

# West Virginia State Parks Foundation

## Minutes of the 2025 Annual Meeting

April 7, 2025

Foundation President Greg Bray convened the meeting at 10:05 at the Stonewall Resort in Roanoke, West Virginia. Approximately 60 attendees were present. They introduced themselves and stated which park or foundation they represented.

**Secretary's Report:** Bob Hoke said the draft minutes of the 2024 Annual meeting were mailed to all foundations shortly after the meeting and copies, without the attachments, were in the packet of handouts for today's meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded. It was approved unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:** Kim McClusky passed out a financial report (see attachment #1) and made several comments:

- She has become comfortable with the Treasurer's position.
- Last year she switched from the desktop version of QuickBooks to the online version.
- She will soon have a local accountant look over her procedures and she wants to make the reports easier to understand.
- She plans to document her procedures and find a backup person.
- All accounts are currently at Truist bank. The CDs are currently getting good interest rates and the Foundation's assets currently total about \$321K.
- Many parks without foundations have balances in their accounts with the Foundation. Kim fears that as new superintendents come on board in parks they are not aware of the balances they can spend.
- Round It Up (RIU) funds from all parks go into the Foundation's Endowment Fund. RIU money from parks with foundations is then sent to those foundations and money from parks without foundations remains in the Endowment Fund. There was \$41K in RIU income in 2024 and \$23K was paid out to local foundations. In

2025 \$31K was raised from RIU and \$15K will be paid out to local foundations.

**Park System Report:** Dillard Price made the following comments about the last year:

- The system had \$39M in revenue and achieved 76% self-sufficiency. There was about \$5M in gift shop revenue and an on-line gift shop is now in operation. One study said there is about \$18 in additional local spending for each dollar spent in parks.
- Approximately \$259M in improvement projects are underway or in planning, including two new campgrounds.
- Beech Fork, Watoga, and Babcock achieved 100% self-sufficiency.
- There were 7.5 million visitors last year.
- Summersville Lake is the 36th and newest state park.
- The Park System is hosting the National Association of State Park Directors at Canaan Valley this year.

Brad Reed said that the Park System gets its leaders from within and that has resulted in excellent leaders who know the park system well and are dedicated to its success.

**Legislative Report:** Ken Caplinger gave a summary of the various bills that could affect the parks. See attachment #2 for his report.

- The 2025 legislative session has not ended yet, but it is past the point where bills can be introduced.
- The FY 2026 budget is still being discussed and it is unclear whether there will be significant impact on parks. Ken said so far there appears to be little impact.
- Several bills that were carried over from last year went nowhere this year. Some are likely to be reintroduced next year.
- The House and Senate version of the bill allowing CO<sub>2</sub> storage under state parks are

different. It is likely that some version will be passed, but Ken hopes it will require the injection sites to be away from the park boundaries.

- The bill removing many employees from the Civil Service System and making them “will and pleasure” employees is likely to pass in some form, but Senate amendments, if accepted by the House, will keep Special Natural Resource Police Officers (park superintendents and assistant superintendents) in Civil Service.
- Ken thanked the local foundations for following the rules and not lobbying against any bills. He also thanked them for passing on his messages about the bills to their members. Input from citizens was instrumental in having some damaging bills withdrawn.

Someone asked Ken whether he could include information about what groups are supporting legislation when he distributes information on problematic bills. Ken said he would try to include the information if he can find it, but it is not always obvious who is behind a bill.

**Comments by Sam England:** Sam thanked Ken Caplinger for keeping up with the many bills this year and said that with the large number of bills this year, it was almost a full-time job keeping track of them. He stated that Ken has been very careful not to over-react to bills and if Ken sends an action alert it’s an important time to take action. Calls and emails to legislators are an effective tool.

Sam discussed SB595, the Mountain Bike Responsibility Act and its concerns. But it was being worked on to assure it didn’t have unintended consequences for public lands. He said WV Trail focuses on non-motorized trails of all types and supports economic and community development. He said the West Virginia Trails Plan is being updated and community meetings to solicit input will begin soon. He hopes the plan can be used to oppose the motorized use of current non-motorized trails. He also noted that many trails need active volunteers to help maintain them.

There was a question about whether e-bikes are appropriate for use on non-motorized trails. Sam said there are many classes of e-bikes and the Park System allows use of all classes on park trails

**State Endowment Fund Report:** Sam England gave a report on the State Parks Endowment Fund, which was created in 2019 to support long-term infrastructure and maintenance in parks. It was not intended to be used for new projects, only maintenance. A second purpose was to support local foundations by providing grants.

The Endowment Fund was started with a balance of \$3.5M and income is from royalties for oil and gas leases under the Ohio River, plus donations, if there are any. At the end of FY24 the balance was \$47M which allowed the board to approve expenditures for the first time. The current balance is \$51M so it’s expected there will be an opportunity to approve additional projects this coming year.

Interest earnings have been lower than expected but still allowed the Endowment Board to allocate \$6M for various projects. These include things like water and wastewater treatment plants. Sam said he and others are hoping to use funds to start making grants for local foundation projects that are strong proposals and he hopes that may happen in 2025. The current rules require a 50% match from the foundation, but he is hoping to have administration and legislative support to get the match reduced, perhaps as low as 20%.

Sam mentioned that grants are available for some projects through the Recreational Economies Initiative (REI). He said the grants are easy to apply for if the project meets the REI requirements.

There were several questions raised by the attendees:

- How will project acceptance be determined? Dillard Price said proposals will come to the District Administrators and then through the Parks office.
- Can foundation grants be for new projects? Sam England said he thinks they can.
- What are the guidelines for requesting grants? Sam said the Parks office has a paper that has the details. [Note: The paper is on the WVSPF website in the “Forming a Local Foundation” section. The link to the PDF file is <https://wvspf.org/foundation-policies.pdf>].

**Ken Tawney Presentation:** Ken Tawney, President of the Elk River Trail Foundation, gave a presentation about his foundation's grant activities.

- Requesting grants is hard and takes time. There is no easy way to get a grant.
- A valuable resource is the West Virginia Grant Resource Centers at <https://wvgrantcenters.com/>. It is a collaboration by Marshall University and WVU. The organization provides information about available grants, and training and assistance in preparing grant requests.
- A web search for grants for your projects is a good starting point. Some types of grants, such as for land purchases, are rare.
- Think small. Rather than requesting a large grant to design and construct a project, consider asking for an initial grant for design and then a subsequent grant for construction.
- You should network to look for potential grant sources. Attend meetings, and use resources like WV Trail and the USDA Pioneer Trail Network. Keep your eyes open for unusual grants. Ken's foundation received a \$5K grant from AARP to purchase benches. Other possible sources include Cabela's, energy companies, and other local corporations. Also, talk to other local foundations in your area. Look for other grants like FEMA (if you have had a recent disaster), mine reclamation, Appalachian Regional Commission, county governments, and your local Convention & Visitor Bureau.
- Ken's foundation has a Grant Committee to distribute the task of looking for grant sources and track grant requests after they are submitted.

Ken listed some things to consider when applying for a grant: applying for a grant:

- First, make sure you qualify for the grant. Read the requirements carefully.
- Are matching Funds required? What is the nature of the match (money, labor, etc.) Is the match a reimbursement (meaning you have to spend the money and then be reimbursed)?
- Check the filing requirements. Is an audit required? Is a feasibility study required? Are letters of support required, and if so, who should provide them?
- How competitive is the grant? If there are too many applicants, is it worth the effort of preparing the request?
- What are the reporting requirements?
- Start early. Don't wait until the last minute to prepare a grant request. Start early and have plenty of time to fine tune the request before submitting it.
- Be sure your submission covers every point the application requests.
- Try to tell a compelling human story. Explain how your project will improve people's lives, not just what will be built.
- Grant writers can be helpful, especially with large or complex grants.
- Be prepared for disappointment. Not every request will be successful, but just keep trying.

**Grants from Both sides** Brad Reed spoke on his experiences as both a grant requestor and a grantor. He thanked the many folks who supported him over the years, both Park employees and local foundation personnel.

He noted that he has been on both end of the grant process as a requestor and a grant administrator. He made the following comments:

- There are 11,201 organizations in the nation giving grants. The difficult part is finding appropriate grants and applying for them. Applying for grants can be complex and confusing.
- Make sure the grant is appropriate for your project.
- Look at all the elements in the application and be sure to address all of them.
- Ask the granting organization for copies of successful grants and use them as models.
- Don't be too verbose. Be concise and to the point. Grant reviewers don't want to read lengthy attachments.
- Don't get political in the application.
- Be prepared to answer hard questions. For example, some grantors want to know how much each board member has donated.
- Be accurate and don't try to mislead the grant reviewers.

- Be prepared to meet with the grant reviewers in person if requested.
- If a match is required, be sure to have the match in hand before applying for the grant.

Brad also mentioned some red flags to avoid:

- Don't ask for more money than the grant allows.
- Don't attempt to delay or defer any required match.
- Don't make unreasonable estimates for in-kind labor or similar matches.
- Make sure your park superintendent is fully supportive of your project, and, usually, get approval for it in writing.
- Make sure there is local support for your project. Brad mentioned a proposal for a large private campground at Cacapon that was strongly opposed by the local residents.

#### **Grant Writer / Executive Director Discussion:**

Greg Bray presented a proposal to hire Brad Reed as the Foundation's Executive Director and Grant Writer. The position would be paid at an estimated rate of \$5K per month (plus expenses).

Sam England said having Brad on board should facilitate getting grants. He noted that local foundations are critical to the Park System, but having a leader is a critical step to getting grants and helping the local foundations. He then said WV Trail received a grant from the Benedum Foundation to for pay for his Executive Director

position and suggested that a similar grant may be available to the Foundation to pay for Brad.

There was a **motion to employ Brad Reed to serve as the WVSPF Executive Director and Grant Writer at the base cost of \$5K/month plus reasonable expenses.** The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Brad then said this will be a labor of love for him and that his initial focus will be on marketing and publicity for both the statewide and local foundations.

**Election of officers:** Greg Bray said the current officers are all willing to continue in office. He then solicited any additional candidates. There were no additional candidate volunteers. There was a **motion to reelect the current officers.** The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The officers are:

|                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| President:      | Greg Bray      |
| Vice President: | Kevin Anderson |
| Secretary:      | Bob Hoke       |
| Treasurer:      | Kim McCluskey  |

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 PM.

#### **Attachments:**

1. 2024 Treasurer's Report
2. Summary of the 2025 Legislative Session

### **Attendees at the WVSPF Annual Meeting on April 7, 2025**

("SP" = "State Park"      "SPF" = "State Park Foundation"      "SFF" - "State Forest Foundation")

| <b>Name</b>        | <b>Organization</b>                | <b>Email</b>               |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Joe Emmerth        | Blackwater Falls SP                | joe.a.emmerth@wv.gov       |
| Blaine Steensland  | Blackwater Falls SPF               | bes2@psu.edu               |
| Brent Maynard      | Blackwater Falls SPF               | brent.maynard@marshall.edu |
| Craig Pyles        | Blennerhassett Island              | craig.t.pyles@wv.gov       |
| Keith McClung      | Blennerhassett Island Hist. Found. | crownfloralswv@gmail.com   |
| Robin Otis Stemple | Blennerhassett Island Hist. Found. | robinostemple@gmail.com    |
| Howard Clark       | Cacapon Resort SPF                 | envirocon.clark@gmail.com  |
| Thomas Asbury      | Camp Creek SP                      | thomas.h.asbury@wv.gov     |
| Pam Buchanan       | Camp Creek SP                      | pam.j.buchanan@wv.gov      |
| Don McFarlan       | Canaan Valley SP                   | donald.b.mcfarlan@wv.gov   |
| Ben Herrick        | Canaan Valley SPF                  | ben.herrick37@gmail.com    |
| Frank Witsberger   | Cass Scenic Railroad SP            | frank.l.witsberger@wv.gov  |

|                    |                                    |                               |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Kevin Anderson     | Cedar Creek & WVSPF                | kanderson1836@gmail.com       |
| Daniel Conrad      | Cedar Creek SP                     | daniel.c.conrad@wv.gov        |
| Lisa Gaines        | Cedar Creek SPF                    | lag4415433@aol.com            |
| Landon Gumm        | Cedar Creek SPF                    | gumm.landonp@gmail.com        |
| Jesse Anderson     | Charleston Office                  | jesse.d.anderson@wv.gov       |
| Clinton Cochran    | Charleston Office                  | clinton.c.cochran@wv.gov      |
| Matthew Baker      | Charleston Office                  | matthew.s.baker@wv.gov        |
| Dillard Price      | Charleston Office                  | dillard.j.price@wv.gov        |
| Ross Koch          | Coopers Rock Foundation            | rosskoch1123@gmail.com        |
| Adam Polinski      | Coopers Rock Foundation            | adamzapple88@gmail.com        |
| Brad Atkins        | Coopers Rock SF                    | brad.m.atkins@wv.gov          |
| Ken Tawney         | Elk River Trail Foundation         | elkrivetrail@gmail.com        |
| Art Shomo          | Forks of Coal St. Nat. Area Found. | ashomo54@gmail.com            |
| Angie Bailey       | Forks of Coal St. Nat. Area Found. | bearsnbasketswv@yahoo.com     |
| Nancy Harris       | Greenbrier River Trail Foundation  | nancy.harris.wv@gmail.com     |
| Greg Shaffer       | Holly River SP                     | greg.k.shaffer@wv.gov         |
| Phillip Setterlund | Holly River SPF                    | philsetterlund@hotmail.com    |
| Donna Boggs        | Holly River SPF                    | donnal.boggs@yahoo.com        |
| Clark Sanford      | Kanawha SF                         | clark.l.sanford@wv.gov        |
| George Singleton   | Kanawha SFF                        | georgeinhk@gmail.com          |
| Brian Haga         | Little Beaver SP                   | brian.k.haga@wv.gov           |
| Kathleen Panek     | North Bend Rails-to-Trails Found.  | relax@gillumhouse.com         |
| Zane England       | North Bend SP                      | zane.t.england@wv.gov         |
| Jonathan Summers   | North Bend SPF                     | summers03@zoominternet.net    |
| Teresa Mansfield   | Pipestem Foundation                | teresamansfield@gmail.com     |
| Rebecca Peterson   | Pipestem Foundation                | wvpeterson@gmail.com          |
| Michaela Reger     | Stonewall Resort                   | mreger@stonewallresort.com    |
| Rudy Henley        | Stonewall Resort                   | jrhenley@wv-commercial.com    |
| Brennon O'Sullivan | Stonewall Resort SP                | brennon.e.o'sullivan@wv.gov   |
| Sam Morris         | Tomlinson Run SP                   | Samuel.a.morris@wv.gov        |
| Monte Pearson      | Tomlinson Run SP                   | 304-564-5497                  |
| Jacob Jackson      | Tygart Lake SP                     | jacob.a.jackson@wv.gov        |
| Shelley Elsey      | Tygart Lake SPF                    | tsebuild@comcast.net          |
| Brett Harshbarger  | Valley Falls SP                    | brett.w.harshbarger@wv.gov    |
| Cynthia Stanley    | Valley Falls SPF                   | cindi@scorchy.com             |
| Gene Conley        | Valley Falls SPF                   | touchstonegenewv@gmail.com    |
| Joshua Feather     | Watoga SP                          | josh.m.feather@wv.gov         |
| Jody Spencer       | Watoga SP                          | jody.d.spencer@wv.gov         |
| Vada Boback        | Watoga SPF                         | uboback43@gmail.com           |
| Anne Workman       | Watoga SPF                         | amworkman@frontiernet.net     |
| Mike Rich          | Watters Smith SP                   | michael.j.rich@wv.gov         |
| Sam England        | WV Trail                           | sam.england@wvtrail.org       |
| Milt Gutman        | WVSPF                              | mgutman@gutmanadvertising.com |
| Greg Bray          | WVSPF                              | director@prickettsfort.org    |
| Bob Hoke           | WVSPF                              | bob@rhoke.net                 |
| Ken Caplinger      | WVSPF                              | kencaplinger@gmail.com        |
| Brad Reed          | WVSPF                              | cspranger2@yahoo.com          |
| Kim McCluskey      | WVSPF                              | kmac5036@yahoo.com            |

## Attachment 1 - page 1

### 2024 Restricted Accounts Park Projects

| Project                          | Begin 2024<br>Balance | Paid Out  | Donation /<br>Deposits | Interest<br>Earned | Ending 2024<br>Balance | notes                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Blackwater Falls Playground      | 2,151.53              |           |                        | 239.55             | 2,391.08               | no action on account                                                                                                                              |
| Cashdollar Nature Center Fund    | 72,036.85             | 45,789.69 | 9,462.00               | 3,832.80           | 39,541.96              | Twin Falls nature center move to lodge, plumbing, Signs, entertainment system, murals                                                             |
| Endowment Account                | 88,132.56             | 25,274.33 | 44,630.17              | 3,436.93           | 110,925.33             | pay out RIU to park foundations, PayPal fees, deposits included \$41,170 in RIU and non park specific donations. Pay out park specific donations. |
| Twin Falls Lumberjack Event      | 0.00                  | 2,414.08  | 2,414.08               |                    | 0.00                   | Wyoming County Development made a one time donation for Lumberjack Event. Paid for entertainment. Zero Balance.                                   |
| Farm to Table Event              | 2,085.87              |           | 1,200.00               | 113.00             | 3,398.87               | donation from WV Agriculture                                                                                                                      |
| Fisher Playground                | 33,749.87             |           |                        | 1,977.22           | 35,727.09              | no action on account/ Tygart Lake Playground                                                                                                      |
| General Fund/ Operating          | 13,016.85             | 93.00     | 972.00                 | 734.00             | 14,629.85              | pay out for stamps, annual registration SOS, deposits from annual dues and ATM deposits                                                           |
| Lost River Fire Tower            | 1,797.62              | 4.47      | 200.00                 | 61.00              | 2,054.15               | pay out PayPal fees                                                                                                                               |
| Chief Logan Wildlife Center      | 11,906.85             | 1,565.01  | 200.00                 | 958.00             | 11,499.84              | purchased toys for animals, donation specific to WC                                                                                               |
| Chief Logan Lawson Heirs         | 0.00                  | 18,295.66 | 20,000.00              |                    | 1,704.34               | Supplies picnic tables and fire rings, Boone Co VoTech                                                                                            |
| Twin Falls St Pk Director/ Stihl | 0.00                  | 437.72    | 20,000.00              |                    | 19,562.28              | Fish Pond, Lowes concrete                                                                                                                         |
| Twin Falls Playground            | 0.00                  |           | 12,000.00              |                    | 12,000.00              | Playground equipment was purchased and will be paid in 2025                                                                                       |
| Totals                           | 224,878.00            | 93,873.96 | 111,078.25             | 11,352.50          | 253,434.79             |                                                                                                                                                   |

|                           |            |  |                           |            |
|---------------------------|------------|--|---------------------------|------------|
|                           |            |  | Accounts as of 12/31/2024 |            |
| Ending Balances           |            |  | Money Market              | 6,399.43   |
| Ending Balance Parks      | 59,407.42  |  | Checking Account          | 4,985.66   |
| Ending Balance Restricted | 253,434.79 |  | CD#1                      | 81,488.92  |
| Ending Balance 2024       | 312,842.21 |  | CD#2                      | 61,116.69  |
|                           |            |  | CD#3                      | 101,861.15 |
|                           |            |  | CD#4                      | 57,058.54  |
|                           |            |  |                           | 312,910.39 |

## Attachment 1 - page 2

### 2024 Restricted Park Accounts

| Park                          | Begin 2024<br>Balance | Pay Outs  | Donations | Interest<br>Earned | Ending 2024<br>Balance | notes                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Audra State Park              | 10,952.02             | 1,666.00  | 525.00    | 395.44             | 10,206.46              | purchased a defibulator for the park, event donation                                                      |
| Babcock State Park            | 1,053.29              |           |           | 225.97             | 1,279.26               | no action on account                                                                                      |
| Blackwater Falls State Park   | 5,757.22              |           |           | 395.44             | 6,152.66               | no action on account                                                                                      |
| Bluestone State Park          | 1,708.45              |           |           | 159.70             | 1,868.15               | no action on account                                                                                      |
| Canaan Valley State Park      | 21.18                 |           |           | 1.13               | 22.31                  | NOTE: With payment of 2024 RIU plan to zero out account                                                   |
| Carnifex Ferry Battlefield SP | 98.74                 |           |           | 4.24               | 102.98                 | no action on account                                                                                      |
| Cedar Creek State Park        | 6.00                  |           |           | 28.00              | 34.00                  | NOTE: Money in this restricted fund was paid out to Foundation per Super. This will be zeroed out in 2025 |
| Chief Logan State Park        | 3,424.33              |           |           | 319.40             | 3,743.73               | no action on account                                                                                      |
| Coopers Rock State Forest     | 421.19                | 6,630.00  | 7,873.00  | 160.00             | 1,824.19               | purchases several memorial benches and plaques, donations for benches                                     |
| Droop Mt Battlefield SP       | 1,253.78              |           |           | 395.00             | 1,648.78               | no action on account                                                                                      |
| Greenbrier State Forest       | 7,198.25              |           | 500.00    | 452.00             | 8,150.25               | donation park specific                                                                                    |
| Holly River State Park        | 5,249.90              |           |           | 319.00             | 5,568.90               | no action on account                                                                                      |
| Kumbrabow State Forest        | 272.78                |           |           | 17.00              | 289.78                 | no action on account                                                                                      |
| Lost River State Park         | 4,135.85              | 1,046.94  | 728.00    | 169.50             | 3,986.41               | upgraded WIFI Hardy Communications, deposits Art in the Park, donation for bench                          |
| Moncove Lake State Park       | 10,936.36             |           |           | 559.00             | 11,495.36              | no action on account                                                                                      |
| Pipestem State Park           | 15,150.47             | 15,250.17 | 100.00    | 799.00             | 799.30                 | purchased RTV for park, donation park specific donation, NOTE: zero out acct to foundation                |
| Seneca State Forest           | 1,228.00              |           |           | 160.00             | 1,388.00               | no action on account                                                                                      |
| Tygart Lake State Park        | 686.90                |           |           | 160.00             | 846.90                 | no action on account                                                                                      |
| TOTALS                        | 69,554.71             | 24,593.11 | 9,726.00  | 4,719.82           | 59,407.42              |                                                                                                           |

**Attachment #2****Summary of 2025 Legislative Session Relative to WV State Parks**

Let me start by noting that the 2025 Legislative session has not yet concluded. It will not finish till this Saturday, April 12. However, it's too late on the Legislative calendar for any new bills to be introduced or pass one Chamber and be sent to the other. There were a number of introduced bills in the Legislature that would have or potentially still could affect the park system if passed. I will focus on the most important ones. Also, one vital thing that remains up in the air as of today is the FY 26 budget. The House fully passed its version last week and negotiations are on between the House and Senate to agree on a final version. So, it remains to be seen if what passes the full legislature has any significant impact on DNR/Parks financial resources. Now, let's proceed to an overview of pertinent 2025 legislation.

- SB 688 was a carryover from a similar bill that did not pass last year. Its stated purpose was woodlands wildfire control on all public lands through removal of "biomass", and could have possibly opened the door for logging in the state park system. It never even appeared on the Senate Natural Resource Committee agenda and so it is "dead" for this year.
- SB 9 was another carryover from 2024 but did not move at all this year. It would have opened up all state owned public lands and structures to property taxation. It would have imposed an enormous financial burden on DNR/ Parks.
- SB 18 was also a carryover from 2024 which did not move. It would have allowed county commissions to impose a user fee ( called a health and safety fee) for ALL lodging, tourism, and recreational facilities and raised prices paid by all park system visitors and even local folk wanting to use swimming pools, picnic shelters, golf courses, boat rentals and the like.
- SB 711 – As has been the case in numerous sessions recently, this bill was an attempt by Senator Maynard to open up park system trails to off road vehicle/ATV use. It would have totally removed the current prohibition in Chapter 20 of State Code on establishing ATV, ORV, or UTV motorized trail systems within state parks and forests (except Cabwaylingo which already has allowance for this). It was on the April 17 agenda of the Senate Committee on Transportation, which is chaired by Senator Maynard, but got pulled off at the last minute. I attribute this to the flood of calls and emails that I imagine other committee members got in opposition to this bill after it became known. It is now dead for 2025. However, I am sure we can expect it back in some form next year. Three other Maynard bills, SB 752 (Wildlife Viewing Stamp), SB 754(Outdoor Disability Act), and SB 920(Off Highway Vehicle Act), could have also opened doors for off road vehicle use on public lands in a more indirect manner but never appeared on the agenda of the Senate Natural Resources Committee. Hence, they are also done for this year.
- SB 627 – This bill would allow creation of "pore spaces" under state parks for underground injection and storage of carbon dioxide gas. It is already allowed under state forests and wildlife management areas. There are concerns about the possible impact of transmission lines, injection well sites, and even the toxicity of CO2 leakage. The Senate and House have passed versions that differ due to amendments on both sides. The Senate amendment says there can be no disturbance of the surface of state park property for drilling or injection. The House amendment says that the center of an injection well pad must be 200 feet from a state park boundary BUT also says that the Commerce Secretary and DNR Director can waive this requirement after considering the impact of a proposed well site location on viewshed, noise, or impact on public use and enjoyment of park property. In other words, it is still alive and now both sides have to agree on their changes. It will likely pass in some form.
- HB 2008 – This is the bill that reorganizes part of the Executive Branch including the Department of Commerce which DNR/Parks is under. The concern with this bill is not reorganization but that

it includes provisions to remove Civil Service coverage and access to the state employee grievance procedure from any new employees that are hired as well as any current employees who might decide to transfer to a new position. It is one of the more concerning bills I have seen in a long time. In effect, it would make staff the equivalent of “will and pleasure” employees who can be removed from employment for any reason. It would greatly affect recruitment, retention and morale. The process this bill is going through is very complicated but to reduce it to simplest terms; it passed the House but with an amendment that would also remove DNR Law Enforcement from DNR and put it under the Dept. of Homeland Security; it is on second reading in the Senate today but with an amendment to keep DNR Law Enforcement in DNR and which also specifies that Natural Resource Police and Special Natural Resource Police (park supts and asst supts) would keep Civil Service coverage. Also, that the Commerce Secretary can keep certain employees under Civil Service if necessary to comply with federal laws and rules to qualify for federal funding. If the Senate passes its version, it will go back to the House to see if they agree with the Senate or further amend it. If the House and Senate don’t agree then it can go to a joint conference committee. I myself hope the bill dies but doubt that will be the case.

This is probably not a complete list of all 2025 bills that could, or will, affect the park system and if I have missed any of great significance our active Parks staffers here can speak up and mention what those might be. However, these are the ones that have attracted the most attention.

To conclude, let me commend you for staying within the guidelines imposed upon 501-C-3 non-profit organizations when it comes to politics. Condensed down to a few words, the IRS does not allow a majority of a non-profit’s activities to be directed to lobbying and the DNR/Parks guidelines basically mirror this. To violate this mandate risks tax free status and also recognition by DNR/Parks as a cooperating entity. The best way to avoid crossing this line is for our Foundations to focus on providing educational information to legislators about the potential impact of proposed legislation rather than outright lobbying, and for us to remember that we all, as private citizens, can reach out to our elected officials to inform them of our opinions on proposed legislation. Also please remember the importance of the Legislative Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee visits to park system areas. These provide great opportunities for you and your members to meet with and educate legislators during these tours when they happen to schedule a trip to your area. Thanks to each of you and your Foundations for all you do to protect, preserve, and improve this great state park system.

-- end --

# **2024 Reports Submitted by Local Foundations**

## **Blackwater Falls State Park Foundation**

This year begins the third year for our young Foundation. A year that has seen both strides and sadness. The Park's professional leadership team was finally in place last Spring with Superintendent Marshall Markley arriving to compliment the new Assistant Superintendent, Ben Leedom. A permanent leadership team was now in place and the team was clearly supportive of the Foundation and its plans. Tragically, Superintendent Markley passed away after only a few months in his new role. Fortunately, and only after a brief period, Ben Leedom was named the new Superintendent, although the Assistant Superintendent's remained unfilled until just a few weeks ago when Joe Emmerth joined the Park's staff. Given this significant transition of leadership over the past year, it could have negatively impacted the work of the Foundation, but that was not the case. Superintendent Leedom's time, active participation and obvious commitment to the work of this Foundation has enabled our collaborative activities and plans to move forward without interruption.

We were notified by International Dark Sky that the Blackwater Falls State Park met eligibility requirements for a formal Dark Sky Park application and have done so. The Foundation worked with Park staff to determine what lighting must be retrofitted to be Dark Sky compliant. The survey of the Park's lighting was completed and the Foundation has begun purchasing lighting fixtures. To the extent possible, the Foundation is also supporting the cost of installing these new fixtures. Lighting replacement is a priority of the Foundation.

However, the Park's needs are many and the Foundation helped to fund the renovation of the basketball courts and the purchase of a BWO "smart" Digital Telescope to enhance programming offered through the Park's Nature Center. Funds have been approved to acquire three additional bike racks this spring and discussions are taking place related to the design and financial support for a new playground facility.

Not all of the projects include financial support as reflected by the inaugural "trail maintenance" activity bringing volunteers and the Blackwater Falls State Park staff together to monitor and enhance existing trails. The new initiative is being conducted monthly, weather permitting.

The Foundation continues to present and participate in various state and regional conferences held at the Park such as the Kanawha Valley Astronomy Society, Astrophotography Weekend and the West Virginia Wildflower Pilgrimage. We sponsored a running/walking team for the area's largest fundraising event that's entitled "Run for It" and brings over a thousand participants to the small community of Davis.

The Foundation has acquired a sufficient number of attractive "donation boxes" that are placed in various locations of the Park and have proven rather successful. Some preliminary work has been undertaken to explore potential sources of grant and gift funding, particularly in support of the Dark Sky initiative.

## **Canaan Valley State Park Foundation**

In the 2024 calendar, the Canaan Valley State Park Foundation completed several listed projects and events. The Canaan Valley State Park Foundation hosted another Sunrise Scramble ski race. The Canaan Valley State Park Foundation continued with trail work at the State Park. The Canaan Valley State Park Foundation funded the installation of barbeque grills and bicycle washing stations throughout the Canaan Valley Resort State Park.

One of the major projects for the Canaan Valley State Park Foundation consists of the funding and construction of a picnic pavilion for the Canaan Valley Resort State Park. The Canaan Valley Resort State Park needs picnic facilities for day visitors. The installation of a picnic pavilion will go a long way toward servicing that need. In addition to the pavilion, the Canaan Valley State Park Foundation continues to fund the installation

of picnic grills and bicycle washing stations at the Canaan Valley Resort State Park.

### **Completed projects for the previous year.**

#### **Sunrise Scramble March 2025**

One featured Canaan Valley Resort State Park activity is the annual Sunrise Scramble. The Sunrise Scramble is an uphill skiing event organized by the Canaan Valley Resort State Park Foundation. The Sunrise Scramble is a fundraising activity to assist in promoting uphill and back-country skiing at the Canaan Valley Resort State Park.

The Sunrise Scramble has grown into one of the premier events in the area. This year, we enjoyed good weather and great participation.

## **Uphill Skiing at the Canaan Valley Resort State Park ski hill**

The Canaan Valley State Park Foundation drafted and achieved passage of an uphill skiing policy at the Canaan Valley Resort State Park. The uphill skiing policy benefits the residents of the local communities by making the ski hill available even when the cost of either lift tickets or season passes are not within reach.

As the resort becomes accustomed to uphill skiers, we hope to continue to benefit the local community by expanding the uphill ski policy.

## **Ongoing activities at the Canaan Valley Resort State Park.**

### **Picnic Pavilion**

Canaan Valley State Park Foundation obtained funding and purchased a picnic pavilion at the Canaan Valley Resort State Park.

With 60 inches of annual rainfall, the need for a Picnic Pavilion is justifiable. The pavilion funding has been obtained, the kit has been purchased, and we hope to complete construction this year.

### **Bicycle Trails, Bicycle Wash Stations, Picnic Tables, and Barbeque Grills**

The Canaan Valley State Park Foundation plans to continue working on improving the bicycle trails, hiking trails, bicycle wash stations, and picnic tables in the various locations around the Canaan Valley Resort State Park.

## **Coopers Rock Foundation**

In spring of 2024, the Coopers Rock Foundation (CRF) proposed a new trail to WV DNR and WV DOF and it was approved by both agencies. During the summer and fall CRF coordinated the all-volunteer construction of the 2.2 mile long trail, now known as the Lonesome Boulder Trail, parallel to Henry Clay Furnace Road. This is the first major trail built in the forest since the early 2000s when the Foundation created the Roadside Trail. It is suitable for hiking, mountain biking, and cross-country skiing.

CRF replaced the roof, door, shutters, and hinges using historically accurate replicas on the structure referred to as the "Spring House." The Spring House is a stone structure near the main overlook that was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps to house a well that used to be a source of drinking water. Although the functional purpose for the Spring House is now obsolete, it is a beautiful piece of historic architecture that is within the boundary of the Camp Rhododendron district on the National Register of Historic Places.

CRF completed a new, professional quality topo map that details all of the trails and other features of Coopers Rock State Forest. It is now available for sale at the two bike shops in Morgantown as well as the Trading Post at Coopers Rock.

CRF held a running race: the Coopers Rock 50 km and Half Marathon in April, as well as two festivals: the Celebration of the Outdoors in October and Winterfest in February.

Our trail maintenance activities included 29 separate volunteer trail work days with over 850 hours of work performed. Maintenance was conducted on six trails, the Trout Pond, Henry Clay Iron Furnace, the Overlook Picnic Area, and the Rhododendron Campground. Over 1000 tree seedlings were planted in heavily impacted parts of the forest. A West Virginia University class helped to install new lantern posts, tent pads, and plant Hemlock saplings at the Rhododendron Campground.

## **Elk River Trail Foundation**

- **Arc Power Grant:** Since the last meeting, Elk River Trail Foundation (ERTF) has largely worked on getting its Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant of \$1.365 million in place and commencing implementation of the \$1.7 million project.
- **Kayak Launch Sites:** A landscape architect was hired to prepare site plans for two kayak launch sites on Elk River in Sutton and Gassaway. The project is aided by grants from ARC, Partners Community Capital, and the Braxton County Convention and Visitors Bureau via a TC Energy grant.
- **Executive Director Search:** ERTF is launching a search to hire an executive director. If interested, send your resume to [elkrivertail@gmail.com](mailto:elkrivertail@gmail.com)!
- **Benches:** With the aid of a grant from AARP and work provided by the Department of Natural Resources, installed 13 more benches along the rail trail.
- **Marathon:** The third annual Elk River Trail Marathon attracted 250 runners from 20 states in 2024.
- **Signage on ohe River:** Completed placing mileage markers on the Elk River Water Trail in Braxton

County and into Clay County. Clay County and Kanawha County to go.

- **Planning Clean-ups:** Working with several groups to schedule rail trail and water trail cleans-ups in 2025.

- **Bigfoot:** Thanks to Clay County High School Shop Class, a proud new addition to the trail.

## Forks of Coal State Natural Area Foundation

During 2024, the following actions were taken by the Forks of Coal State natural Area Foundation:

- Completed the installation of additional exhibits at the Claudia L. Workman Wildlife Education Center. This included a display about American Indian history and artifacts found by a local archaeologist in the Coal River watershed.
- Completed set-up of a headwaters aquarium with native fish, crustaceans and a softshell turtle in the classroom.
- Commissioned and paid for a woodcock taxidermy exhibit to add to the mature forest island.
- Ordered and installed approximately 33 bricks at the Center.
- Worked with the DNR on replacement of the bridge on the Orange Trail.
- Provided volunteers for Center staff for several school visits and public programs. The Center saw over 5,400 visitors, including more than 1,200 students on field trips. There were 30 school and home school groups that visited.
- There were 11 special events at the Center.
- Provided volunteers to help maintain the landscaping around the center.

- Worked with TC Energy volunteers to conduct an Earth Day environmental event that included landscape improvements, trail maintenance and broadcasting hickory nuts in the woods.
- Worked with Boone Career and Technical Center to install the outdoor Christmas Tree.
- Other trail improvements were made on several workdays throughout the year. These included:
  - ▣ Removal of downed trees and shrubs
  - ▣ Maintenance of the vegetation in the pollinator field
- Purchased several pieces of equipment to aid in trail maintenance.
- Collaborated with the DNR on a master plan for the DNR property and restoration of trails on the Workman Estate property across the highway from the State Natural Area.
- Supported the DNR during the Beyond the Backyard event.
- Assisted with the WVDEP's Project WET event for schoolchildren.

## Friends of Cass

The Friends of Cass (FOC) is the successor organization to the Mountain State Railroad & Logging Historical Association (MSR&LHA). The Association had dual focuses: preservation and documentation of West Virginia's logging railroads, and support for the Cass Scenic Railroad State Park. With the privatization of the Park's railroad operation the Association's membership declined and decision to dissolve it was made in late 2023. A new 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the Friends of Cass,

was formed and all of MSR&LHA's assets were transferred to it. The focus of the FOC is solely on supporting the Park and preserving its historic character.

In 2024 the FOC coordinated Cass Days, which brought record crowds to Cass for a weekend of music, vendors, a cake walk, and the annual Parade of Steam. The FOC is planning to continue the Cass Days tradition in 2025 and have more events that attract visitors and raise awareness of the Park.

## Greenbrier River Trail Foundation

In GRTF's fourth year our efforts were focused on support of the Park Superintendent's number one priority: re-decking the 37 bridges on the Trail. In support of this goal, the GRTF Board secured match funds and initiated next steps.

2022 and 2023 Transportation Alternatives grants were approved totaling approximately \$1.2 m for re-decking the 37 bridges on the Trail. Match funding of \$305,000 is required. We have obtained the following commitments:

|                                                     |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| • Hollowell Dawkins                                 | \$20,000  |
| • Seneca Foundation                                 | \$25,000  |
| • James F. B. Peyton Foundation                     | \$148,000 |
| • State Parks Foundation 2022/2023 (Phase I and II) | \$50,000  |
| • Greenbrier River Trail ASSOCIATION                | \$30,000  |
| • Greenbrier River Trail FOUNDATION                 | Remainder |

J.B. Turman Engineering completed a design study for the scope of the project. We anticipate advertising, bid and contract award by WV Department of Transportation (Highways) in 2025.

#### Other activities:

- Grant Applications (In total we applied for 6 grants; 2 approved; 1 pending.

Successful 2024 Grant Applications:

- Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area \$10,000 (to update website and include culture and history information)
- GRTF: James F. B. Peyton Foundation \$50,000 (Match for Bridge Re-decking)

Pending 2024 Grant Application: State Parks Foundation \$25,000 (Match for partial resurfacing Mile Marker 16 and South)

- In 2024 our use of Little Green Light (LGL) donor management software and 2024 (Spring/Fall) Newsletter prompted donations of approximately \$26,671 (an increase of more than \$20,000). We currently have 1300 members in the database which is integrated with Pay Pal and MailChimp to facilitate collection of funds and efficient communication of Newsletters etc. We also introduced another donation platform, Give Butter, in the fall of 2024.
- We are executing the recommendations made in the Gray, Griffith & Mays financial review. This is part of our effort to improve our governance efforts and to support our grant applications process.
- Bike Repair Stations: We added 3 new bike repair stations. There are now 7 bike repair stations on

the GRT, one at each of the two Caldwell parking lots, one each at Renick, Seebert, Clover Lick, Marlinton and Cass. Of the newest 3, Greenbrier Valley Bike Club donated for the purchase of the one at Seebert while Board member, Craig Attkisson and his wife donated the money for the purchase of the ones at Clover Lick and Cass. Bigfoot Braxxies Bikes in Gassaway built and installed the bike repair stations. Volunteers built the concrete pads for the new bike repair stations.

- Routine Trail maintenance (cut and remove downed trees, trim bushes, trash pickup, clean shelters, repair shelters, weed removal around new landscaping at Caldwell Trailhead). Of note, a trail counter on the southern terminus was damaged by vandals in the Summer 2 months after installation. We are in the process of repairing the counter for reinstallation. A second counter provided by the Hanging Rock Raptor Observatory will be installed in Marlinton.
- At the new Caldwell Trailhead Parking Lot, Dale McCutcheon, volunteer, created a pollinator garden and installed the rain barrel donated by Greenbrier River Watershed Assoc.
- GRTF's policy proposal re: location, purchase and bench installation on the Trail for the Park Superintendent's consideration was rejected by DNR/State Parks. At this point we no longer install benches on the Trail.

Meanwhile, GRTA actions include:

- US Forest Service: 2020 Secure Rural Schools (SRS) Title II grant, for Informational Signage (\$40,000) was completed. Board members, Rob Gronan and Nancy Harris with the support of Lyn Guy and other volunteers, completed installation of the signs. The signs have been well received by trail users. All funds were expended.
- On behalf of the Trail (completed under the auspices of GRTA) the 2024 Great Greenbrier River Race cleared approximately \$27,000 which will be used for future Trail projects.

**Volunteer Hours increased by 122 hours in calendar year 2024 totaling 3,243 hours.**

## Holly River State Park Foundation

Our Foundation had a very good year. We were able to complete several projects, even with bad weather, purchased gravel for all camp sites and Parking areas, several dangerous trees cut and cleaned up. I could

make a list but to say we have a very good Foundation. Irish Road Bowling, Trunk or Treat, Easter Egg Hunt all were huge successes. Hoping 2025 only gets better.

## North Bend Rails-to-Trails Foundation

It has been a busy year for our Foundation, and we'd like to share with you a few things we've been working on:

- The North Bend Rail Trail Superintendent Paul Elliott and his crew, assisted by the Foundation's Vice-Chair Ken Adams, finished the new shelter located beside the comfort station installed last year at Walker (mm 14.1). Final dressing will have to wait for better weather, but the shelter is complete, with animal-resistant trash receptacle, fire ring, and hitching rail.
- In 2024, the Foundation was awarded a second \$100,000 grant from the WV Transportation Alternative and Recreational Trails Program to survey and ditch the trail. It is part of a multi-phase project to divert damaging rain and groundwater from the trail.
- During this winter months the trail crew and NBRTF volunteers trimmed approximately 6 miles of brush closing in on the trail. In addition, spot areas were cut back as needed. During this process any large, discarded items along with rotten/damaged barricades and damaged gates were removed.
- The old, damaged shelter at MM 66.6 in Salem was removed and a grant submitted for a replacement shelter with animal-resistant trash receptacle, fire ring, and hitching rail.
- In 2024 we again partnered with MPLX and participated in WV DEP's Make It Shine Program. Approximately 280 pounds of trash were removed from the North Bend Rail Trail, consisting of several bags of trash, two tires and miscellaneous pieces of steel.
- Last spring the Parkersburg Area Community Foundation & Regional Affiliates awarded the Foundation \$6,000 to help purchase five animal-resistant trash receptacles. In 2024, these receptacles were placed along the trail in Wood and Ritchie Counties.
- We partnered with the North Bend State Park to host our annual Luminary Walk which attracted around 120 hikers.
- We attended several fairs and festivals in north central West Virginia to promote the trail and sell our products. These events include the Apple Butter Festival, Ephraim Bee Festival, Mineral Wells Craft Fair and Volcano Days.

## North Bend State Park Foundation

The North Bend State Park Foundation, Inc., has had a productive twelve months. Our fundraising efforts raised over \$9000.00. Our major fundraiser Chocolate With Friends at North Bend is a chocolate themed tasting event. This was our third year holding the event. Attendance was 155 persons in 2023, 166 in 2024 and jumped to 262 this year, making it one of the best attended events at North Bend State Park Lodge.

Our board membership and participation continue to be excellent.

We only completed one modest project. We solicited donations from the community to buy materials for the construction of new picnic tables. We were able to have eight picnic tables constructed by high school students at the Mid Ohio Valley Technical Institute. Those tables were delivered and put in place in March of 2025.

## Pipestem Foundation

2024 was a slow year for our foundation and we were unable to get many projects off ground, some of which were due to changes in administration at the park, large scale construction projects on the park and the unavailability of our volunteers.

The activities we facilitated in 2024 included:

- Help sponsor the Homegrown Music Series at the Black Bear patio at McKeever Lodge on Friday nights throughout the year.
- The installation of an ADA wheelchair swing at the Campground, bringing the total ADA wheelchair swings on the park to two.
- The purchase of bat boxes for the Amphitheater.

- Providing funding for luncheons for the employees of the park.
- Collaborating with park personnel to identify and approve individuals native to West Virginia for induction into the West Virginia Hall of Fame at McKeever Lodge.

We are hoping that 2025 will be a more productive year for our foundation. We are currently in the planning stage of a landscaping project for the Canyon Rim Center and hope to have it completed by the time the new aerial tramway opens this, Summer. The project will consist of utilizing one of the islands in the parking lot at the top of the tramway and installing benches, a water fountain, and planting flowers and shrubs. This should

make a very picturesque location overlooking the Tramway and Bluestone Gorge.

## Stonewall State Park Foundation

The Stonewall State Park Foundation (SSPF) continues to facilitate and support improvements projects at Stonewall Resort State Park, located in Roanoke, WV. In the past year, we have worked on the following projects at Stonewall:

- Sponsoring the Beyond the Fairways Tournament with First Tee of West Virginia, encouraging individuals and groups to participate as a method of fundraising. This tournament will take place again in 2025.
- Sponsoring Lewis County Math Field Day at Stonewall Resort and providing lunches for participating teachers and students.

- Continued to hold the Roanoke Shoe Drive, in which we provide a new pair of shoes for every child at Roanoke Elementary School.
- Hosted the United States Marine Corps for an Innovated Readiness Training Project to conduct earthwork and trail maintenance around Stonewall.
- Created and placed new trail signs for hiking trails in the park, including QR codes to find trail mapping and information.

Stonewall will continue to aid the Resort in completing various expansion projects to enhance the property, through fundraising, sponsorships, and grants. Our next major projects are two Abandoned Mine Lands grants to enhance the property with new amenities.

## Tygart Lake State Park Foundation

### Events:

- **Annual Easter Egg Hunt** is on the TLSP Nature Center lawn. Children of all ages hunting 3000+ eggs, lots of candy, and pictures with the Easter Bunny is a highlight.
- **Spring and Fall Employee Luncheons** - In appreciation for the Staff from the State Park, Marina, Army Corp, and Adventure Park, the volunteers prepare and serve lunch. We work closely together all year, and this gives us an opportunity to fellowship together.
- **Annual Youth Fishing Derby** is held on the shores of Tygart Lake. Volunteers and USACE join together to host a day of fishing, fun, and food; we distribute fishing poles, supplies, and prizes.
- **Memorial Day Weekend** of Events in conjunction with The Spirit of Grafton downtown. Music in the Park with a local band and participation in the Memorial Day Parade. Members decorated the park trucks, marched, and handed out candy to the spectators to promote our park.
- **Music in the Park** - Summer Music Series, occurs monthly with a variety of bands.
- **Murder Mystery Dinner Show** - Naturalist - We sponsored this sold-out program.
- **Earth Day** - Volunteers, First Energy, participated in Park Cleanup Day/Trail Clean up.
- **Celebrate WV Program** - Sponsored WV Day Activity - the Mick Sutter, Music Program.

- **Snakes of West Virginia** - Program sponsored by naturalist at the Nature Center.
- **Birds of Prey** - Wings of Wonder sponsored by naturalist at Nature Center shelter.
- **Farm to Table** - The Lodge sponsored and provided locally grown food to a sold-out dinner with Bluegrass music.
- **Appalachian Autumn Fest** with crafters, vendors, exhibits, hayride, Chinese auction, and making apple-butter starting at sunrise, while the spectators helped with stirring.
- **Fall Event** - Naturalist - Friday, Geology Presentation with a Hike on Saturday.
- **Spooktacular Drive Through/Trunk or Treat** for Halloween Event with community support.
- In November marched in Annual **Veteran's Day Parade** and sponsored a Turkey Trot.

### Christmas

**Breakfast with Santa** - At the lodge, members provided Christmas cookies, hot chocolate, a craft, a picture with Santa, face-painting, and a book give-a-way. Breakfast is served by the Lodge restaurant.

**Christmas Parade** - We decorated the park truck, marched, and distributed candy.

## Valley Falls State Park Foundation

### 2024 INCOME

- Gift Shop Sales \$44,327.00
- Chair Rentals for weddings \$1,066.00
- Individual donations \$975.00

### 2024 PROJECTS

- Purchased AED
- Created VFSP informational flyer for Marion County Visitors Center including discount coupon for our gift shop
- Provided two porta potties while restrooms were closed
- Two volunteers attended vendor show at Appalachian Glass in Weston
- Master Gardener plus Foundation volunteers continue work on flower beds
- Year-end bonus provided for two seasonal Park employees

### 2024 VOLUNTEER HOURS

- Gift Shop was opened weekends plus Fridays and holidays May through October
- Approximately 1,000 volunteer hours (gift shop, gardening, meetings)

### PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Continued updating of Facebook
- Third year to sponsor Christmas light display at Morris Park
- VFSP flyer for County-wide Marketing Program

### PARK EVENTS

- Wild turkey Run, Car Show, Endurance Marathon, Enduro Mountain Bike Race, weekly yoga in the park, kayak and tube float and Saw Whet owl banding

### 2025 PROJECTS

- Gift Shop will be opening in May
- Continue to seek additional funding for Educational Pavilion

## Watoga State Park Foundation

The Watoga State Park Foundation members and volunteers had an active year of project completions. In 2024 the WSPF:

- Contributed \$20,000 and received a \$20,000 State Parks Foundation matching grant for the conversion of the old park tennis courts to new pickle ball courts. The park provided new fencing and purchased equipment to complete the project. The WSPF sponsored a grand opening “It’s a Big Dill” pickle party on August 31st for park visitors.
- Completed the installation of new interpretive signs at the Brooks Memorial Arboretum which includes 74 tree identification signs and replacement of 4 trail maps. The foundation provided \$1,250 toward purchase of the metal post supports, and provided 395 volunteer hours in 2024 to complete the project.
- Funded and repaired the collapsed CCC shelter in the arboretum with a grant received from the Pocahontas County Historic Landmarks Commission (\$3,000).
- Cleared debris and logs from hiking trails, widened many sections of overgrown trails, and regularly mowed the Workman Cabin and Cemetery.
- Provided \$10,500 in funding for the reopening of Jesse’s Cove Trail which had been impassable for several years. This popular trail connects the Riverside CG to the Historic Workman Cabin and Anne Bailey Trail.
- Continued work on the ridgetop mountain bike trail system under construction by volunteers and park

staff along the Workman Ridge and Anne Bailey trail area.

- Continued editing and review of the Watoga State Park Foundation E-book and printed edition on the history of the park with final publication set for the summer of 2025.
- Developed and printed dark sky post cards. These sell for \$1.00 each and have information on the back which meets the dark skies agreement for an educational component.
- Funded the Owl Program, Star Party, Halloween Parry, and trail safety lights for the night time Synchronized Firefly Walks. Used remaining federal dark sky grants funding to replace non-compliant light fixtures at the park office flagpole and supply building, and the rest was used to purchase dark sky education displays and interactive material/activities at the nature center, as well as two additional dark skies backpacks for visitors use.
- Provided public information booth at Pioneer Days and Art in the Park events.
- WSPF members and volunteers provided over 3,500 hours of event assistance and project work in 2024 in support of Watoga State Park.

In 2025, we plan to continue assisting the park as needed AND:

- Focus on pursuing grants for the purchase of much needed playground equipment throughout the park.

- Assist with funding and roof replacement for the Anne Bailey Tower.
- Continued trail maintenance and mountain bike trail improvements.
- Assist with replacement of foot bridge in the Arboretum, and bench replacement in CCC shelter.

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