

# Fortune's Cove Preserve Committee Handbook

The Nature  
Conservancy   
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™



Michael Lipford

Volunteer Visitation Committee Members

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THANK YOU for deciding to help maintain and monitor Fortune's Cove 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:** Fortune's Cove Preserve, Nelson 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.



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# PRESERVE INFORMATION

## **GUIDE TO THE PRESERVE**

Fortune's Cove is a 755 acre nature preserve located in the mountains of Nelson County, Virginia. It straddles Virginia's Piedmont and Blue Ridge. Here, these two ecological regions meet to form a unique collection of flora from both areas. The preserve is situated within some 29,000 acres of relatively unfragmented forest habitat and hosts rare plant communities on a series of rocky glades. This plant community found on the glades is thought to be extremely rare, with fewer than 20 examples known to occur worldwide. Jane Heyward approached the Conservancy about protecting the property and making it accessible to visitors. Through her generosity, the property was donated to the Conservancy and a parking area, signage and hiking trail was created.

## **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.

The 5.5-mile loop trail climbs steeply from the parking area, gaining some 1,500 feet in elevation before reaching its highest point. 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.

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: biking, camping, fishing or trapping, horseback riding, hunting, motorized travel, pets and the collection of plants, animals, artifacts or other items found on 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 Nelson 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.



# 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.

Fortune's Cove Preserve is located in Virginia's Piedmont region, home to the Conservancy's first preserve in Virginia. The Piedmont region spans the state from north to south. Its cultural and historical sites include the University of Virginia and the homes of presidents Thomas Jefferson (Monticello), James Madison (Montpelier), and James Monroe (Ash Lawn-Highland). Rolling hills, fertile working farms, expansive river systems, and hardwood forests comprise this densely populated plateau connecting the Blue Ridge Mountains to the coastal plain.

To date, the Conservancy has protected more than 23,000 acres and more than 100 miles of streams in the Piedmont, one of the nation's fastest growing regions. Many significant natural areas here still need protection, including 22 examples of large native forests and five river systems spanning 2.6 million acres. Using various creative strategies, the Conservancy is working with partners to conserve the Piedmont's finest remaining lands and waters before they disappear.



© TNC Fortune's Cove Preserve Workday

# 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

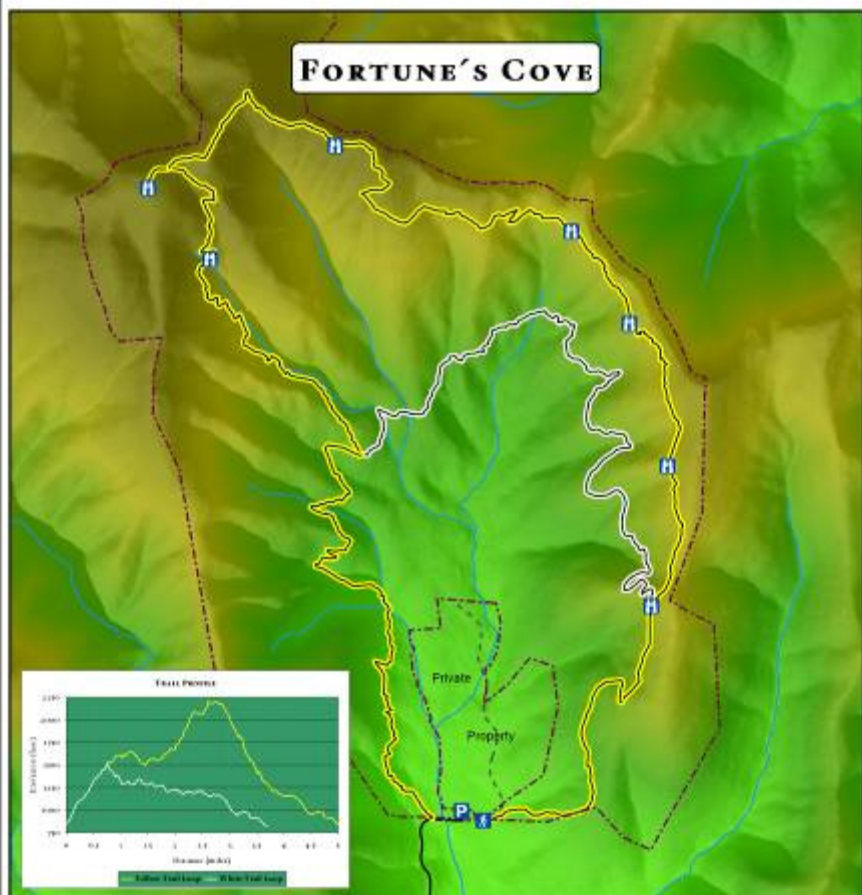
The Nature Conservancy in Virginia  
490 Westfield Road  
Charlottesville, Virginia 22901  
(434) 296-6106  
(434) 979-0370 fax

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

Nelson County Sheriff's Office  
94 Court St  
PO Box 36  
Lovingson, Virginia 22949  
(434) 263-7050

Nelson County Rescue Squad, Station # 2  
7995 Thomas Nelson Hwy  
Lovingson, VA 22949  
(434) 263-8099

# FORTUNE'S COVE



The Nature Conservancy  
Protecting nature. Preserving life.



- Yellow Trail (5.1 mile loop)
- White Trail (3.7 mile loop)
- Preserve Boundary
- Fortune's Cove Road
- Private Road
- Stream

- Viewpoint
- Parking Area/Kiosk
- Hiking Trailhead

