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VIRGINIA

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A Burn to Learn

For millennia, Indigenous people ignited fires that drove the evolution of our forests. Many plants and animals, such as longleaf pine and the red-cockaded woodpecker, adapted perfectly to these fire-kissed landscapes. But to European settlers, fire was an enemy and longleaf merely a product (harvested nearly to extinction). The Nature Conservancy values Indigenous knowledge and its contribution to our modern-day science. From the Virginia Pinelands to the Allegheny Highlands, knowledge fuels our forest restoration work, whether via our professional Fire Learning Network or our interns who gain valuable research experience. Your support for our programs advances our science and gets more good fire on the ground. Thank you!

Bettina K. Ring

Bettina K. Ring, State Director



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To learn more and support our work in Virginia, use the QR code or go online to nature.org/virginia.



Lake Shenandoah controlled burn © Meghan Marchetti/DWR

Playing With Fire

Intern shares new learning about fire in the mountains

Eli Beech-Brown, a University of Richmond student and recent GIS intern for The Nature Conservancy, spent last summer with our Allegheny Highlands team analyzing fire effects in the mountains. “My first task was to assess the severity of all past controlled burns in the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests and the impact they had on forest composition,” says Beech-Brown. No easy ask. But after wallpapering his work space with notes, which he then used to hammer out “a few hundred lines of code,” he was able to map out the results. That computer-generated information still had to be ground-truthed, he adds, “so into the forest we went.” *Follow Beech-Brown into the mountains by reading his full story at nature.org/prescribedfireva.*

Shaping the Pinelands with Fire

In 1999, TNC reintroduced fire at our then-new Piney Grove Preserve—part of a once-vast forest that evolved with thousands of years of Indigenous burning. Throughout 2024, TNC is celebrating 25 years of progress toward restoring pine savannas, endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers and our future climate-resilient forests of longleaf pine.



Burning at Piney Grove Preserve © Kyle LaFerriere



View from Bear Loop on Warm Springs Mountain, Fortune's Cove trailhead, Brownsville dock at sunset © Daniel White/TNC

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120K

TNC has helped to protect over 120,000 acres of public lands in Virginia for everyone to enjoy.

Volunteer for Nature



Eelgrass volunteer © Jay Fleming Photography

Walking on Sunshine

Five great preserves to hike this summer

Warm Springs Mountain—Our Bear Loop, Sandy Gap and Ingalls Overlook trails offer miles of hiking through diverse Allegheny Highlands habitats, along with access to stunning views. From Sandy Gap, you can also connect to trails in the George Washington National Forest and Douthat State Park.

Fortune's Cove—A half-hour drive from Charlottesville leads to one of the most challenging and rewarding trails on TNC land in Virginia. After you reach the ridgetop, take a break by a rocky glade that affords beautiful views of the cove below.

Brownsville—Home to TNC's Volgenau Virginia Coast Reserve, this historic farm now features a rich variety of habitats. Look for birds and other wildlife along the Cummings Trail as you stroll by fields, forests, ponds and salt marshes.

Voorhees—A new parking area and spur trail opened in 2020, leading visitors to a view overlooking beaver ponds. You can continue on to follow a bluff overlooking the Rappahannock River, where bald eagles soar, and cross scenic Owl Hollow Marsh.

Bottom Creek Gorge—The Johnston Trail takes you to a view of Bent Mountain Falls, Virginia's second-highest waterfall, but the highlight of this Roanoke-area preserve is Bottom Creek itself. Take the Knight Trail for the best views along this cascading stream.

Learn more about visiting "Places We Protect" online at nature.org/virginia.

Every year around this time, dozens of volunteers don snorkeling gear and plunge into shallow bays off the Eastern Shore to collect eelgrass seed shoots. Beginning in 2008, these efforts have been integral to TNC and our partners achieving the largest, most successful seagrass restoration in the world. But it's only one of many ways that our Virginia volunteers help advance our conservation mission and make a tangible difference on the ground (and in the water) from the Atlantic to the Appalachians. In addition to events—like eelgrass and oyster restoration workdays or watershed cleanups—we offer year-round engagement with preserve stewardship. And if you're interested in combining service with travel, what better way to see the USA than to leave places *better* than you found them? Explore volunteer opportunities in Virginia and across the country at nature.org/volunteer.