

VIRGINIA OUTDOORS FOUNDATION OWNED LANDS ACTIVITIES REPORT

Prepared for the March 12, 2026 Board Meeting

CAMP BRANCH

56.37 acres Floyd County

Transfer to Department of Conservation and Recreation

On January 29, 2026, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation completed its acquisition assistance agreement with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) with the recordation of a Deed of Gift in Floyd County, transferring ownership of 56 acres, designating the property as Open-Space, and dedicating it as a State Natural Area Preserve.



This preserve protects wetlands and headwater streams which enhance water quality and provide habitat to native species such as the imperiled Appalachian snaketail dragonfly, bog turtle, and Mitchell's satyr butterfly (seen in photos above).

VOF received immediate messages of gratitude and thanks from DCR representatives, including Frank Stovall, Deputy Director of Operations and Lesley Starke, Chief of Natural Areas Stewardship. The note below speaks to the importance of the parcel for habitat protection.

“... thank you all. This is a significant milestone in protecting the BEST habitat in Virginia for this federally endangered butterfly, as well as bog turtles and Appalachian snaketails, and many other native species downstream. A big day for biodiversity conservation in the Southern Blue Ridge.”

-Ryan Klopf, *Regional Supervisor/Natural Areas Science Manager*, DCR, Natural Heritage Program

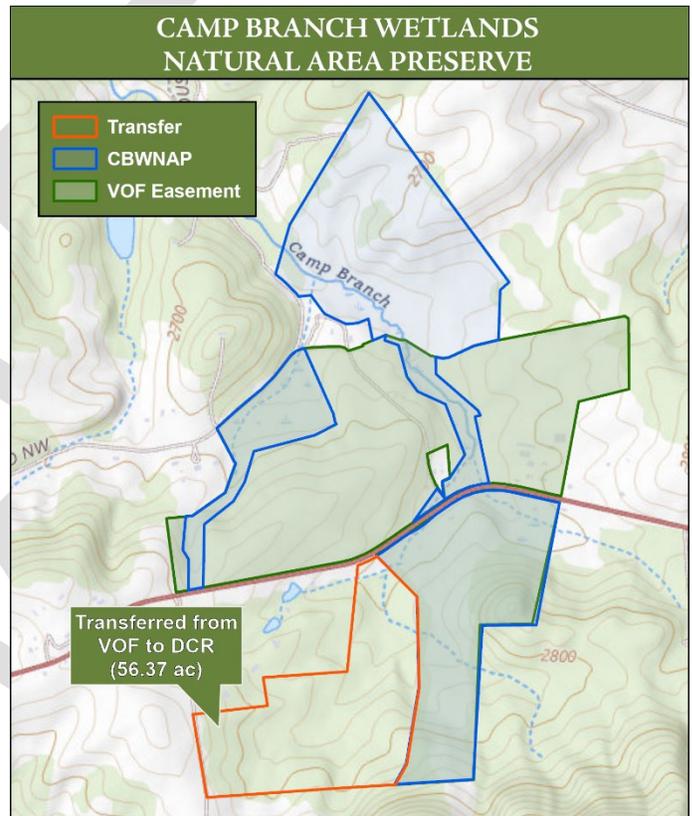
Camp Branch Background

DCR’s Natural Heritage Division was awarded \$365,000 from Virginia Land Conservation Foundation’s (VLCF) natural area category in the late 2022 grant round to protect 56 acres adjacent to the Camp Branch Wetlands Natural Area Preserve (CBWNAP) in Floyd County.

The subject tract intersects two categories of ConserveVirginia and includes forested wetlands and riparian areas along Camp Branch, as well as habitat for numerous species of greatest conservation need, and two significant natural heritage resources.

DCR requested VOF’s assistance to secure this vital acquisition. The VOF Board approved the request at their October 12, 2023 meeting and the VLCF grant was transferred to VOF. VOF closed on the property and took ownership on December 27, 2023.

This property shares a long boundary with the existing NAP and a VOF easement (VOF Project #3160), creating a contiguous connected stream corridor, important for the movement of a federally and state-listed endangered species. This acquisition is the first DCR-owned tract at CBWNAP; the rest of the dedicated property is in private ownership.



BULL RUN MOUNTAINS NATURAL AREA PRESERVE 2,528 acres in Prince William and Fauquier Counties

Cultural History Program Results in Increased Community Connection

As part of our cultural history program, we facilitated three separate Descendant-focused events during 2025. These events help us connect our cultural resources with the people whose families once built and occupied these homesteads, while helping us better understand the human history of BRMNAP.



In September, we first welcomed twenty-three descendants of Juanita Gaskins to the site of their family’s historic home place in the North Section. Later that month, we welcomed Baltimore-based artist, Phyllis Brent (Gaskins) out to the Preserve’s South Section to visit the homestead where she remembers living as a child with her adopted family.

Finally, our annual Robinson-Corum Descendant’s Day marked its 5th year. This year, twenty-five family members joined us on a hike to their familial homestead and cemetery. Participants ranged from 80+ year old matriarchs to their great grandchildren.



These events provide a unique opportunity for younger family members to hear about what life was like here in the Mountains in the mid-1900s directly from those elders who experienced it, while providing VOF staff with the opportunity to collect oral histories that refine and humanize our understanding of these resources. This knowledge better informs both our stewardship and outreach programs.

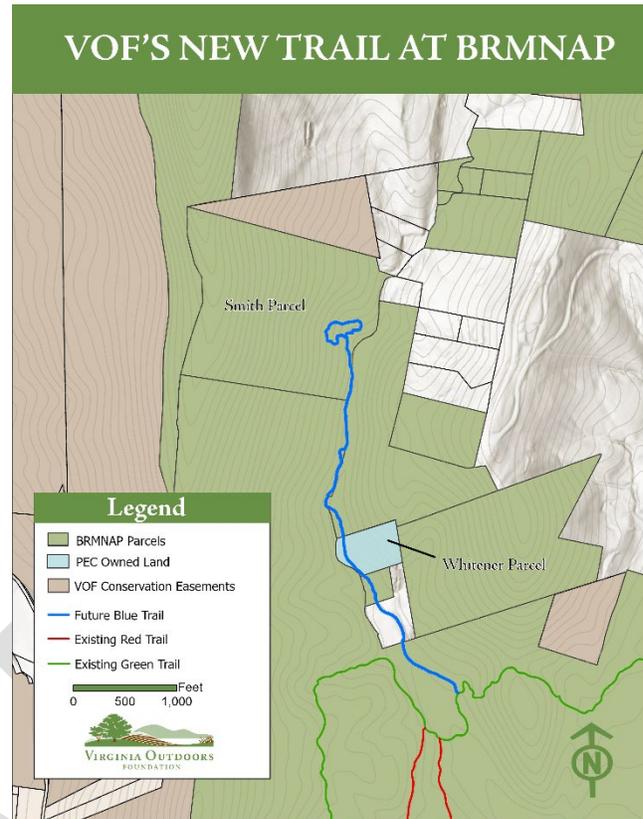
Infrastructural Progress and New Trail Approaching Completion

As reported previously, VOF has planned for the development of a new parking lot and trailhead at the Bull Run Preserve for over 20 years. A 4-acre parcel that borders Beverley Mill Drive was set aside from preserve status for this purpose (dedicated as permanent open space but not designated as Natural Area Preserve). The planned improvements will move our visitor parking lot from its current position along a VDOT right-of-way onto VOF land. This will provide a safer, more welcoming, user experience while improving site security, by placing parking and a maintenance area behind a lockable gate.



This quarter, we are happy to report further improvements. With the help of our VOF Stewardship Committee volunteers and staff from the Department of Conservation and Recreation’s Division of Natural Heritage (DCR-DNH), we were able to erect a “stewardship hub” (a shed made from two cargo containers and a connecting roof system). It sits in our area to safely secure the equipment necessary to steward BRMNAP.

In addition, a new out-and-back trail is also nearing completion. It will take visitors up along Catlett's Branch and through a suite of cultural history sites. This trail will be facilitated by a transfer of the Whitener Parcel by the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC). This key inholding was acquired by PEC's Bull Run Fund with the intention of transferring the parcel to VOF to be incorporated into BRMNAP.



Facilitated Research Utilizing BRMNAP in 2025

- Human Remain Detecting (HRD) dogs visited BRMNAP to train and add to our archeological understanding of our historic cemeteries by providing additional data towards delineating accurate boundaries. This effort contributes to the ongoing site survey work that our research associate and volunteer, Patrick O'Neill, is performing here through a partnership with the Archaeological Society of Virginia.
- Blandy Experimental Farm's propagation program is focused on preserving regional piedmont lineages of hawthorns, butternuts, chestnuts, beech, viburnum, and persimmon trees. Blandy staff have visited BRMNAP to collect nuts and seeds to preserve Bull Run Mountains genetics and jumpstart this program.
- Dr. Neitzey, from the University of Connecticut, genetically sampled BRMNAP's American beech and hemlock trees to analyze the species' genetic lineage and search for possible markers of genetic resistance to the emerging threats of American beech leaf disease and the hemlock wooly adelgid.



- The United States Geological Service (USGS) visited BRMNAP to bury small sensors that will help them create a magneto-telluric map of the earth’s subsurface structure. This data should inform them on how magnetic-storm hazards might impact the region’s electrical grid. This unusual piece of research allows BRMNAP to contribute information that will strengthen Virginia’s electrical system, providing increased infrastructural security and resilience.
- Dr. Ben Kligman, now curator at the University of Austin, continues a multi-year paleontological study on fossil deposits found within BRMNAP’s Waterfall Formation. Fossil fish, invertebrates, and plant tissue have been recovered. Recently 200-million-year-old pollen/spore was identified and provided another ecological data point, revealing more about our Bull Run Mountains’ landscape during the Triassic-Jurassic boundary.

HOUSE MOUNTAIN RESERVE
884 acres in Rockbridge County

VOF continues to manage and maintain the property, with a focus on public access and the protection of natural and cultural resources.



The new trail map to be installed at the parking lot kiosk and Saddle trailhead locations.



This winter, the Saddle was mowed to avoid impacts on ground-nesting birds and other species.

KOHL'S ISLAND RESERVE
80 acres in Northumberland County

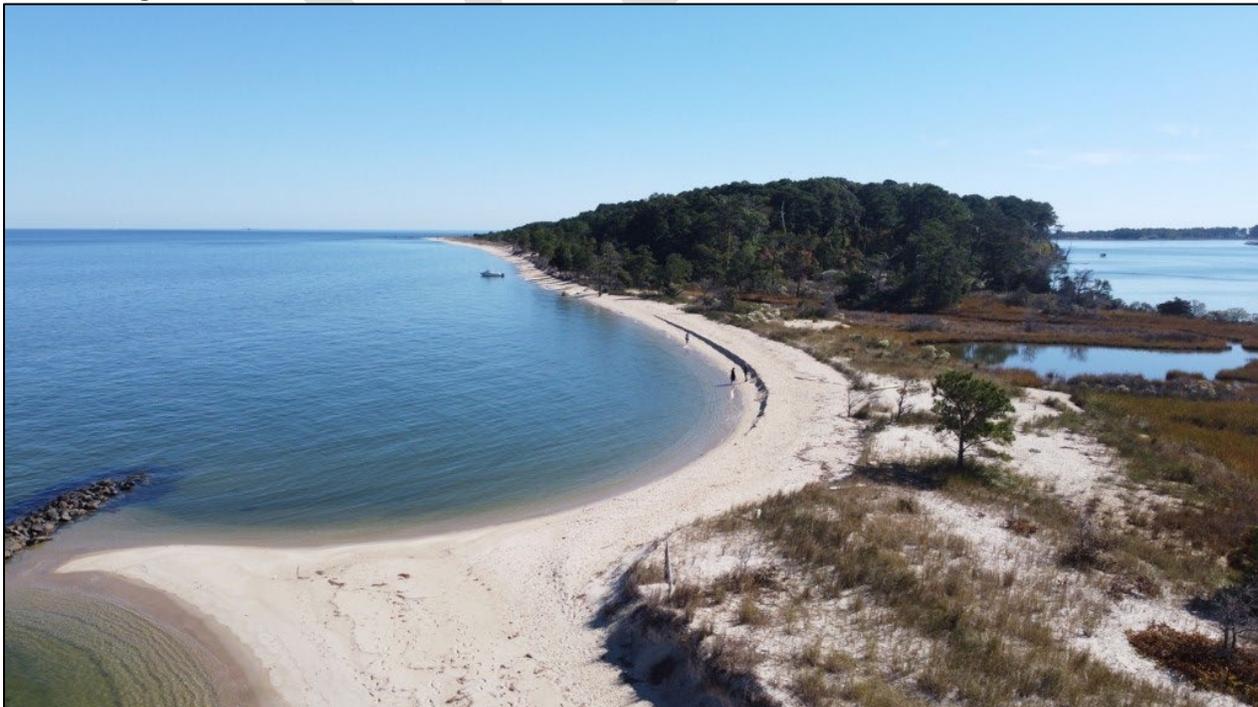
Planned dredging project for the Little Wicomico River

VOF received a request from Northumberland County and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VRMC) regarding a planned dredging project for the Little Wicomico River. The design and permitting process is complete and includes putting the dredge spoil on a beach south of the river entrance jetties, not on Kohls Island. This fill will replenish a great deal of sand that has been lost there and is currently endangering the structure of the south jetty wall. VOF has signed

off on the project as an adjacent landowner. This project will greatly benefit boat traffic entering the channel and accessing upstream marinas but will not directly impact the Kohls Island beach.



Drone Image of Kohl's Island, 2024



BLUE BALL MOUNTAIN

100 acres in Clarke County

VOF staff performed a site visit at the Blue Ball Mountain property in mid-December. The habitat remains pristine and there were no signs of disturbance or trespass. The 100 acres of mountain top habitat is largely composed of white and chestnut oak forest. The presence of woody invasives has remained minimal. Of special note, the presence of butternut trees were documented during this visit. Butternut trees are threatened across their range, because of rapid decline brought on by the fungal disease - butternut canker. The nearby Blandy Experimental Farm has been informed about these individuals to incorporate into their project to document, monitor, and collect nuts from the species throughout the mid-Atlantic. In doing so, they hope to better support the conservation of this species and are involved with the butternut trees on another VOF Owned Land, BRMNAP.

