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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kentucky Natural Lands Trust Expands Laurel Gap Preserve

Berea, KY July 25, 2023 – Kentucky Natural Lands Trust (KNLT) protected new wildlands in Whitley County this summer with the Davis addition to the Laurel Gap Preserve. The recently safeguarded 36-acres expands KNLT's preserve to more than 300 acres. The new tract, on the south face of the Pine Mountain, secures important forested habitat at the headwaters of the Cumberland River.

KNLT established the Laurel Gap Preserve in spring 2022, safeguarding wildlands along one of the most remote stretches of Pine Mountain on the Kentucky-Tennessee border. The preserve protects contiguous forest that is habitat for the endangered northern long-eared and Indiana bats, as well as birds, bears, salamanders and numerous other species. It also safeguards headwater streams of Laurel Fork, a tributary of the Cumberland River — **an extraordinary watershed with notable rare species**. The aquatic communities of Central Appalachia are the most biodiverse temperate freshwater ecosystems in the world.

The Laurel Gap Preserve contributes to a network of more than 8,000 acres of connected conservation lands, including several KNLT preserves and the Archer-Benge State Nature Preserve, which was established in 2012 via a partnership between KNLT and the Office of Kentucky Nature Preserves.

Protecting Kentucky's diverse wildlands depends on a network of diverse partners. KNLT deeply appreciates the support of individual donors, foundations, and partners. This particular project was made possible by the Imperiled Bat Conservation Fund (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Kentucky Field Office).

About Kentucky Natural Lands Trust

KNLT is a nationally accredited nonprofit working to protect biodiverse and climate resilient landscapes in ways that benefit communities. Through partnerships with government agencies, nonprofits, corporations and private individuals, KNLT has protected more than 55,000 acres of wildlands throughout the Commonwealth. For more information on how you can help KNLT protect wildlands, visit [KNLT.org](https://www.knlt.org).