

**OWNED LAND ACTIVITIES REPORT**  
**November 2014**

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

**White Rocks**

VOF staff has conferred with Natural Heritage Program staff and the landowner of the White Rocks and the decision has been made to close the area to general recreational use for a period of restoration. While the duration of the closure will not be determined in advance, the likelihood is that it will be for two growing seasons at a minimum. Natural Heritage staff has agreed to set up a study area to establish a baseline and to continue to monitor conditions and make recommendations. The area will be open to organized groups who are guided and supervised.

In advance of the closure, VOF is working with the Bull Run Mountains Conservancy (BRMC), the Natural Heritage Program, and the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) to coordinate information delivery and supervision of the area to enforce the closure.

BRMC has been a longstanding partner at the preserve. They operate educational programs and occasionally coordinate scientific research efforts. Their headquarters are located opposite the main trailhead at the preserve so they have also been helpful in providing some supervision of the general public use of the property.

PATC and VOF signed a partnership agreement in 2010. PATC was founded in the 1920s and was the first organized group to promote and construct the Appalachian Trail. Since that time they have agreed to formally manage 1200 acres of trails in the Mid-Atlantic including for the National Park Service and local governments. They have provided extensive trail assistance to us and will play a role in a trail redesign that will discourage visitors from continuing to the White Rocks area.

The closure will go into effect as soon as new signage can be installed and an informational campaign can be produced on each organization's website and other published materials.

**Stone House Preservation**



Stone Cabin with the windows and doors removed by Vintage, Inc.

The contract to perform restoration work on the Stone Cabin was awarded to Vintage, Inc., an historic renovation firm located in Winchester. Vintage will be replacing the 20 year old roof with a new cedar roof built in the traditional all wood method. In addition, Vintage will be addressing the needs of the 11 window openings and four door openings. Work was begun on Wednesday, October 15<sup>th</sup> and included removing the windows and one existing door to take them to Vintage's shop for study and repair. According to David Logan, proprietor of Vintage, some of the windows appear to have been made from salvaged cabinet doors! Those windows will likely be replaced with new windows that will be custom-made by Vintage in the historically appropriate design. Similarly, new doors will be created to match the sole existing door and its hardware.



Existing door at the Stone Cabin and a detail of wrought iron hardware.



## **HOUSE MOUNTAIN** **900 acres in Rockbridge County**

At a meeting on August 29<sup>th</sup>, VOF and RACC agreed to move forward on developing a management plan for House Mountain. RACC has designated two point people to act as their representatives. One is a faculty member at Washington and Lee University in the Biology Department who specializes in biological diversity and ecology. The other is on the staff of Washington and Lee University who has been a member of RACC for many years and has served on the House Mountain Management Committee.

Amanda Scheps is working on a draft of the management plan. The following is an excerpt of the goals being drafted to underpin the management plan.

## Goals

It is the mission of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation to hold in public trust the significant natural and cultural heritage resources of the Commonwealth for the present and future Virginians. One facet of this mission is the stewardship of VOF's owned lands.

To provide for the highest level of stewardship of the House Mountain Reserve, the following goals and objectives will be the underlying principles of the management plan.

Goal 1 – Protect and conserve the natural and cultural resources of the Reserve.

Objective 1.1 – Manage the Reserve for the benefit of native species and natural communities.

Objective 1.2 – Develop a plan to protect the viewsheds to and from the Reserve, including a management plan for forest resources.

Objective 1.3 – Develop a plan for the saddle area to maintain the historic apple orchard and open meadow area.

Objective 1.4 – Collaborate with area residents compiling the cultural history of House Mountain.

Goal 2 – Provide low-impact recreational and educational opportunities to the public.

Objective 2.1 - Develop a risk management plan involving the local emergency responders to best prepare for foreseeable incidents involving health and safety.

Objective 2.2 - Provide support facilities for Reserve visitors, to include adequate parking and wayfinding.

Objective 2.3 – Improve and expand the trail network to include trails for different activity levels and interests.

Objective 2.4 – Improve signage to explain visitation rules and interpret Reserve features.

Objective 2.5 – Develop a hunting program that ensures compliance with existing regulations regarding licensing, seasons, and bag limits.

Objective 2.6 – Coordinate with area schools and universities to encourage the educational use of the Reserve.

Goal 3 – Participate in mutually beneficial efforts with partner organizations and citizens to enhance the Reserve.

Objective 3.1 – Partner with local conservation organizations and landowners and to ensure the ongoing conservation of the House Mountain Reserve experience.

Objective 3.2 – Partner with local groups to promote the Reserve and provide information to the public.

Objective 3.3 – Partner with other public agencies to benefit from their expertise in resource management.

Objective 3.4 – Cultivate the continued development of community support and volunteerism to help achieve Reserve goals and objectives.

Goal 4 – Manage and administer the Reserve in a manner which fosters the public's trust.

Objective 4.1 – Implement management plans and practices to support the natural and cultural landscape of the Reserve.

Objective 4.2 – Provide appropriate staff and volunteer levels with necessary skills to achieve Reserve goals and objectives.

Objective 4.3 – Provide services and facilities that meet public expectations for security, health, and safety.

Objective 4.4 – Provide appropriate facilities and infrastructure to minimize negative impacts to neighboring landowners from traffic, parking, and trespass.

Objective 4.5 – Continue to work in concert with local citizens and community groups to enhance Reserve resources and to improve the Reserve visitor experience.

## **KOHL'S ISLAND**

**80 acres in Northumberland County**

For many years a volunteer named Lyton Land has been working valiantly on Kohls Island to combat the spread of phragmites.

Phragmites is a fast-spreading invasive plant which poses a particular threat because it resists removal by hand and herbicides only kill the above surface growth. The rhizome in the soil is left unharmed by herbicide and will continue to sprout. Annual spraying of the plant prevents the plant setting seed and spreading, but does not eliminate the existing stand. The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality produces an informational guide for phragmites control and includes this list of the damage brought by the plant:

### **THREATS**

#### **PHRAGMITES:**

- Eliminates native plants by forming large, single-species stands.
- Reduces the amount and diversity of food sources available to wildlife.
- Increases the risk and intensity of wildfire.
- Obstructs views at waterfront properties.
- Blocks drainage and irrigation ditches and clogs drain fields.
- Slows water movement and increases mosquito breeding activity.

Lyton Land's efforts have been crucial to stopping phragmites from overtaking the island and threatening an important example of a functioning dune system.



Lyton Land controlling one patch of phragmites on Kohls Island. At the end of September, Lyton reported on his phragmites spraying activities for 2014.

## **ACQUISITIONS**

### **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. 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. In addition, a long time supporter of VOF is working on the acquisition of a critical in holding that has been on the market for over one year. If successful, this will be a great relief to have it in safe hands and to be able to work with the landowner on conservation options.

## **SALE PARCELS:**

### **Bull Run Mountains Estate lots – Prince William County**

The VOF board approved the sale of the two lots in Bull Run Mountain Estates at their April 22, 2014 meeting. Closing took place on May 21<sup>st</sup> and the proceeds, as directed by the board, will support the Bull Run Mountains project.

### **White House Creek lot – Lancaster County**

Staff has notified all neighbors of the White House Creek lot of our intent to sell the property. Staff received no indication of interest and has moved on to listing the property for sale with a local realtor.

### **Schilling donation – Nelson County**

The donation of two lots in Nelson County was considered and approved by the VOF Board at the October 2013 meeting. The transaction was completed shortly thereafter with settlement and closing occurring in December of last year. The lots were donated with the intent that VOF will sell them and use any proceeds in furtherance of VOF's mission. Staff will now move on to the process of establishing an asking price and listing these lots for sale.