



West Virginia Division of Forestry
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Joe Manchin III, Governor
Randy Dye, Director/State Forester

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SEVEN-YEAR EFFORT TO PROTECT WEST VIRGINIA FORESTLAND COMPLETE

More than 2,500 acres now protected by a conservation easement

Morgan County, W.Va. – The West Virginia Division of Forestry and The Conservation Fund have announced the protection of more than 2,500 acres of forestland located on a scenic ridgeline overlooking the bends of the Potomac River near Paw Paw, W.Va. This announcement caps a seven-year effort that included cooperative efforts by the West Virginia congressional delegation and the USDA Forest Service.

“I commend the Conservation Fund and the West Virginia Division of Forestry for working tirelessly to protect this invaluable ridgeline in Morgan County,” said Gov. Joe Manchin. “The proper conservation of this land has far-reaching benefits that will be appreciated beyond the borders of our state and by many future generations of West Virginians.”

“I am very pleased that this property is now permanently protected,” said Randy Dye, Director/State Forester of the West Virginia Division of Forestry. “Present and future generations will continue to receive timber, wildlife and water quality benefits from this significant working forest.”

Used for many years by members of the Tri-State Sports Club for recreational hunting, the property provides habitat for white-tailed deer, black bear, grey squirrel, fox squirrel, turkey, ruffed grouse and other game and nongame species common to this region of the Appalachian Mountains. The previous owner of the property also had timber sales that were conducted by professional foresters. Opportunities for forest management and timber harvesting will continue to occur. The property will be managed according to the landowner’s objectives through a Forest Stewardship Plan.

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Forests within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and particularly along river banks, are integral to the health of the Bay, as they filter pollution, transform and store nutrients and sustain aquatic habitat. Efforts to protect and manage these forests are useful for improving the quality of the Chesapeake Bay, allowing limited funding for Bay restoration to go further.

Given its proximity to the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, the property had been eyed for development. In 2003, The Conservation Fund, with support from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, purchased the land from Wally Moore, Jr., and worked with the state of West Virginia to permanently preserve the property.

“This protects both sides of Sideling Mountain, which rises between the Potomac and Cacapon rivers, not far from Cacapon Resort State Park and Berkeley Springs,” said Reggie Hall, real estate associate for The Conservation Fund. “With its captivating views, prime wildlife habitat, excellent forestry opportunities and invaluable natural resources, this property had been a high priority for conservation, and we’re glad we could work with the state of West Virginia and the U.S. Forest Service to make it happen.”

Through the federal Forest Legacy Program, and with key bipartisan support in Congress from the late Sen. Robert Byrd, Sen. John Rockefeller and Rep. Shelley Moore Capito, the state of West Virginia received federal funding to purchase a conservation easement on the property, which permanently restricts the type and amount of development that occurs on the land. The conservation easement allows the property to remain privately owned while continuing opportunities for hunting that have been in place for 50 years and ensuring long-term forestry in the area.

“After several years of unwavering efforts, more than 2,500 acres of forestland in West Virginia are now protected – and this means great things for our state and our people,” said Sen. Rockefeller. “As West Virginians, we cherish our forests – and the recreation and beauty that they provide. They are part of our heritage, our landscape, and our livelihood and the work of the Forest Legacy Program, particularly the Moore Project, should be commended.”

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Sen. Carte Goodwin also praised the efforts. "The Forest Legacy Program is helping West Virginia preserve its forested lands—preventing fragmentation while protecting natural beauty and resources. Both hunting and forestry are part of West Virginia, and I applaud this effort to allow both to continue through the Moore Project."

Rep. Shelley Moore Capito added, "Future generations will now be able to enjoy over 2,500 acres without the threat of the land being commercially developed."

"Forest preservation and sustainable forest management are critical to Chesapeake Bay water quality recovery and restoration," said Nancy Ailes, executive director of the Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust. "The Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust is working to protect connected parcels in Morgan County adjacent to the Cacapon State Park, eventually connecting the park to this parcel owned and protected by The Conservation Fund. When adjoining parcels are protected, the sum of the conservation values is greater than isolated tracts of protected land in a sea of development."

"This project dramatically expands the conservation of the forested slopes and critical high ridges of Morgan County that are so important for watershed protection and for migrating wildlife of all kinds," said Peter Smith, President of the Potomac Valley Audubon Society. "The Forest Legacy Project protection now in place assures that this land will remain a working forest and natural resource community asset that complements our efforts at Eidolon Nature Preserve."

The Conservation Fund currently owns the land but intends to sell it to a conservation-minded individual or group interested in continuing good stewardship of the land. Regardless of who owns the property in the future, it will remain protected by the conservation easement.

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The Forest Legacy Program, administered cooperatively by the U.S. Forest Service and the West Virginia Division of Forestry, protects significant forestland from conversion to non-forest uses through use of conservation easements. The Forest Legacy Program is one of the only sources of federal funding dedicated to protecting working forestland, keeping properties from becoming fragmented, and maintaining ecological value of properties. Forestry and forest products represent a \$4 billion contribution to West Virginia's economy.

"The Potomac River Hills project is a good example of the US Forest Service Forest Legacy Program course of action," said Deirdre Raimo, Forest Legacy Program Manager for the Northeast region. "From the funding process through the acquisition procedures, Americans can feel comfortable that the partners, West Virginia Division of Forestry and The Conservation Fund, maintained high standards to assure continued scenic vistas, clean water and forestry will last forever on this large block of forestland."

For more information about the Forest Legacy Program, visit the Division of Forestry's website at www.wvforestry.com.

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About the West Virginia Division of Forestry

The West Virginia Division of Forestry is committed to protecting, nurturing and promoting the wise utilization and sustainability of our state's forest resources.

About The Conservation Fund

The Conservation Fund is dedicated to advancing America's land and water legacy. With our partners, we conserve land, train leaders and invest in conservation at home. Since 1985, we have helped protect more than 6.5 million acres, sustaining wild havens, working lands and vibrant communities. We're a top-ranked conservation organization, effective and efficient.

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