

OWNED LAND ACTIVITIES REPORT
October 2013

BULL RUN MOUNTAINS NATURAL AREA PRESERVE

Public Archaeology at the Stone House:



On October 11th and 12th, VOF and Fauquier County hosted a seminar featuring Mike Barber, VA State Archaeologist presenting the basics of archaeology and a public dig at the Stone House.

As part of a preliminary dig in September, archaeologists from Thunderbird Archaeologists removed wrought nails from their test pits. The discovery of wrought nails is very important in dating buildings from the late 18th and early 19th century. Mass produced wire nails first appear on the marketplace immediately after the revolution and were widely available by the first decade of the 19th century. Finding wrought nails on the site gives a strong indication that the house was constructed in the 18th century. Wrought nails came in many forms and we may be able to learn a little more about the house once the archaeologists are finished researching the particular wrought nails they uncovered.

At the time of this writing, the archaeologists had not finalized their report, but sent a brief summary:

We still feel that our finds indicate a late 18th century construction date for the house. We were surprised that the site is relatively low in artifact density. We also recovered few (or no) artifacts associated with functional groups other than Kitchen and Architecture; no tobacco pipe fragments, buttons, gun flints, etc.

Due to the low artifact density, I feel additional closer interval shovel testing could assist in better understanding the site. Still, we identified several locations for test units that should produce historic artifacts during the Public Archaeology event.

We also discovered an interesting prehistoric component that included several chert flakes and a chert point fragment that may date to the Late Archaic or Early Woodland period. We will pin down the date of the point next week with a little additional research. I don't believe chert is readily available in the Bull Run Mountains so trade or transportation from other areas (possibly the Valley) may be indicated.

While the primary purpose of the archaeological research is to learn more about the Stone House, the discovery of prehistoric artifacts is fascinating and may lead to future research efforts. Please note that Fauquier County has contributed \$10,000 toward the archaeology, which has covered the total cost to this point.



Boyd Sipe, Archaeologist with Thunderbird Archaeology working on a shovel test pit near the Stone House

Once the archaeology has provided us with enough evidence of the age of the structure, VOF can apply period appropriate preservation methods and provide accurate interpretation of the house to school groups and other interested parties. VOF was recently contacted by faculty of a nearby school interested in looking at ways that VOF and the students could cooperate on projects at the site.

Prescribed Burn:

VOF is coordinating with the Department of Forestry and the Division of Natural Heritage to conduct a prescribed burn on approximately 60 acres on the public area of the preserve. Prescribed burns are one of the most effective tools to battle invasive plant species and encourage a regrowth of native plant species within the burn area. Brian Laposay has earned a prescribed burn certification through the Department of Forestry and will be able to assist with the burn. It is hoped the burn can be performed before the end of the year.

HOUSE MOUNTAIN

VOF and Rockbridge Area Conservation Council (RACC) continue to work toward a new partnership agreement for the stewardship of House Mountain. The current agreement was signed in 1989 and has continued to automatically renew every four years since. Formal notice was sent to in September that VOF will allow the current agreement to expire this November.

ACQUISITIONS

Schilling donation – Nelson County

See the proposed donation on agenda for October VOF board meeting.

Bull Run Project – Fauquier County

One of VOF's highest conservation priorities in the Bull Run Mountains Project is acquisition of inholdings and parcels adjacent to the 2,500 acre Bull Run Mountains State Natural Area Preserve. Now that the long standing lawsuit has settled regarding the boundary issues related to the Eli Hall Estate land and white cliffs, VOF can turn its attention to other parcels. VOF has mapped and identified high priority parcels within or adjacent to the preserve that would be of interest for acquisition. Several of these high priority parcels are subject to delinquent taxes and other title issues. VOF staff is working with counsel to investigate the potential for acquisition and solutions for these parcels which, if acquired, would become part of the Preserve.

SALE PARCELS:

Bull Run Mountains Estate lots and White House Creek lot.

Both these lots are being actively listed. Staff has notified all neighbors of the Bull Run lots and White House Creek lot of our intent to sell the properties. There have been a number of interested inquiries recently on the Bull Run parcels but no live offer yet.