

# Falls Ridge Preserve Committee Handbook

The Nature  
Conservancy   
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

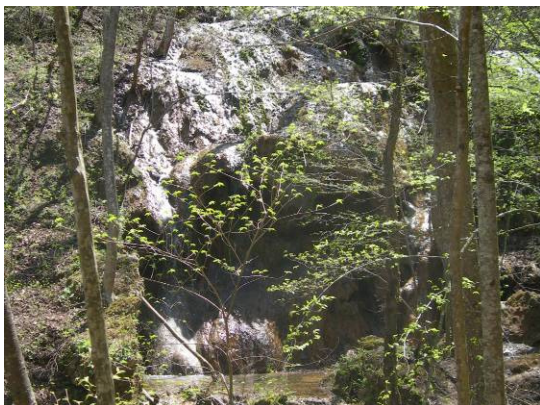


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Volunteer Visitation Committee Members

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Falls Ridge Preserve © TNC

THANK YOU for deciding to help maintain and monitor Falls Ridge Preserve. Volunteers make it possible for the Conservancy to continue protecting nature and preserving life.

# VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

**POSITION TITLE:** Volunteer Visitation Committee Member

**POSITION LOCATION:** Falls Ridge Preserve, Montgomery County

**SUPERVISOR:** Volunteer Coordinator

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**SUMMARY:** With many preserves to manage around the commonwealth, it is not always possible to monitor them as often as the Conservancy would like. Regular monitoring and maintenance keeps us informed about their condition, while promoting the Conservancy's mission and supporting the ecological goals for which each preserve was established. Committee Members visit the preserve on a rotating schedule, greet visitors, walk trails, make observations and perform trail maintenance as needed while working as part of a team.

## **ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:**

Committee members will visit the Preserve on a regular, rotating calendar schedule, approximately 4-6 visits per year, to assess the condition and needs of the Preserve. When making a visit, members should thoroughly inspect the property by walking trails and various areas of the Preserve while carrying a tool to observe for the following:

- Instances of trespassing and land abuse (trash dumping, unauthorized trail use, etc.).
- Condition of the parking areas, gates, kiosks, signs, trails and boundaries (vandalism, tree blow downs, erosion damage, etc.)

Volunteer Visitation Committee Members should also perform basic trail maintenance by removing debris, fallen branches, overgrown vegetation and trash as needed. Members will report problems and issues to the supervisor.

## **BASIC QUALIFICATIONS:**

- Demonstrated interest in the management of nature preserves and commitment to the mission of The Nature Conservancy.
- Basic physical fitness to hike moderately challenging outdoor terrain and physical ability to operate hand tools such as loppers and hand saws safely.
- Good human interaction and interpersonal communication skills to work and communicate with a diverse group of people, including volunteers, local residents, trespassers if necessary and Conservancy staff.
- Self transportation to and from site.
- Willingness to participate in training sessions and attend committee gatherings (potlucks, etc.)
- Enthusiasm and ability to work as part of a team.

**RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Complete and report preserve inspection form after preserve visits (provided by The Nature Conservancy).
- Suggest ideas for improvement projects to accommodate future preserve needs.
- As needed, greet and inform visitors of rules and volunteer preserve opportunities.
- When possible, help establish and maintain good relations with preserve neighbors and foster local attitude of stewardship, possibly recruiting volunteers to assist with future work.

**COMMITMENT:**

Flexible, depends on personal interest in maintaining preserve; ideally, 4-6 days per year or more. Ultimate goal is to have the preserve visited every week by committee members.

**BENEFITS:**

Being a Volunteer Visitation Committee Member for The Nature Conservancy gives you the opportunity to help protect critical habitat for plants and animals that is quickly disappearing. Members will gain valuable experience in the field and have the opportunity to increase leadership skills.



Falls Ridge Preserve © TNC

# PRESERVE INFORMATION

## GUIDE TO THE PRESERVE

Falls Ridge is a 655 acre nature preserve. Part of a steep, rugged ridge that rises from the valley of the North Fork of the Roanoke River, Falls Ridge boasts a spring-fed travertine waterfall approximately 80 feet in height. Salem Fault runs through the preserve, dividing it into two different rock types--Precambrian limestone and shale/sandstone. The corresponding difference in soil types generates a diversity of vegetation, particularly wildflowers and smaller flora.

The rocks in the travertine falls watershed grew steadily, as minerals and lime dissolved in the water precipitate upon them. Over thousands of years, the build-up of calcium carbonate steepened the stream's gradient and slowly created both the waterfall and one of the largest-known exposed travertine deposits. Large sinkholes on part of the land also indicate the existence of underlying caverns which have never been explored.

Some of the plant species found here are very rare, such as the Allegheny plum and Goldenseal, and at least one species is endemic to Virginia: the Addison's Leatherflower. The woodlands primarily contain species common to an eastern deciduous forest.

In 1968, Mr. William P. Bradley, a photographer and publicist, bought the Falls Ridge Preserve area from a local family. Mr. Bradley used the property as a retirement home, eventually deeded Falls Ridge to the Conservancy in 1974.

A large Indian settlement was located upstream of Falls Ridge Preserve on the North Fork of the Roanoke River, but the only direct evidence of Indian activity has been the discovery of a few white flint arrowheads. In 1823, the Governor of Virginia granted to the Birchfield family 700 acres of land, encompassing part of the present day preserve. A local family, the Dudleys, later acquired the land and used it not only for farming but also to operate several enterprises: a wool carding mill, general store, post office, lumber mill and a livery. In 1939, a kiln to produce burnt lime was installed at the falls by Harry Dudley. Calcium carbonate cliffs (travertine) deposited by the stream were blasted loose, crushed and carted by mule to the top of the kiln. Traces of this operation can be seen near the falls.

## PUBLIC ACCESS

Nature Conservancy preserves are private properties. They are managed to protect fragile resources--native species and plant communities. The point of allowing the public to visit the property is to educate and inspire. During defined hours, the public are permitted to park in the gravel lot at the entrance and enter the preserve on foot using designated trails.

Two trail loops provide over five round-trip miles of hiking. Take the Bradley Trail for a shorter easy hike, or the Chamberlain Trail for a moderate hike. An information kiosk and trail map are located on the preserve to orient and educate visitors of the opportunities that are available as well as list the rules and policies of the preserve.

## **WHAT TO LOOK FOR/ ACTION TO TAKE**

Note the condition of the preserve's natural features, signs, trail markers, structures, as well as anything unusual. Please fill out the Monitoring Inspection Report Form, example found on page 8, and turn in to supervisor.

### **Parking Areas/ Signs/ Kiosks/ Structures/ Gates (locks)**

Most Conservancy parking areas are small in size and simply just a pull-off from the road. Check parking areas for litter or dumped garbage or overgrown vegetation. Check the condition of gates or fences that may need replacing and check for damage to kiosks and signs.

**ACTION:** Pick up any litter or dumped garbage (if substantial amount, may need to schedule a workday). Mow, week-whack or trim with hand tools any overgrown vegetation adhering to all safety precautions. Contact supervisor with any structure issues.

### **Trails/ Boardwalks/ Bridges**

Survey the condition of all trails. Look for blow downs, obstructions and erosion problems. Inspect for encroaching vegetation. Make sure the trail markers are present or in need of replacement. Examine boardwalks and bridges for damage including loose boards or nails, rotting wood and instability.

**ACTION:** Remove any overgrown vegetation with hand tools such as loppers, clippers or swing blades. Maintain a path that is 4' wide by 7' tall to allow easy passage. Walk trails and move any blow downs and obstructions such as branches and fallen trees out of the trail while adhering to all safety precautions. Do not move large trees or those that need chainsaw work. Contact the Conservancy staff if chainsaw work is needed. Replace trail markers as needed. Contact supervisor with any boardwalk or bridge damage that you cannot repair.

### **Signs of: Vandalism, Dumping, Fire, Unauthorized vehicle activity (ATV's), Trespassing, Illegal Hunting, Camping, Biking, Horseback Riding, Damaged Vegetation, etc.**

Be aware of instances of the above preserve violations. Look for signs such as tire/track marks, campfires, etc.

**ACTION:** Although committee members have the authority to inform visitors of rule violations, this is not required. Committee members should only act if they feel comfortable. If you witness illegal activity, please do not confront the person, but record the activity and immediately call The Nature Conservancy's office or the Montgomery County Sheriff's office when appropriate. \*see *additional resources section for important phone numbers*

## Pets

The Nature Conservancy has a nationwide policy prohibiting pets on preserves. Dogs can chase wildlife, disturb ground nesting birds and trample vegetation. Dogs are very commonly seen with hikers at the preserve.

**ACTION:** Committee members should not ask visitors to leave if they have a dog, but should mention that they are not allowed. However, only speak with visitors if you feel comfortable doing so.

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

*Reimbursements*– The Nature Conservancy has certain vendor accounts where supplies can be purchased. However, purchases should be approved in advance by the Conservancy staff in Charlottesville. Many field supplies are kept by this office and efforts should be made to use these whenever possible.

*Visitor Liability*– The Nature Conservancy assumes no responsibility for accidents to visitors while at Fortune’s Cove Preserve. All visitors to the preserve assume responsibility for their own safety.

*Preserve Publications*– All publications should be approved by Conservancy staff at the Charlottesville office. All inquires from newspapers, magazines, television stations, etc. should be forwarded to Conservancy staff as well.

## **PROPER PREPARATION**

Be sure to dress properly for monitoring. Generally, it is a good idea to wear long pants and hiking or work boots. You should also bring work gloves and water/snacks. Depending on conditions, a hat, sunscreen and insect repellent are helpful as well.

Hand tools such as, loppers, clippers, hand saws, swing blades and hoes will also be helpful to remove overgrowth, downed branches and fix sections of trail.

Falls Ridge Preserve Hike © TNC



# MONITORING INSPECTION REPORT FORM

SITE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
MONITOR'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ APPROX. TIME SPENT IN FIELD: \_\_\_\_\_ (hrs)

If the preserve is in good condition  
with no significant problems check this box.

Was the *parking area* in good condition along with all *signs, kiosks, structures and gates* (including *locks*)? Was the vegetation trimmed around these areas?

**Comments/Action Taken/ What did you do about it?:**

Were the trails in good condition?

Any blow downs, obstructions, erosion problems?

**Action Taken/ What did you do about it?**

What are the conditions of the boardwalks or bridges (if any)?

(Loose boards/nails; rotting wood; replacement necessary)

**Action Taken/ What did you do about it?**

**Were there any signs of (check any that are appropriate):**

Vandalism  Unauthorized vehicle activity  Safety Hazards   
Dumping  Biking/Horseback Riding  Illegal Hunting   
Litter  Camping  Fire  Damaged Vegetation

**Please explain/ What did you do about it?:**

Did you notice any changes in surrounding land use or status?

Describe any interactions you had with preserve neighbors or visitors.

Describe any significant wildlife or plant species you may have encountered during your visit. We'd like to hear about anything unusual you observed!

**General Comments.** Did you notice any other problems or have suggestions for preserve improvement?



# ABOUT THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

## **MISSION**

To preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.



## **FACTS AND FIGURES since 1951**

We've protected more than 117 million acres of land and 5,000 miles of rivers worldwide — and we operate more than 100 marine conservation projects globally.

We have more than 1 million members.

We address threats to conservation involving climate change, fire, fresh water, forests, invasive species, and marine ecosystems.

We have grown to be one of the nation's top 15 charitable institutions, as measured by private funds raised.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

*How did The Nature Conservancy get started?*

The Conservancy emerged from a professional association of ecologists seeking to turn their knowledge of nature into positive action for conservation. The Conservancy was incorporated in 1951 in the District of Columbia for scientific and educational purposes.

*Where does the Conservancy work?*

The Nature Conservancy is a global organization that works in all 50 United States and more than 30 countries.

*How does the Conservancy identify lands and waters for protection?*

The Conservancy takes a systematic, science-based approach to identifying sites for protection. Called Conservation by Design, this approach helps us identify the highest-priority places—landscapes and seascapes that, if conserved, promise to ensure biodiversity over the long term.

## **THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN VIRGINIA**

Established in 1960 and headquartered in Charlottesville, The Nature Conservancy of Virginia has helped protect more than 235,000 acres of wildlife habitat across the commonwealth.

Falls Ridge Preserve is located in Virginia's Roanoke Headwaters region. This program area covers 2,200 square miles in the remote mountains and valleys of southwestern Virginia and northeastern Tennessee, encompassing the watersheds of the Clinch, Powell and Holston rivers. These last free-flowing reaches of the Tennessee River system harbor the highest concentration of imperiled species in the continental United States.

Through creative local partnerships, the Conservancy works to ensure the survival of these fragile lands and waters. Our innovative strategies include demonstrating ecological restoration, reforestation, land protection and education.

### **PUBLIC ACCESS**

Specific hours, rules and policies are as follows:

- The preserve's trails will be open to the public daily, dawn until dusk, year round.
- Prohibited activities include: camping, fishing or trapping, horseback riding, biking, illegal hunting, motorized travel, pets and the collection of plants, animals, artifacts or other items found on the preserve.



Falls Ridge Preserve Workday © TNC

# SAFETY

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES**

*\* see additional resources section for important phone numbers*

### **ASSESS THE SITUATION**

In the event of any accident that requires the immediate attention of medical personnel, call 911. Be advised that cell phone coverage varies. If you need to call emergency services note the following:

- Know the directions to the trailhead closest to where you are.
- Take notes about the situation: names, what happened, in what way the victim appears to be hurt, etc.
- Use from a first aid kit only what you are trained to use.

If the injury does not warrant immediate medical attention, the person(s) injured should be transported to the nearest hospital.

After you have assessed the situation and dealt with the emergency, please call the Conservancy's volunteer coordinator .

### **POTENTIAL HAZARDS**

- Exposure to rain, wind, cold
- Exposure to sun, dehydration
- Steep terrain
- Dangerous flora and fauna (e.g., poison ivy, snakes)



### **TOOL SAFETY**

- Carry tools with sharp edge pointed towards the ground on the downhill side of the body when walking. Maintain a safe distance from others when hiking and carrying tools.
- Make sure area is clear of people before swinging a tool. Notify others if walking behind them when they are using a tool.
- Keep unused tools away from work area. Lay tools sharp end down. Keep tools closed or sheathed when not in use.



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## CONTACT INFORMATION

The Nature Conservancy in Virginia  
490 Westfield Road  
Charlottesville, Virginia 22901  
(434) 296-6106  
(434) 979-0370 fax

Jennifer Rich, volunteer coordinator  
(434) 951-0572 (office)  
(740) 590-3307 (cell)  
jrich@tnc.org

Montgomery County Sheriff's Office  
16 S Franklin St  
Christiansburg, VA 24073-3535  
(540) 382-7313

Montgomery Regional Hospital  
3700 S Main St  
Blacksburg, VA 24060-7081  
(540) 951-1111

# Falls Ridge

