

News Release
Kentucky Natural Lands Trust
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March 3, 2015
For Immediate Release

Kentucky Natural Lands Trust expands the largest conservation effort in the Commonwealth's history

Kentucky Natural Lands Trust, a statewide land trust, is working on the largest landscape conservation effort in the Commonwealth's history with a campaign to protect thousands of additional acres on Pine Mountain in southeast Kentucky. To date, KNLT has protected 7,000 acres on Pine Mountain. Fourteen projects covering more than 9,000 acres of significant natural areas are targeted, significantly furthering the goal of a large contiguous protected wildlife corridor.

The conservation effort has been launched with lead gifts from The Owsley Brown II Family Foundation, based in Louisville, KY and from Thomas Dupree, Sr., of Lexington, KY.

"Inspired by the largest land conservation grant in the state's history from The Owsley Brown II Family Foundation and Christina Lee Brown, and major support from Thomas Dupree, Sr., the Forecastle Foundation, and a strong base of long-term supporters, KNLT is able to move forward on land conservation projects that have been many years in the making," said Hugh Archer, executive director for KNLT. "We are prepared to add 1,200 acres to Blanton Forest in Harlan County, and purchase some of the largest remaining private tracts on the mountain in Bell, Whitley, and Letcher counties. Each of these projects taken alone is significant; together they represent a milestone in private conservation efforts in our state."

Archer has named Ronald R. Van Stockum, Jr., of Shelbyville as Campaign Chairman to lead KNLT's efforts to meet land acquisition goals.

We too often forget that healthy natural areas have a significant effect on maintaining our individual and community health. Our unconscious reliance on certain special places goes unnoticed until they quit working to mitigate our activities. The 120-mile-long Pine Mountain range is an essential part of the region's biological and economic resiliency. Biologically, it provides critical habitat and migratory routes for many species, including black bears, neotropical birds, and monarch butterflies. Diverse, uninterrupted habitat is key to species survival in a period of shifting climate. Economically, Pine Mountain represents a wealth of natural capital that can be part of the region's new sustainable economy. The mountain harbors the headwaters of many important water sources in Kentucky. Protecting these streams benefits many state residents and businesses as well as a significant percentage of the state's rare plants and animals.

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KNLT protects Kentucky wildlands through partnerships with private landowners, community leaders, conservation biologists, and state and federal wildlife agencies. KNLT purchases land for protection, and also utilizes conservation easements, management agreements, and sustainable forestry initiatives.

“This is our perfect storm,” Archer said. “Our staff, strategic plans, and board are first class. Twenty years of groundwork and negotiation for some of our most significant remaining natural areas, and unprecedented show of support from Kentucky’s leading investors gives us the confidence to accelerate our work on the mountain and help with tourism and the economic transition in the region.”

KNLT’s staff and board include individuals who are experienced in the conservation field, and who possess knowledge of biodiversity assessment, protection, stewardship, and the social sciences and legal processes applicable to land conservation in Kentucky.

Information about KNLT is available at www.knlt.org and on Facebook.

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