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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Laurel Fork Preserve Established in Whitley County

Kentucky Natural Lands Trust's newest preserve is part of 8,000 acres of conservation lands

Berea, KY February 14, 2024 – In late December, Kentucky Natural Lands Trust (KNLT) established the 282-acre Laurel Fork Preserve on Pine Mountain in Whitley County. The preserve combines a newly acquired tract with land protected in 2020. The new preserve is part of over 8,000 contiguous acres of conservation lands along the Kentucky-Tennessee border that include the Archer-Benge State Nature Preserve which KNLT conserved with partners.

"The Laurel Fork watershed has some of the most remote and biodiverse stretches of Pine Mountain. The terrestrial and aquatic diversity of this area is extraordinary. For more than a decade KNLT has worked with partners to ensure the natural heritage of the area is conserved."
~Greg Abernathy, KNLT Executive Director

The preserve protects the forested headwaters of Laurel Fork, a tributary of the Cumberland River and part of the most biodiverse temperate freshwater ecosystem on Earth. These forests are critical summer habitat for endangered northern long-eared and Indiana bat while the streams support populations of the endangered Cumberland elktoe (mussel) and Cumberland darter (fish).

For nearly 30 years, KNLT has safeguarded wildlands along Pine Mountain, a biodiverse and climate resilient landscape in Central Appalachia. Pine Mountain provides critical habitat for thousands of species of plants and animals; nearly 200 of these species are considered rare, some found nowhere else on the planet.

This conservation project is made possible by the power of partnership. We are grateful for support from individual donors, foundations, and partners. We thank the Imperiled Bat Conservation Fund (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Kentucky Field Office) for supporting this project.

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 individuals, nonprofits, government agencies and businesses, KNLT has protected more than 57,000 acres of wildlands. For more information on how you can help KNLT safeguard wildlands, visit [KNLT.org](https://www.KNLT.org).