



The McCreary County property is adjacent to the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area. © Ben Childers

Protecting the Big South Fork

Conservancy acquires tract in climate resilient region

Last spring, The Nature Conservancy acquired a 466-acre tract of forestland adjacent to the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area and the Daniel Boone National Forest. Our acquisition helps protect a critical migratory corridor that wildlife will depend on in the face of a changing climate.

This protection effort helps the National Park Service acquire a significant inholding, a privately-owned property that otherwise fragments public land. The Kentucky chapter has worked with the U.S. Forest Service for decades to decrease fragmentation and increase public land acreage in Kentucky. This is the first time the chapter has worked with the National Park Service on such a project.

“It was the largest inholding on the Kentucky side of the park,” says Dian Osbourne, director of protection for the Kentucky chapter. “When you have

inholdings like that, it’s much harder to manage the property because there is a private landowner there. There was also some concern that the landowner might develop the property along the river.”



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TNC will hold the property while the National Park Service applies for funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to purchase the land. Eventually the tract will add to federal lands in the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area,

providing public land for recreation as well as conserving nature.

“This tract has a high degree of conservation value on several fronts,” says Danna Baxley, director of conservation for the Kentucky chapter. “It’s in an incredible spot in terms of biodiversity, and it’s in one of the largest forests we have that’s really important for wildlife migration. There is frontage on the Big South Fork, an important river for fish and mussel species.”

The river is home to 26 documented species of mussels, five of which are federally listed as endangered, and supports other rare and sensitive species. This property is also important to people.

“The Appalachians provide drinking water for more than 20 million people,” says Baxley. “Protection of drinking water is another benefit of making sure these forests aren’t fragmented.”

Palisades Preserves

This fall is a great time to visit The Nature Conservancy's public nature preserves along the Palisades of the Kentucky River. Three of the preserves have new interpretive signage to enhance the visitor experience. Signage installed at Dupree Nature Preserve interprets the importance of forestland, wildflowers, and TNC's management practices on the area. A memorial sign for Tom Dupree, Sr.



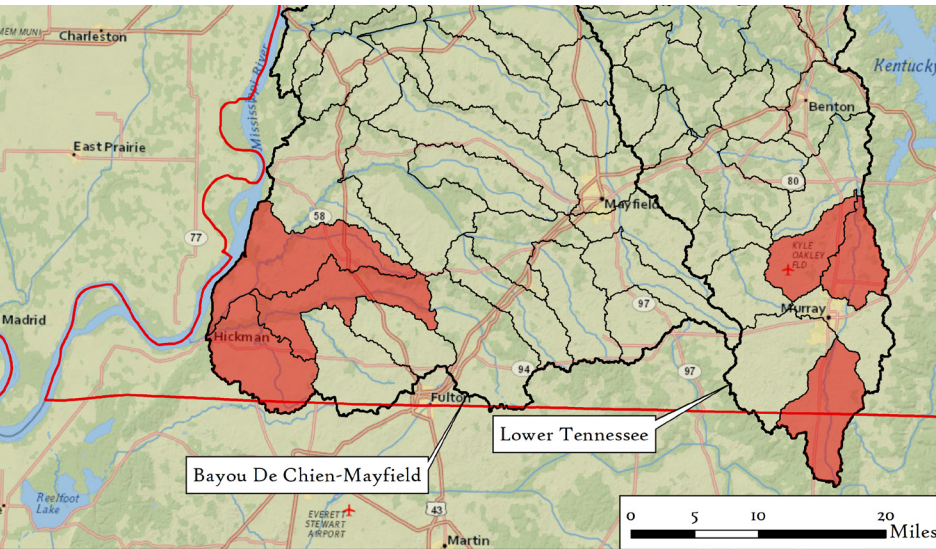
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honors the legacy of this TNC supporter. Dupree Nature Preserve has approximately three miles of hiking trails for visitors to enjoy.

New signs at Sally Brown and Crutcher Nature Preserves promote birding, interpret the geological history of the Palisades region, and tell the story of preserve founders Sally Brown and Dr. Richard and Dorothy Hillenmeyer Crutcher. These preserves have more than five miles of hiking trails.

September and October are excellent months for birding in the Palisades region, as the fall migration takes birds back to Central and South America for the winter. The Palisades provides a forested corridor in which migrating birds can rest and find food on their journeys.

For more information on these preserves, go to nature.org/DupreeNaturePreserve and nature.org/BrownCrutcherPreserve.



A map created by the new tool shows prioritized watersheds for floodplain restoration work in western Kentucky. © Kris Johnson

A Guide for Conservation

Floodplain explorer tool prioritizes wetland restoration

The Nature Conservancy and its partners have created a first-of-its-kind tool that will help conservationists prioritize Mississippi River basin floodplain conservation, identifying areas where restoration will have the greatest impacts to the river's health. This interactive, web-based tool will help guide the Kentucky chapter and its partners as the largest wetland restoration project in state history continues.

"It filled the need for a one-stop shop information tool," says Shelly Morris, western Kentucky project director for the Kentucky chapter. "It's supposed to be a conversation starter to help inform decisions. You can look at your questions through a lot of different lenses such as wildlife benefits, flood risk reduction and nutrient capture."

Floodplain restoration can reverse these negative impacts.

Shelly Morris, western Kentucky project director

Tens of millions of acres of the Mississippi River's floodplains have been developed or converted to agriculture. These land use changes have degraded water quality due to excess nutrient pollution, increased impacts from flooding, and diminished habitat for fish and wildlife. Since 2011, the Kentucky chapter has partnered with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to help enroll more than 7,300 acres of western Kentucky land into federal wetland protection and restoration programs.

"Floodplain restoration can reverse these negative impacts," says Morris. "Restoration can produce a healthy, functioning floodplain, one that has connectivity to its river or stream, is able to store floodwater and can take up nutrients and sediments."

In addition to identifying priority conservation areas in the Mississippi River basin, the tool will be used to prioritize other projects statewide such as sustainable agriculture. "We can put the whole state of Kentucky into this tool," Morris says. "It can be used to help identify the watersheds where we can best reduce nutrient pollution. That is where we want to site our projects."