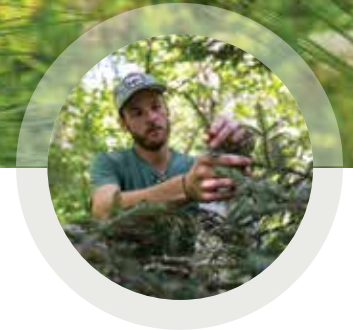


Our Virginia



Conservation's New Frontier



The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

ON THE COVER OktoberForest highlights four flavors of Virginia (story on page 14) © Kyle LaFerriere; THIS PAGE Locke Ogens © Kyle LaFerriere

Our Virginia mountains were once the American frontier. Indigenous peoples, of course, stewarded the Appalachians for millennia. But it wasn't until the lead-up to the American Revolution that Daniel Boone set out from his home along Virginia's Clinch River to begin opening the Wilderness Road into Kentucky.

In a sense, history has come full circle, as our Appalachian region is gaining recognition as a new frontier in conservation. This time, it's global climate change rousing our revolutionary spirit. Such an all-encompassing threat requires us to declare independence from past thinking and to reimagine our strategies for conquering 21st-century environmental challenges.

That's why The Nature Conservancy ventured into uncharted territory in 2019 with our quarter-million-acre Cumberland Forest acquisition. TNC's Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee chapters; our NatureVest division; and outside impact investors forged a unique alliance to pursue a shared vision of positive change across this vast swath of Appalachia.

It's extremely gratifying that, this fall, a *National Geographic* magazine cover story highlights Cumberland Forest as one of four projects representing the leading edge of conservation. As the article states, traditional conservation of

preserves and public lands has produced extraordinary results. But in the face of climate change, conservation must engage *everywhere*.

Moreover, the article goes on to say, "You have to make conservation pay better than destruction." We're seeing this theory of change play out—and pay off—in the Cumberland Forest. We see it in the elk herd that's thriving on former minelands. In our partnerships to generate solar energy from other minelands. And in the local community entrepreneurs whose nature-based ventures we're supporting.

In fact, as the examples in this report show, we're seeing conservation pay off across Virginia, from the Appalachians to our Atlantic barrier islands. Your support makes Virginia a conservation leader, and I deeply appreciate your commitment to a brighter future for nature and people.

Locke Ogens

Locke Ogens
Virginia Director

P.S. It's easier than ever to make your year-end gift! You can use the enclosed envelope, or scan the QR code to give online.



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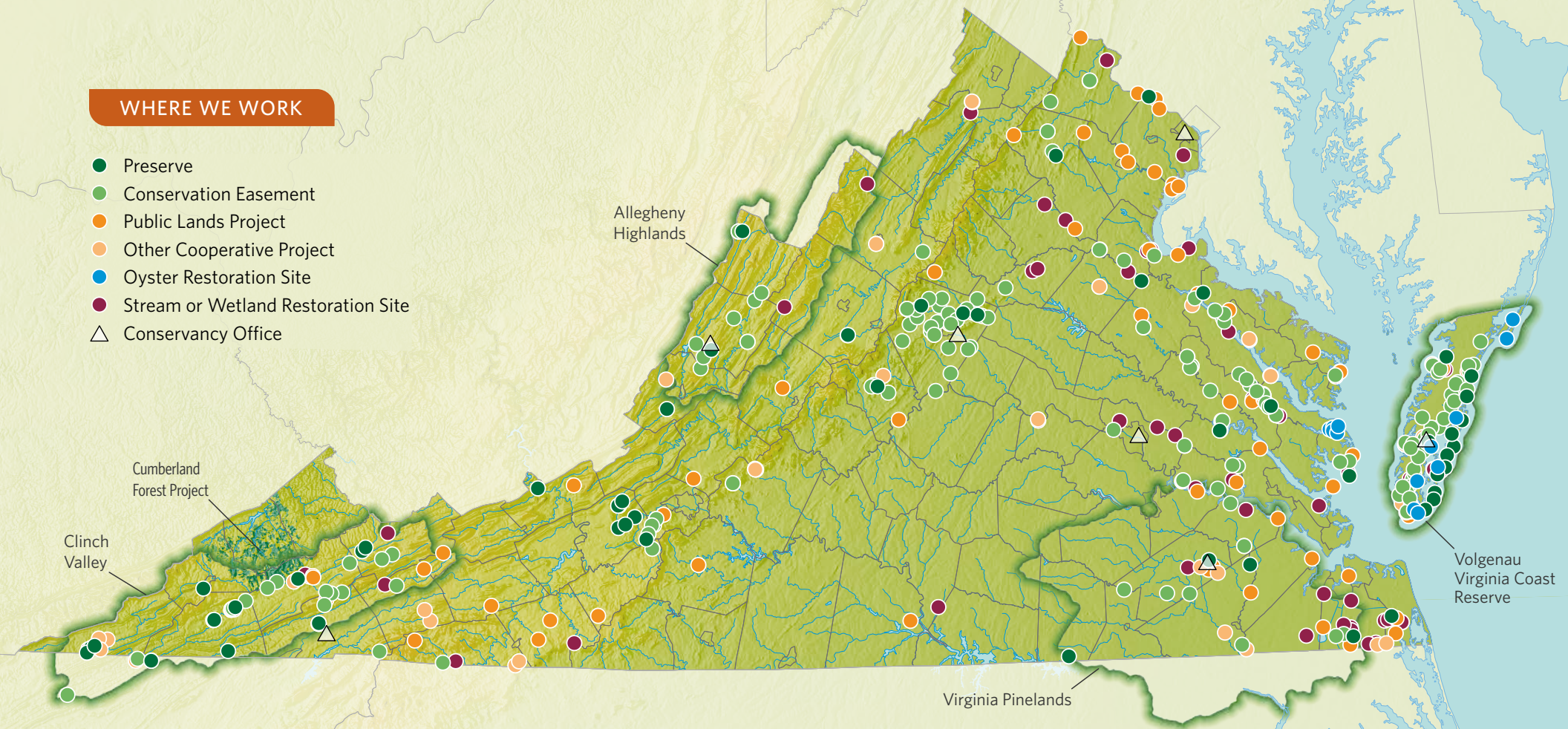
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WHERE WE WORK

- Preserve
- Conservation Easement
- Public Lands Project
- Other Cooperative Project
- Oyster Restoration Site
- Stream or Wetland Restoration Site
- △ Conservancy Office



BY THE NUMBERS

500K

Acres that The Nature Conservancy has protected across the commonwealth of Virginia



253K

Acres across three states being managed under TNC's Cumberland Forest Project



121K

Acres of public land across Virginia that TNC has worked with partners to protect



THE APPALACHIANS

“This farm is, for us, heaven on Earth. We are proud to give it to The Nature Conservancy.”

— Truman Semans

A quarter of the famous 2,200-mile Appalachian Trail runs through Virginia—more than any other state. This foot path and the forested ridges, pastoral valleys and swift streams of the surrounding landscape are beloved for their scenic beauty and recreation opportunities. For The Nature Conservancy, these ancient mountains ranging from Alabama into Canada are a top conservation priority because of their resilience and diversity in the face of global climate change.

Unbridled Generosity: Hobby Horse Farm Elevates Mountain Conservation

A generous gift by Truman Semans of his family’s historic Hobby Horse Farm in western Virginia’s Bath County bolsters our adjoining Warm Springs Mountain Preserve as a flagship for Appalachian Mountains conservation.

“This farm is, for us, heaven on Earth,” says Semans. “We are proud to give it to The Nature Conservancy.”

TNC envisions this 600-acre slice of heaven eventually serving myriad purposes: regional hub for implementing climate-resilience solutions; training center for fire teams; housing for visiting scientists, students, legislators, and environmental leaders; and model of effective conservation for the entire Appalachian range.

Strategically located in the Central Appalachians, Hobby Horse Farm nestles into our 9,000-acre preserve, which,

RIGHT View of rain clouds from Bear Loop with rhododendron blooms in the foreground, Warm Springs Mountain Preserve © Daniel White/TNC; INSET, TOP TO BOTTOM Black bear © Cassidy Girvin/TNC Photo Contest 2021; Hiking in the Appalachians © Daniel White; SIDEBAR Hobby Horse Farm aerial © TNC





Conservation Champions

Like the Ingalls family before them, Truman and the late Nellie Semans felt the pull of Warm Springs Mountain. For decades, the couple lovingly cared for the family farm they called Hobby Horse. They also were early and devoted supporters of TNC's Warm Springs Mountain acquisition and the ongoing work of our Allegheny Highlands program.

Truman Semans has long been recognized as a champion for conservation. In addition to serving for many years on TNC's Virginia board of trustees, he has been a board member of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation since its inception and has served on the boards of The Conservation Fund, The National Audubon Society and Duke University's Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions.



Cover of September issue
© National Geographic; Virginia
elk herd © Daniel White/TNC;
Planting a red spruce seedling
© Patrick Cavan Brown;
OPPOSITE PAGE Appalachian
vista © Daniel White

in turn, shares a 13-mile boundary with the vast George Washington National Forest. It also fits perfectly into TNC's short-term goal of protecting 3 million acres as a critical migration corridor for Appalachian wildlife responding to changes in climate.

Hobby Horse Farm and Warm Springs Mountain Preserve both owe much to the stewardship of the Ingalls family who, more than a century ago, purchased the mountain that rose over the fabled Homestead Resort. Smitten by the mountain's beauty, they carved out their own oasis on its western shoulder.

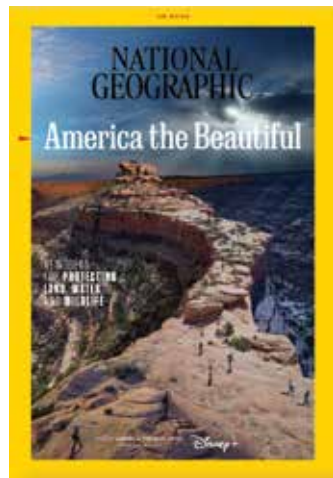
"This beautiful 600-acre property sits below and seamlessly fits into our Allegheny Highland Program's Warm Springs Mountain Preserve," says Locke Ogens, Virginia director. "This gift will profoundly impact our work across the Appalachians and help us achieve our bold conservation vision in the decades to come."

Reimagining Conservation in the Cumberland Forest

"The [Cumberland Forest] property is a complex set of discontinuous parcels punctured by inholdings, an Appalachian lace. But it contains a variety of latitudes, altitudes, and microclimates that offer options for the future—and enough continuity that animals can range freely. Among those animals is one long missing from these woods: elk."

— Excerpt from National Geographic cover story, September 2022

National Geographic magazine's September cover story profiles four sites across the United States representing the leading edge of conservation in the 21st century.



"To safeguard all our species, all our ecosystems—and to make sure that they have the resources and space to adapt as the climate continues to warm—we need to do conservation everywhere," the article states.

In addition to traditional preserves and public lands, "everywhere" includes Appalachian communities and the working lands of TNC's Cumberland Forest. Continued on-the-ground progress here depends on buy-in from outside impact investors and local communities alike.

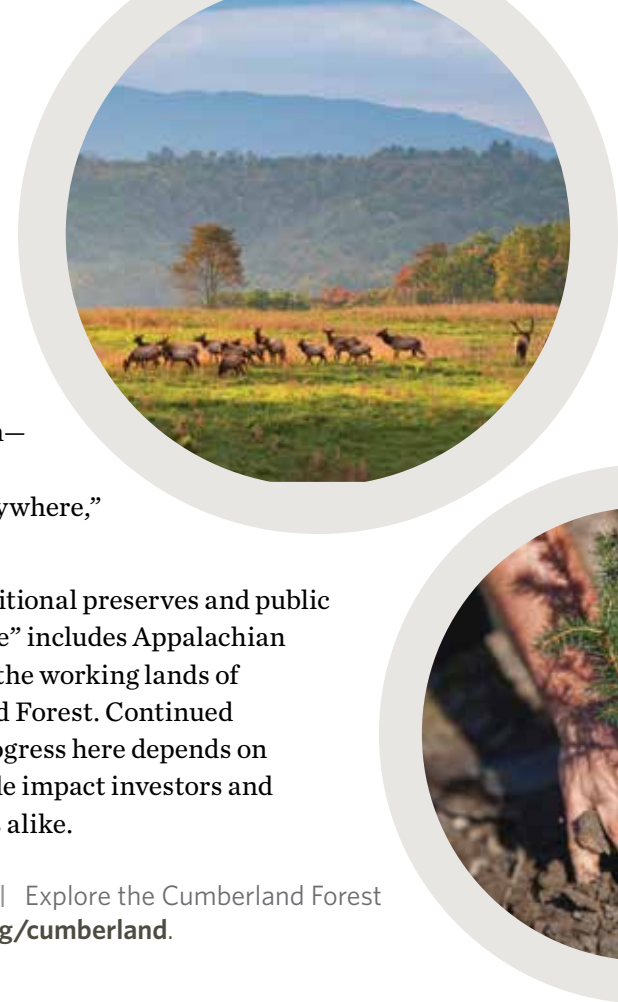


ONLINE | Explore the Cumberland Forest at [nature.org/cumberland](https://www.nature.org/cumberland).

Science Yields Seeds of Hope

Cool, moist air kisses your skin. The very ground beneath your feet feels less than solid; a *squelch* sound accompanies every step, as spongy soil grabs at your feet. The vibration you felt first in your chest soon fills the air, and you realize your heart is fine: there's a ruffed grouse nearby drumming its wings.

"It's really a magical feeling," says Kathryn Barlow, restoration manager for TNC's Central Appalachian



“This gift will profoundly impact our work across the Appalachians and help us achieve our bold conservation vision in the decades to come.”

— Locke Ogens, Virginia Director

Program. Barlow is describing the experience of walking into an Appalachian red spruce forest, especially on a summer day.

Unfortunately, these iconic forests attracted the timber industry during a time when forestry was far from sustainable. By the 1930s, a mere 10% remained. Over the last 20 years, TNC has worked to overcome two related challenges to restoration: mature red spruce forests are scarce and fragmented, and this isolation has resulted in trees with unnaturally low genetic diversity.

Today, there's new hope thanks to TNC's teaming up with the University of Vermont and contractor Dave Saville, a founder of the Central Appalachians Spruce Restoration Initiative. Seeds are collected from areas ranking high in genetic diversity. Saville then works with nurseries to grow seedlings—about half a million just last year.

“This effort has been an incredible example of how to connect science and practice to advance conservation,” Barlow says. Specifically, greater genetic diversity means a healthier forest—and that's a doubly important advance in the face of climate change.



ONLINE | Watch our “Seeds of Hope” video at [nature.org/redspruce20](https://www.nature.org/redspruce20).



Burning to Learn at Virginia WTREX



“As I took part in the training and deep discussions about equity and inclusion, I was awestruck by the women that stand shoulder to shoulder in this field.”

— Jennifer Morris, CEO
Summer 2022 *Nature Conservancy Magazine*

This past spring, a pandemic-delayed gathering of wildland fire professionals finally took place at The Nature Conservancy’s Piney Grove Preserve. Some participants traveled long distances, crossing a continent or an ocean. Others undertook different journeys, overcoming myriad life and career challenges.

At least 90% of participants were women. Look at virtually any fire crew across the country and you’ll see the reverse. In fact, many of these women have experienced being the *only* woman working with an otherwise all-male team.

Spanning two weeks of intensive workshop and field experiences, the 2022 Women-in-Fire Training Exchange (or WTREX) aimed to support and retain the women working on fire lines in Virginia and around the world.

WTREX is the brainchild of the six women who participated in a standard Prescribed Fire Training Exchange in 2015. Among the founders were Nikole Simmons, from TNC in Virginia, and Colorado firefighter Monique “Mo” Hein, an incident commander overseeing WTREX’s controlled burns.

“Most of us were used to working in an environment where we were the only female on our crew,” Hein says. “We started to talk about how to make things better, not just for us but all women in fire.” The group concluded that a female-focused event would create a safe, supportive environment to accelerate learning.

WTREX has exceeded expectations, and demand now far exceeds supply. Being accepted for one of WTREX’s limited slots meant new challenges for South Africa’s Kylie Paul,

who was determined to make her way to Virginia. “I quit my job, I packed up my house, and a bunch of folks got behind me and helped me to raise money to be here,” she says. “TNC’s been amazing, helping me with travel costs and accommodations.”

While limited funding remains a challenge, organizers are optimistic that WTREX can grow to accommodate more women—and potentially other underrepresented groups to foster diversity and strengthen the global wildland workforce.

For now—coincidentally, the 60th anniversary of TNC’s “Good Fire” programs—our organization’s investment in fire *and* in women resonates especially strongly among relative newcomers to fire work. This group has been prone to leave and pursue other careers.

“WTREX is physically, mentally and emotionally exhausting, but it was totally worth it,” says Zoe McGee, a first-time participant and recent addition to TNC’s Allegheny Highlands team. “It was such a powerful experience, and we’ve built a community and network that we will have for years to come.”



ONLINE | Meet more “Women in Fire” at nature.org/trailblazersva.

THIS PAGE Jennifer Morris © Lexey Swall; OPPOSITE PAGE Andi Clinton and Mary Nell Armstrong monitoring fire line © Daniel White/TNC; INSET, TOP TO BOTTOM Zoe McGee © Kyle LaFerriere; WTREX participants © Bill Kittrell/TNC; Kylie Paul © Daniel White/TNC; SIDEBAR National Fire Learning Network tour of Warm Springs Mountain Preserve © Daniel White/TNC



“[WTREX] was such a powerful experience, and we’ve built a community and network that we will have for years to come.”

— Zoe McGee, Allegheny Highlands Team



Virginia Hosts National Fire Learning Network

Led by staff from TNC’s North America Fire Initiative, the Fire Learning Network fosters collaboration and training among the nation’s fire practitioners. Virginia hosted this year’s national meeting, featuring a series of workshops at Wintergreen. TNC staff and partners also led a guided tour of the restoration area at our Warm Springs Mountain Preserve.



2022

HIGHLIGHTS



For hours I familiarized myself with the property, parting the grass seas, climbing the steep valley walls, and wading up to my waist in muddy water. Somehow I managed to get down the valley to the field of boneset and ironweed flowers I had identified earlier in the day as my primary shooting location. Once in place, I shot for nearly an hour. While the camera took five-minute exposures, I lay on the ground, staring up at the heavens and listening to beavers swim and slap the water in the nearby pond. They certainly seemed as happy as I was to be there.

—Brennan Gilmore, Astrophotographer



ONLINE | Read the full story behind the image at [nature.org/VAimpact](https://www.nature.org/VAimpact).



↑ UNDER THE MILKY WAY

Roaring Springs Preserve, donated to TNC by Fitz Gary, fits into a mosaic of conservation lands stretching from Highland County into West Virginia's Monongahela National Forest. This dark-sky area offers excellent stargazing. © Brennan Gilmore



↑ SIGNS OF ELK

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and local partners helped TNC install new interpretive signs focused on elk restoration and the surrounding Cumberland Forest at our property in Buchanan County. © Nick Proctor/TNC



← GENERATIONAL IMPACT

The Volgenau Virginia Coast Reserve hosted a celebration of TNC's 50th anniversary on the Eastern Shore and was able to thank the Volgenau family in person for their philanthropic vision and decades of support. © Bill Kittrell/TNC



← FOX IN SNOW

This year's TNC Photo Contest drew stunning entries from around the world, including this beautiful shot from Virginia. © Charles Schmidt/TNC Photo Contest 2022



↑ APPROACH THE BENCH

TNC's stewardship team and volunteers work hard to maintain preserve trails, including mowing this footpath on Warm Springs Mountain. © Joshua Mitri/TNC



↑ TNC LEADERS LEARN FROM WOMEN IN FIRE

Michael Lipford (Southern Region director), Collette Degarady (longleaf system lead), Bobby Clontz (preserve manager), Jennifer Morris (CEO) and Locke Ogens (Virginia director) observe the benefits of WTREX firsthand at Piney Grove (page 8). © Bill Kittrell/TNC

↑ RAISING THE REEF

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission, a TNC partner in large-scale oyster restoration, recently constructed 150+ acres of new reef in the lower York River. © Andy Lacatell/TNC



Interns Help Broaden Support for Conservation



Basia



Vanessa



Claudia

THIS PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM Basia Scott © Daniel White/TNC; Vanessa J. Moses © Daniel White/TNC; Claudia Moncada © Margaret Van Clief/TNC; OPPOSITE PAGE Claudia (far left) with Northampton High School group on Parramore Island © Suzanne Noseworthy

Three summer interns—undergraduate Basia Scott, recent graduate Vanessa Moses and graduate student Claudia Moncada—helped The Nature Conservancy expand our outreach to underserved communities and enrich our interpretation of the places we protect. Meet our interns and hear directly from them about their projects.

Basia Scott

Lands and Lives Intern, Statewide

I absolutely love history and telling stories, specifically those of the underrepresented. So having a chance to focus on lands and lives, exploring stories and conditions through the lens of place, was incredibly interesting to me. I had two major projects over the course of the summer. One was [documenting] the historical Indigenous presence in the places that TNC protects within Virginia.

I am also working on an article that explores the complex relationship that the African American community has to nature—and misunderstandings of that relationship. Often, it seems that people both outside and inside the community feel that nature (and therefore conservation) is not for Black Americans, but through the examination of our past, we can find quite quickly that nature has been an underlying part of oppression and freedom, serving as a canvas for our story.

My highlight was getting to visit the Eastern Shore of Virginia—an amazing opportunity to meet other interns, get closer with my team, and learn more about the historical contexts of the Brownsville Preserve.



ONLINE | Explore our interns' work in depth at nature.org/learningVA.



Vanessa J. Moses

Brownsville History Intern, Eastern Shore

This historical research included both of my passions, environmental stewardship and diversifying the conservation world. It also was an opportunity to understand and contextualize my own family history, as I have ancestors that have been on the Eastern Shore since the early 1800s.

My role is to uncover the overlooked history of enslaved and freed African American individuals who were members of the Brownsville and Nassawadox communities. Some may view Brownsville as just a historic site, but it was more than just a home. It was a plantation owned by the Upshur family, and, as such, it has a complicated and difficult history of enslavement and inequity built into its foundation.

It is my responsibility to fill in the gaps of knowledge about the first stewards of this land: the enslaved laborers and their descendants. I have created a family tree of approximately 80 enslaved people living at Brownsville between 1782 and 1855.

This internship has shown me that there are people-focused careers in conservation, and it has strengthened my resolve to diversify this field.

Claudia Moncada

Spanish Language Conservation Outreach Intern, Eastern Shore

Science communication, and specifically *bilingual* science communication, is very important to me. The big community engagement event I planned was for Latino Conservation Week, a nationwide event from the Hispanic Access Foundation that aims to get more Latino and Spanish-speaking people out in nature. We held a picnic lunch and bilingual wagon rides on July 23 at Brownsville Preserve and just encouraged people to come out to the trail with their families and enjoy nature.

So many people out there would greatly benefit from learning about the work TNC is doing and simply being outdoors and enjoying nature. But a huge portion of them is being missed due to things like language barriers. Since TNC is a global organization, I think it's a natural next step to consider communicating its work beyond the people they have historically been reaching.

In making the effort to meet community members where they are, I think more people will be able to decide for themselves what they would like nature and conservation to mean, and that's a choice that everyone deserves to be able to make.

Celebrating the Lands and Waters on Which All Life (and Beer) Depends



Foraging chanterelle mushrooms under the canopy of a mountain forest. Clipping red spruce tips after a hike up a steep ridge. Scooping seagrass from the deck of a skiff. No, these aren't scenes from *Gordon Ramsey: Uncharted*. Nor is it how craft brewers typically procure ingredients.

OktoberForest Fest 2022, the brainchild of Black Narrows Brewing co-owner Josh Chapman, built on Chapman's previous "crazy idea" (his words) to brew an India pale ale featuring longleaf pine from The Nature Conservancy's Piney Grove Preserve. Kicking things up a notch, this year's collaboration paired three additional breweries with TNC programs from the Atlantic to the Appalachians.

One wild local ingredient, carefully collected by hand, offers an expression of each area's lands and waters that you can literally taste. On October 1, Black Narrows and TNC hosted a micro-festival in Chincoteague, where each brewery debuted its concoction and TNC staff shared the conservation story behind the brew.

Allegheny Highlands Farmhouse Ale

Brewed with chanterelle mushrooms foraged from Warm Springs Mountain Preserve

"The mountain forest where we gathered wild chanterelles for this project is more open than it once was, thanks to a prescribed burn program that is restoring diverse habitat. The deeply passionate people doing this hard work were kind enough to share this magnificent space with our team, and we are excited to share an element of that mountain in this beer."

— Brian Mandeville, Fine Creek Brewing

Barrier Islands Gose

Brewed with eelgrass collected from underwater meadows in the Virginia Coast Reserve

"Seeing the wild success of eelgrass restoration efforts by the Volgenau Virginia Coast Reserve was deeply invigorating. Snorkeling the thriving young eelgrass beds, finding a few rare bay scallops, and even (carefully!) walking a razor-sharp intertidal oyster reef profoundly strengthened our appreciation for these sensitive ecosystems."

— Josh Kauffman, Väsen Brewing Company

Clinch Valley Saison

Brewed with Appalachian red spruce tips collected from Clinch Mountain

“Our hike up to 4,500 feet elevation was truly spectacular, but certainly no walk in the park! As we carefully harvested new-growth spruce tips, it was amazing to see all the hard work and passion that the Clinch Valley team has dedicated to these mighty red spruces. Collaborations like these bring such a meaningful purpose to our industry and help connect us to our neighbors and greater community in Virginia.”

— McKinnen Leonard, Crooked Run Fermentation

Piney Grove India Pale Ale

Brewed with longleaf pine from Piney Grove Preserve in the Virginia Pinelands

“We all gathered needles, branches, and wrapped up with cones after an incredible tour of a few different areas and my first six-wheeler ride. I was blown away by the passion of the team behind the longleaf restoration. I immediately felt a camaraderie, a kindred-spirit sort of vibe. I’ve done countless collaborations in my brewing career, but I’ve rarely had that feeling.”

— Josh Chapman, Black Narrows Brewing



ONLINE | Explore the stories behind the brews at nature.org/oktoberforestVA.



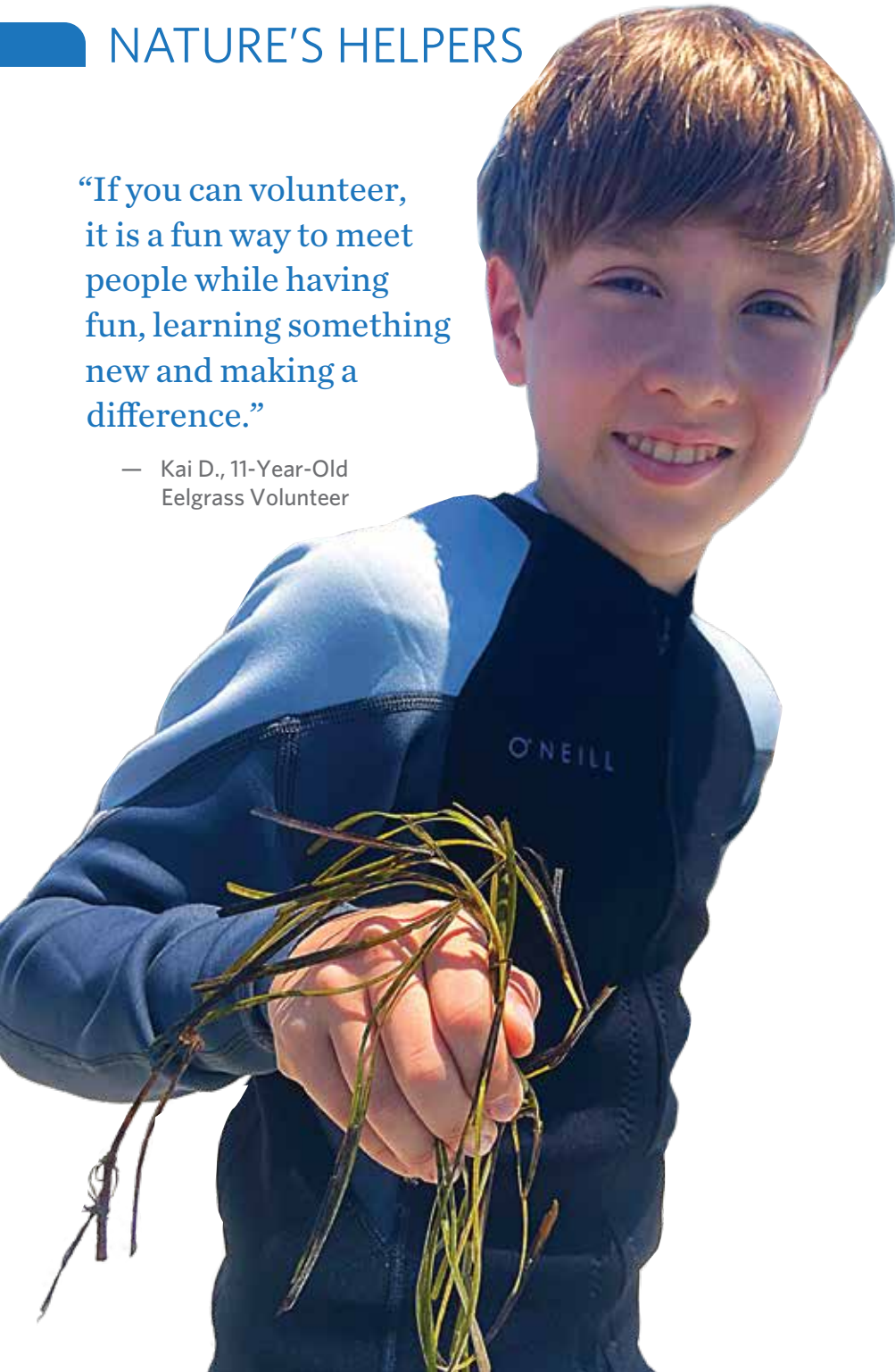
OPPOSITE PAGE Josh Chapman, Black Narrows Brewing Co.; LARGE Flavors of Virginia; INSET, LEFT TO RIGHT Chanterelles; Clinch Mountain ALL PHOTOS © Kyle LaFerriere



NATURE'S HELPERS

“If you can volunteer, it is a fun way to meet people while having fun, learning something new and making a difference.”

— Kai D., 11-Year-Old
Eelgrass Volunteer



Virginia Volunteers Making a World of Difference

The Nature Conservancy's volunteer programs in Virginia continue to rebound from pandemic impacts in a big way. Volunteer program manager Jennifer Dalke, who leads recruitment and compiles results, shared the following success stories from this year's largest events.

Clean the Bay Day

In partnership with Fairfax County Parks, TNC recruited well over 500 volunteers for cleanups at 22 different sites. Volunteers donated almost 1,200 hours of labor and removed about 5.5 tons of trash from the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

City Nature Challenge

TNC hosted spring citizen-science events on the Eastern Shore and in Charlottesville, with 240 combined participants recording almost 2,500 observations of plants and animals.

Eastern Shore Seagrass Restoration

The world's largest seagrass restoration project continues to grow. About 80 volunteers joined TNC staff and partners in late spring to harvest seed-bearing eelgrass shoots from coastal bays. Seeds will be extracted for replanting this fall.



ONLINE | Explore volunteer opportunities at [nature.org/getinvolved](https://www.nature.org/getinvolved).

My Snorkeling Adventure

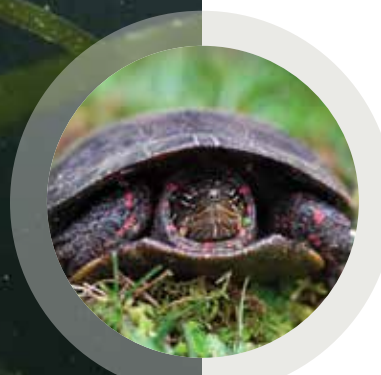
By Kai D., Eelgrass Volunteer, Age 11

We drove an hour and a half north up to the Eastern Shore. Once we got there, we suited up in wetsuits and got on one of two boats. On the way, we got a class on eelgrass and the history of the estuary.

The bay water was above my knees, almost to my waist. Floating through the shallow water above the eelgrass was such a peaceful and calm place with all kinds of sea life. I found a toadfish hiding inside a whelk shell and a bunch of scallops. Did you know that if you take a scallop out of the water for a bit it slowly opens its mouth and then snaps shut? I also learned the little blue dots around the rim of their shells are actually eyes.

Our group collected a total of 25 bags of eelgrass seeds, which were dumped into big tanks. I learned that the seeds will pop out of the shoots, and the grasses will decompose. In October, TNC will throw the seeds out in the areas that need more eelgrass and then check back in March and hope they grew!

If you can volunteer, it is a fun way to meet people while having fun, learning something new and making a difference. This was a really awesome experience, and if you go, I hope you will enjoy it, too!



LARGE Eelgrass © Jay Fleming; INSET, TOP TO BOTTOM Oyster tables © Mark Schwenk; Seagrass volunteers © Mark Schwenk; Painted turtle laying eggs in Charlottesville © Daniel White

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The Legacy Club is a unique group of supporters who have let us know that they have included The Nature Conservancy in their estate plans and/or have established life-income gifts with us.

Please bring any errors or omissions to our attention by contacting liz.blaine@tnc.org.

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We are grateful to the following donors, who made new commitments to advance Virginia's conservation agenda during the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2021, and ending June 30, 2022.

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INSIDE | WOMEN IN FIRE, APPALACHIANS UPDATES, OKTOBERFOREST



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