

OWNED LANDS ACTIVITIES REPORT

Prepared for Virginia Outdoors Foundation

June 2024 Board of Trustees Meeting

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

Improvements to BRMNAP's Historically Renovated Stone House

This quarter, we turn your attention to recent improvements on the North Section of the Preserve.

The historically renovated stone house ca. 1810 is now safe from moisture once threatening the integrity of the structure with completion of a drainage trench around the foundation and a dehumidifier inside. In addition, a water source has been established for the house, utilizing an existing well and installing a pump as well as a hydrant.

While simple in scale, this water source brings much potential to this particular site by enabling staff and volunteers to care for the Biocultural Garden (funded by the Fauquier & Loudoun County Garden Club) currently being established, in addition to supporting a suite of water dependent stewardship and public engagement activities within this section of the Preserve.



Folk Music Fellows Visit BRMNAP

A musical fellowship was created in 2021 with \$5,000 of donated funds to enable a unique mission - to bring to life music from the Bull Run Mountains that were documented in the 1930s by a Works Progress Administration (WPA) worker, Susan Morton.

Local American roots duo, Herb & Hanson, were selected as our 2024 Folk Music Fellows and recently immersed themselves in the Mountains' unique cultural history and folklore.

Herb & Hanson perform songs from Americana's oldest influences, incorporating the traditional styles of both the Piedmont and Delta regions. We are excited to have them dedicated to reviving music that hasn't been heard in almost 100 years.



Another Successful Brook Trout Reintroduction Season

In the fall of 2015, VOF was contacted by Dr. Kirk Smith who was interested in investigating the streams within BRMNAP for their potential suitability to hold a brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) population. After a review of several potential reintroduction streams, the headwaters of Catharpin Creek were selected as a reintroduction site. In Spring of 2017, we kicked off this collaboration with Trout Unlimited's trout-in-the-classroom program with a pioneer population of 50 brook trout fry. Since that inaugural season, between 175 – 729 brook trout fry have been released each year. With the 2024 trout season now concluding, an estimated 600 additional brook trout will have been released by K-12 schools throughout Northern Virginia.



KOHL'S ISLAND RESERVE **40 acres in Northumberland County**

VOF staff Martha Little, Estie Thomas, and Dave Morton visited Kohls Island for a site assessment April 30, 2024 and while there obtained some excellent drone footage that will be shared during the Owned Lands section of meeting. The drone, among other views, revealed an extensive heron rookery on the interior of the island.

Access to the Island

Staff has been investigating the access situation at the island for some time. A small parcel of land that historically provided a way to access the island is now underwater with the natural changes in shoreline and dredging work at the mouth of the Little Wicomico River. The Army Corps of Engineers has been dredging Little Wicomico River and using Kohls Island in conjunction with the operations since at least 1936 when Edward Kohls deeded part of the island to the Corps to construct the jetties on either side of the channel to the Potomac River. Since VOF has owned the island, we have entered into six agreements with the Corps to allow dredge spoils to be placed on VOF property.

Island Ecosystem and Species



Kohls Island is one of only five remaining sites of the Northeastern Beach Tiger Beetle, an insect whose historic range was 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, has been 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. It has been known for years that Kohls Island is home to the threatened tiger beetle and the vulnerable seabeach knotweed. The island is also home to another endangered species, the Northern Diamondback Terrapin. This terrapin is the only turtle in the U.S. that lives exclusively in brackish saltwater marshes, coastal bays and lagoons. During the summer the females look for sandy beach areas or coastal dunes to lay their eggs. The Northern Diamondback Terrapin is listed as a species of concern in Virginia due to loss of appropriate habitat and the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources considers the Commonwealth's diamondback terrapin population as "Near Threatened."



Northern Diamondback Terrapin shell and skull from Kohls Island

Northern Diamondback Terrapin





Kohls Island beach where the Potomac River meets the Chesapeake Bay



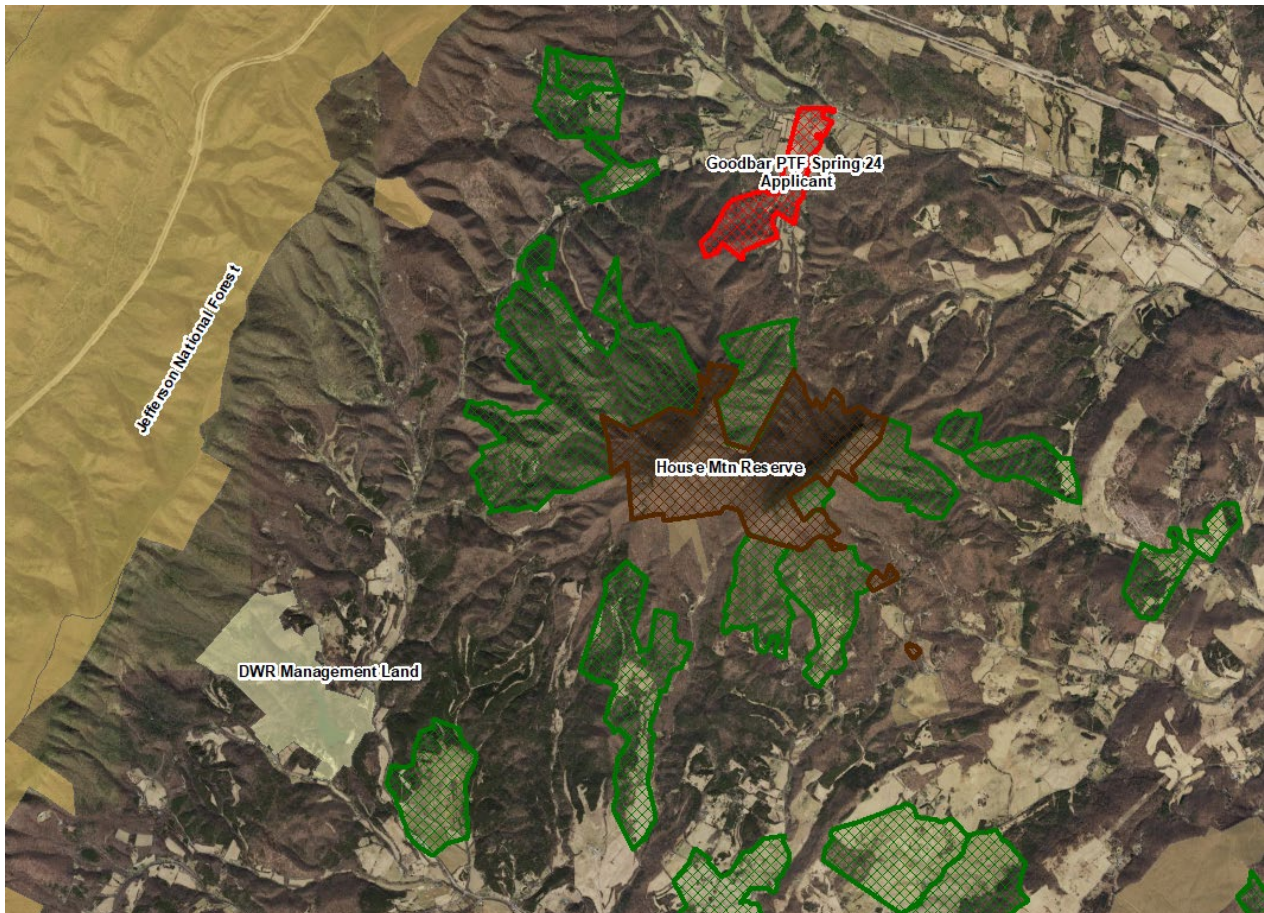
Drone view of Kohls Island with the Little Wicomico River channel on the right of screen

HOUSE MOUNTAIN RESERVE

883 acres in Rockbridge County

Conservation around the Reserve

Approximately 28% of the land within a mile of the Reserve boundary is National Forest, DWR Management Area, or other conservation land, including open-space easements held by VOF.



Land Management

VOF staff and volunteer, Brian McCannon, continue to provide regular monitoring and maintenance which includes the removal of trees and storm debris from roads and trails on the Reserve as necessary in order to insure access. The culvert at the entrance to the parking lot was recently cleaned out by VDOT after it became clogged with debris and gravel from winter storms. The first mowing of the 5-acre saddle meadow is scheduled to occur in early June. The bushhogging of the saddle meadow helps control vegetation growth, reduce invasive species, and increase the public's enjoyment of the property. The saddle and its open meadow are favorite destinations and features of the Reserve. VOF also recently contributed funds to the annual maintenance and gravel placed on Trailhead Lane, the private road which serves as the main access for VOF staff and the public to the Reserve.

UPDATE Regarding FY 25 Budget of Importance Regarding VOF LANDS

The adoption of the state's 2024-2026 budget bill on May 13th includes several items regarding acquisition of lands by the Department of Conservation and Recreation for planned additions to State Parks and Natural Area Preserves. This budget passage will enable those acquisitions to proceed and means that:

- VOF can transfer the final parcel (40 acres) of land it owns at Hayfields Farm to DCR for a new State Park in Highland County.
- VOF can 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.
- The two parcels that VOF was authorized by the Board to acquire on behalf of DCR for new Natural Area Preserves in Montgomery and Rockingham Counties will be able to be acquired directly by DCR rather than needing VOF assistance.

ROCKFISH PROPERTY

86 acres in Nelson County

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. This resolution was deferred at the March 27, 2024 for further discussion and to order an appraisal.

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 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. Discussions with Nelson County and offer to transfer the property so it could become a public park did not advance. The proposed terms for the open space easement were approved at the March 27, 2024 board meeting.



Farrar Bridge
over
Rockfish River



The Rockfish River
frontage along the VOF
property

Interior view
of the Rockfish parcel





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 13th day of June, 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 conservation work and programs 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

ATTEST: Brett Christina Glymph, Executive Director