

**OWNED LAND ACTIVITIES REPORT  
July 2012**

**Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve**

As mentioned in the owned lands report for the April board meeting, our volunteer stewardship committee has outdone themselves this year in the amount of work they performed on our behalf. At the top of the list of their accomplishments, is the new parking area they constructed with materials and equipment they arranged to have donated. A local asphalt company donated 15 loads of recycled crushed asphalt and a local excavating company donated the use of a bobcat to distribute it. The cost to VOF for the entire project was \$1000 for the concrete wheel stops. The new parking area was sorely needed and now accommodates 25 additional cars. This doubles the amount of parking previously available.



Thanks to our VOF Ranger, the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, and volunteers for the Bull Run Mountains Conservancy, considerable trail work has been accomplished over the last year. Many of the longstanding trail related issues have been addressed with improvements to drainage and some rerouting. At this point, our Ranger can now turn more attention to other pressing needs. The Preserve has a serious and increasing problem with invasive plant species. Brian has been mapping the locations of the most troublesome species to use as a future reference and he has been applying herbicide where appropriate.

The Division of Natural Heritage has been using outside contractors to fight invasives on areas of their Preserves where that level of effort is required. VOF should explore the use of contractors in areas of the Preserve where it is critical to get ahead of the invasive curve.



*An area overgrown with Japanese stilt grass and mile-a-minute weed.*



*The same area after attention from our Ranger.*

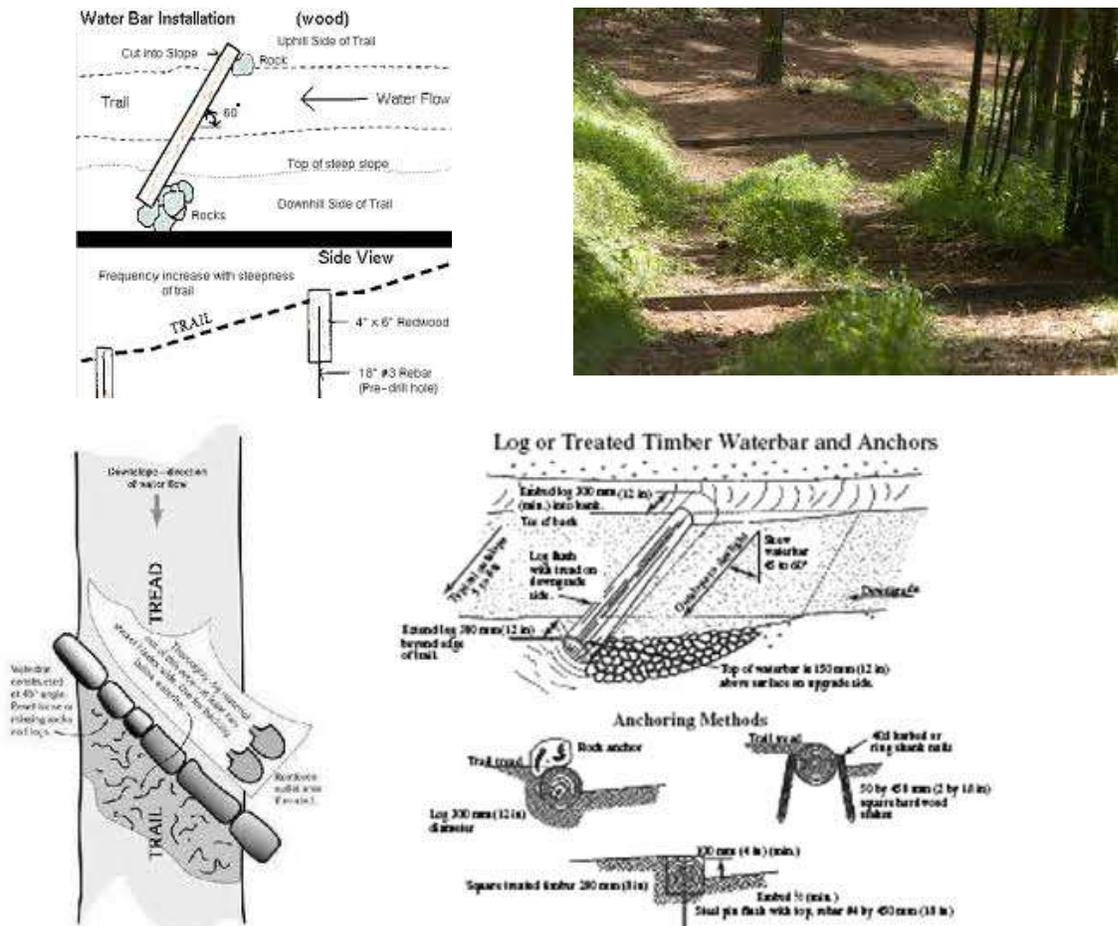
## House Mountain

DGIF Wildlife Biologist, Sergio Harding, has been studying the Peregrine falcons on House Mountain for two seasons. Sadly, he made this report at the end of May:

*Just wanted to let you know that I was up at House Mountain on May 22<sup>nd</sup> for what will be my last survey for peregrine falcons this year. Based on what I have seen during the last few visits, it appears that any nesting attempt made by the pair this year has failed. I have been to the site for a total of 6 visits this year, and have actually not seen two birds simultaneously on any one occasion. However, the territorial behavior of the individual(s) earlier in the year, along with an observation of a pair by Brenda, points to a pair having been present at one point and we can assume that they attempted to breed. I did see a bird at last year's nest on a couple of different visits, but no signs of incubation. On my last visit on the 22<sup>nd</sup> I observed one bird, but did not note any territorial behavior. Although the nest failure is unfortunate, it is not unusual, especially in peregrines nesting at natural cliff sites. It is encouraging that the site was occupied by peregrines for a second year, and I fully expect that the birds will be there again next year. I will start monitoring the site again next March. Thanks to all who have supported this project.*

As an example of how fortunate VOF is in having good neighbors and volunteers, I received a call in early June from House Mountain neighbor, Brian McCannon, who is concerned with the storm damage done to the access road in the late Spring. Mr. McCannon is a weekend resident of House Mountain and he has a construction background. He has requested permission to construct waterbars on the road following the construction details that he submitted. This would both repair current damage and minimize future damage.

### Typical trail water bar installation suggested for the House Mountain trail



## **Kohls Island**

Volunteers from the Northern Neck master naturalists and the Northumberland Association for Progressive Stewardship met for a cleanup day on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. This was a very successful cleanup with more than 100 pounds of litter collected.

Another cleanup and invasive removal effort is planned for late September.



## **SALE PARCELS:**

### **Bull Run Mountains Estate lots, White House Creek lot, and Colony property.**

Staff has notified all neighbors of the Bull Run lots and White House Creek lot of our intent to sell the properties. The Bull Run lots are being listed on MLS site and one neighbor at Bull Run has already contacted us with an indication of interest. The White House Creel lot will be listed, unfortunately our notice to neighbors did not result in any response to date.

The Colony property is on the July meeting agenda for recommended approval of the Board to sell the property to a neighbor that meets the appraised value and to retain an open space easement. The proceeds will benefit the House Mt. property.