

NATURE

VIRGINIA

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Locke Ogens © Kyle LaFerriere

Moving Mountains

More than two decades ago, our Clinch Valley Program began as a one-person operation. It was ambitious—or naive, some might say—attempting to protect river systems encompassing a swath of Appalachia larger than the state of Delaware. But we trusted that sound science could move mountains. As our program grew, we made the then-radical leap of adding staff across a state line. As a result, innovations have flowed as steadily as the rivers. Fast-forward to 2019, when our pioneering Conservation Forestry Program and successful entry into carbon markets made it possible to attract impact investors and conserve 250,000 acres across Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky. Today, The Nature Conservancy is committed to the entire range as one of our highest global priorities. Thank you for joining this vital conservation mission and helping Virginia lead the charge.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Locke W. O.", which is the signature of Locke Ogens.

Locke Ogens, Virginia Director



Elk calf and cow in Virginia's Clinch Valley region © Daniel White/TNC

For more info on
Elk Restoration
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CHECK OUT PG. 14

A Geography of Hope

Conservation and resilience in the Appalachians

Among a handful of global priorities for The Nature Conservancy, the Appalachian Mountains stand out as a geography of hope. These verdant forests have a remarkable ability to absorb and store carbon pollution, while providing havens of cooler temperatures that could help myriad plants and animals survive a changing climate. Virginia is leading the way, from managing our preserve in the heart of the state's elk restoration zone to stewarding our tri-state, quarter-million-acre Cumberland Forest Project. We're also fostering new partnerships with energy companies to produce clean solar energy on former minelands. Explore how TNC works to conserve this 2,000-mile chain of ancient mountains at nature.org/appalachians.

Fire in the Allegheny Highlands

For millennia, lightning strikes and intentional burning by Indigenous people made fire an ever-present force in the Appalachians. Today, fire is still an essential tool that TNC and partners use to maintain the rich biological diversity of places such as Virginia's Allegheny Highlands, while also helping to reduce the scale and severity of wildfires. Learn more about how and why we're using fire on the ground in western Virginia at nature.org/alleghenyfireva.



Allegheny Highlands burn © Tyler Urgo



Red-cockaded woodpecker habitat at Piney Grove Preserve © Robert B. Clontz/TNC

Dedicated to Conservation

State designation boosts Piney Grove protection

In September, Piney Grove Flatwoods became Virginia's 66th natural area preserve. The Nature Conservancy will retain ownership of this 446-acre tract, and dedicating it as part of the Virginia Natural Area Preserve System will bring the state's highest level of protection to this critical habitat at our Piney Grove Preserve. The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), through its Natural Heritage program, will bolster our efforts to protect vulnerable wildlife such as barking treefrogs and red-cockaded woodpeckers. "Establishing Piney Grove Flatwoods Natural Area Preserve builds upon DCR's 20 years of tremendous contributions to pine savanna restoration in the Piney Grove area," says Brian van Eerden, director of TNC's Virginia Pinelands Program. "This is an exciting new chapter, particularly with the expert science that DCR biologists and ecologists can offer." Learn more about our work with state and federal partners to restore pinelands at nature.org/vapineygrovefire.

This Land Is Your Land

The Nature Conservancy has worked with many dedicated conservationists to protect more than 500,000 acres across Virginia. Thanks to our partners at local, state and federal agencies, much of that acreage is now protected as public land for everyone's benefit. Explore your public lands in Virginia at nature.org/vapubliclands.



Powell Valley Overlook © Travis Dove

NATURE VIRGINIA

Park Opens on Clinch River



Clinch River State Park © Travis Dove

Governor Northam visited southwest Virginia this past June to officially dedicate and open the new Clinch River State Park. While work to add river access points and recreation amenities continues, the opening fulfills a years-long vision and culminates a robust partnership among local communities, the state and TNC to conserve key sites along this special river, while promoting environmental awareness and sustainable economic development.

Raising the Reef



Oyster reef restoration © Andrew Button/VMRC

Virginia's Piankatank River recently became the site of the largest shellfish restoration project in the world. The Nature Conservancy has invested nearly \$1 million into this decade-long effort, which leveraged five times that amount from partners and surpassed restoration goals. The Virginia Marine Resources Commission built 60 new acres of reef in July, and the Army Corps of Engineers is slated to add 50 acres in 2022—raising the total acreage to nearly 500 acres.



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