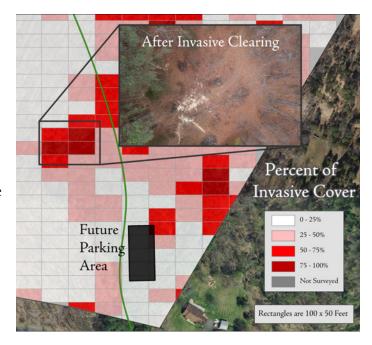
Eagle Scout, Vishnu Peechara, made his mark last year at the Preserve when he led twenty-five Scouts from Troop #7369 on a large trail remediation project. Together they added 40 feet of bog walk to the trail, constructed two turnpikes, amended a third, and split some locust rail for our historic fencing project. According to Vishnu, "the most challenging part of the project was the paperwork." We congratulate Vishnu for earning his Eagle Scout status by leading this project and thank him and his merry band of Scouts for their hard work and long hours!

Invasive Plant Management

Invasive plant management (IPM) this year focused on pushing back woody invasives from targeted areas along our trail system and from around our cultural history sites. Species removed included privet, multiflora rose, autumn olive, and Japanese barberry.

To support our long-term goals of tracking this IPM program, we mapped the invasive plant species coverage within the eastern half of the Preserve's South Section (some of the most impacted habitat within BRMNAP). This data will allow us to track changes over time and better plan our invasive species control tactics.

A half-acre patch near our new trailhead was largely dominated by invasive shrubs and 135 invasive trees, known as Tree-of-heaven.



They were intensively treated and the clearing is being prepped for active restoration. We plan on maintaining this small area to support native plants that favor a more open canopy, an uncommon habitat type within a mostly wooded natural area preserve.



In addition to the mechanical and chemical treatments, we also welcomed 1,000 biocontrol weevils from the VA Department of Forestry (DOF) to target our invasive mile-a-minute vine (Persicaria perfoliatais).

Our staff would like to thank the volunteers and partners that assisted in our invasive management work this year, notably: Boy Scouts of America, the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC), DOF, DCR-DNH, and VOF's Stewardship Committee.



Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve Tire Removal

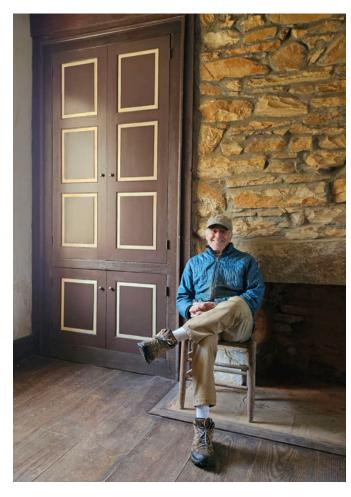
Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve is what we at BRMNAP consider our sister preserve down in Stafford county. They recently acquired a new parcel of 228 acres last year, that in addition to the beautiful acres of wetlands, came with a large pile of discarded tires. The BRMNAP team came down to assist with the removal of the tires out of a steep ravine, characteristic of Crow's Nest topography, for a hard work day. At first the extent of the tires was not known, but over many days the DCR Crow's Nest team removed a total of 1.100 tires.

Stone House Improvements

A historic stone house greets guided hike participants at the Preserve's North Section and has seen a list of improvements this year that slowly brings us closer towards converting this space into a building suitable to be the home for our physical collections that include arrowheads, civil war remnants, and other artifacts that inform and anchor what our community knows of this mountain range.

This year's improvements include:

- •Local artisan, woodworker, and VOF volunteer, Redmond Manierre, graciously built historically accurate replacement doors for the built-in cabinets within the stone house.
- •A well was also installed at the stone house to enable stewardship activities and the watering of the new pollinator and biocultural garden made possible by the Fauquier and Loudoun Garden Club.
- •Other smaller projects that were completed at the stone house in 2024 include minor carpentry and masonry repairs, and a deep cleaning of the interior.



Additional work needs to be done to the stone house before we can open its doors as a museum. If you are interested in supporting a specific project, please reach out to the Preserve Manager Joe Villari at jvillari@vof.org.



Preserve Trail News

This past year, our new eastern extension of the Fern Hollow Trail was put to the test by eager feet. To amend a muddy stretch of trail, a new section of bog walk was constructed with the help of Potomac Appalachian Trail Club volunteers in March. Bog walks are structures that prevent the widening of trails by lifting hikers over wet spots and allowing water to flow underneath the boards.

This year saw the use of "Trail Cookies" (cross-sectioned log slices) employed to act as temporary stepping platforms to help hiker navigate across wet areas during the late winter and early spring.

By summer, the trails were dry enough for work again and additional long-term solutions were put into action. Other amendments this year included building drainage structures and armoring the trail with crushed rock to protect against soil erosion.

On National Trails Day, June 1st, we had volunteers cut in a new trail that will connect with our newly anticipated trailhead and parking lot that is currently under construction. Lastly, this winter, we had a team of volunteers come out to help replace the tread on a 20-foot bridge along the Western run of our Fern Hollow loop.







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BULL RUN MOUNTAIN NAP GUIDED HIKES

BULL RUN MOUNTAIN NAP VOLUNTEERS

Special Thanks To

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Dr. Ben Kligman

Dr. Kirk Smith Dr. Mike Johnson

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Club

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Turn the Mill Around Campaign

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Division of Natural Heritage

Virginia Department of Forestry

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

Virginia Herpetological Society Virginia Master Naturalists Virginia Native Plant Society Virginia Natural History Society

Virginia Tech

Virginia Working Landscapes

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Buckland Mills Elementary School Chris Yung Elementary School Deer Park Elementary School

Franklin Sherman Elementary School

George Mason High School

Gro Preschool & Natural Education Space Hillside Elementary and Burgundy Farm

James Madison High School

Lemon Road Elementary School London Towne Elementary School

Lorien Wood School

Mountainside Montessori The Hill School of Middleburg

Thomas Jefferson High School Thoreau Middle School

We also wish to thank our many oral history project interviewees and our many generous anonymous donors.

