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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KNLT Expands to Virginia with Gift of Land

Kentucky Natural Lands Trust Establishes Stone Branch Preserve on Cumberland Mountain

Berea, KY April 22, 2024 – In celebration of Earth Day, KNLТ is pleased to announce our expansion to Virginia with the newly established Stone Branch Preserve. The 100-acre tract in Lee County on Cumberland Mountain was generously donated over the winter. These newly protected wildlands along the north face of the mountain safeguard forest habitat along Stone Branch at the headwaters of the Powell River, a tributary of the Tennessee River. The forests and freshwater systems of this region are globally significant and vital to sustaining all life on Earth.

Cumberland Mountain is a 97-mile forested ridgeline that parallels Pine Mountain to the southeast. The mountain is critical habitat for thousands of plant and animal species including 139 that are considered rare. Cumberland Mountain is partially protected by a matrix of conservation lands that include Cumberland Gap National Historic Park, Jefferson National Forest and several state parks, preserves and wildlife management areas.

“My spouse C.V. (Bennett) served on the KNLТ Board in its infancy and believed that those in the coal industry had a responsibility to preserve, too. My sons and I continue this legacy with this now protected land on Cumberland Mountain. We are thankful that this special place is now safeguarded and support the continued mission of KNLТ.” ~ Blanche Bennett, landowner

KNLT has been working along Cumberland Mountain to assist with the protection of tracts added to some of the existing conservation areas. Over the last year KNLТ has established two of its own preserves, Panther Gap and Stone Branch, within the longest stretches of the mountain without conservation areas.

KNLT is grateful for the support of individual donors, foundations, and partners. We thank the Imperiled Bat Conservation Fund (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Kentucky Field Office) for making this project possible.

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 across Kentucky and throughout Central Appalachia. For more information on how you can help KNLT protect wildlands, visit [KNLT.org](https://www.knlt.org).