



BLUE RIDGE CONSERVANCY

SAVING THE PLACES YOU LOVE
ANNUAL REPORT 2017

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1 www.blueridgeconservancy.org

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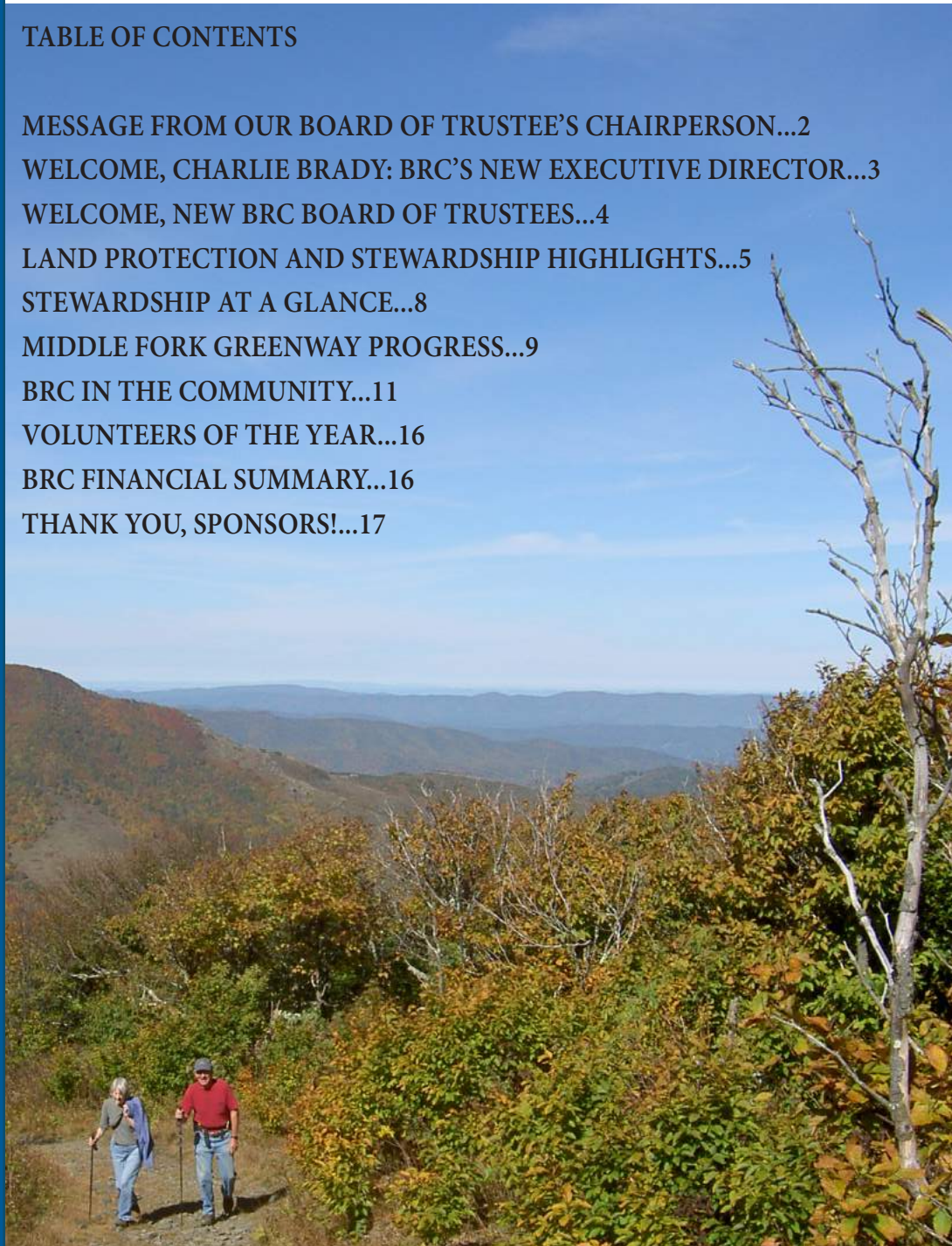


WE ARE ACCREDITED.

The accreditation seal is a mark of distinction in land conservation. It is awarded to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence.

Each accredited land trust completes a rigorous review process and joins a network of organizations united by strong ethical practices. This trusted network of land trusts has demonstrated fiscal accountability, strong organizational leadership, sound transactions and lasting stewardship of the lands they conserve.

The seal is awarded by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance. The volunteers who serve on the Commission represent a diverse group of land conservation and nonprofit management experts from around the country. For more information, please visit landtrustaccreditation.org





When I was first introduced to the basics of land conservation, it was described in transactional terms - a legal agreement between a land owner and a conservation organization. As a former banker, it was a language I understood. As I've worked and volunteered in this realm over the last decade, I've grown to appreciate the breadth and depth of relationships that contribute to the protection of every precious parcel. A constellation of individuals- community leaders, local government representatives, volunteers, donors - all make critically important contributions to awareness, funding and stewardship of conserved land in our beautiful corner of the world. The stories in this year's annual report will introduce you to a few of the people that have contributed to a year of great accomplishments by the Blue Ridge Conservancy.

At this time, we celebrate our past Executive Director, Walter Clark, whose legacy will be felt indefinitely and whose contributions continue in his new role as North Carolina's Clean Water Management Trust Fund Director. And we anticipate our next leader, Charlie Brady. Our incredible BRC staff, a team with exceptional expertise, dedication and passion, work closely with so many of you to advance our mission of protecting those things that we cherish about the High Country - lush vistas, sparkling rivers and streams, rolling farmland and the ability to experience the sights, sounds and touch of nature. We are grateful to be in this worthy endeavor with you.

Sincerely,

Ann Browning
BRC Board of Trustees Chairperson



OUR MISSION

Working with willing landowners and local communities to permanently protect land and water resources with agricultural, ecological, cultural, recreational and scenic value in northwest North Carolina.

Charlie Brady named Blue Ridge Conservancy Executive Director



Blue Ridge Conservancy is excited to announce Charlie Brady as its new Executive Director. Charlie is an avid outdoorsman and has a strong commitment to land conservation. A native North Carolinian, Charlie has expansive knowledge of the geography, ecology, history, and culture of the High Country. He has served on the State of North Carolina Environmental Management Commission and on the board of Foothills Conservancy in Morganton. Through his law practice Charlie has helped local land trusts navigate through legalities with conservation easements and acquisitions.

“We are thrilled that Charlie will be leading the BRC team. We will benefit greatly from his passion, his commitment to the mission, and his exceptional ability to connect with people and create collaborative relationships,” said BRC Board Chairperson, Ann Browning. “Charlie is ready to hit the ground running. Under his leadership, our staff, dedicated supporters and community partners will be working together to elevate land conservation efforts in the High Country.”

Before joining BRC, Charlie practiced law with Clement Law Office in Boone. His relationship with BRC began here by advising, litigating, and negotiating real estate conveyances for conservation properties for the Conservancy. He played an active role to conserve a parcel of land that will become a part of Elk Knob State Park.



“I am extremely honored and excited to become part of the Blue Ridge Conservancy team. The Conservancy has demonstrated its effectiveness by protecting over 20,000 acres of unique land in our region and by spearheading the effort to establish the Middle Fork Greenway between Blowing Rock and Boone. I enthusiastically look forward to working with Blue Ridge Conservancy to build upon its record of success in protecting the land that we love for future generations,” said Brady.

Charlie received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and earned his Doctor of Jurisprudence from Wake Forest University. He is currently a member of the American Bar Association, the North Carolina State Bar, and the North Carolina Advocates for Justice. He also has served on the board for High Country Recreation and Mountain Alliance.

Charlie will join BRC on October 18th, 2017. Blue Ridge Conservancy welcomes Charlie and is confident that Charlie will be an excellent leader and advocate for its mission to protect land and water resources in Northwest North Carolina.

Charlie Brady (far left), with the BRC hiking group at the Blue Ridge Parkway Waterfall guided hike.

Welcome, New BRC Board Trustees!



Tim Gupton

Tim fell in love with the High Country after meeting his spouse, Brent Moore, who had a second home in Blowing Rock. The outdoor life style, cool summer temperatures and the miles of green converted him from a lifetime of beach living. He and Brent relocated to Blowing Rock from Raleigh in 2015 after building a new home in the historic Mayview neighborhood in Blowing Rock. Tim first recognized the importance of land conservation after visiting Old Orchard Creek Farm and began to understand that the miles of green cannot be taken for granted.

Tim grew up in Henderson, NC and moved to Fort Lauderdale, FL for 20 years following graduation from UNC Chapel Hill where he was a partner with KPMG. He returned to NC in 1992 as a senior partner with Hughes Pittman & Gupton, LLP in Raleigh. Tim retired from HPG in 2015 and remains an active partner with HPG Wealthcare Advisors, LLC.

Tim enjoys hiking, collector cars, contemporary art, traveling and reading. The family includes three adult children and four grandchildren, all who love visiting Blowing Rock.



Don Mikush

Don is the founder and past owner of M Creative, a design and marketing firm located in Winston-Salem where he began to learn about conservation through his work with the New River Conservancy and the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation. Don and his wife, Sandra, built a small cabin on conserved land in Crumpler and recently moved to their permanent home in Sutherland Valley after raising their three children in Winston-Salem. Their property is under a conservation easement managed by the Blue Ridge Conservancy.

Don received his degree in mechanical engineering from Duke and studied visual design at N.C. State University's School of Visual Design. A native of Maryland, Don was pleased to discover soon after he and Sandra first purchased property in Ashe County that his great-great grandfather, Peter Kelly, immigrated there from Ireland in the 1840s and worked at the Ore Knob copper mine. Don likes to say that his love for the North Carolina mountains runs in the family.

When Don and Sandra aren't tending to their 116-acre farm, they're hiking, kayaking, fly-fishing, biking and learning all they can about our northwest mountains.



Bonnie Weyher

Bonnie is one of the founding partners of Yates, McLamb & Weyher, L.L.P. in Raleigh, and serves as Senior Counsel to the firm.

Bonnie's practice is primarily in the area of insurance coverage, professional liability, and alternate dispute resolution. She is an American Arbitration Association Panel Member. She is a member of the North Carolina Academy of Superior Court Mediators.

Bonnie has substantial involvement in local and state bar organizations. She is a Past President of the North Carolina State Bar. Previously, she served as a Councilor on the North Carolina State Bar. She chaired the Grievance Committee, Ethics Committee, and the Authorized Practice of Law Committee. Bonnie served as Chair of the Litigation Section of the North Carolina Bar Association. She is a Past President of the Wake County Bar Association.

Bonnie is married to her law partner, Dan McLamb, and they have four sons. She enjoys travel, spending time at her home in Blowing Rock, reading, hiking, and spending time with her family.



Wade Reece

A native of Boonville, NC and graduate of NC State University, Wade began his financial career in the BB&T Management Development Program in Wilson, NC. He retired at the end of 2015 as the Chairman and CEO of BB&T Insurance Holdings, Inc., where he provided strong, unified leadership of all of their insurance operations as Chairman of each of its subsidiaries.

During his career he served on a wide array of boards, including serving as the Chairman of the Board of the Council of Insurance Agents and Brokers and The Institutes. He continues in his retirement as a member of the Board of Directors of Horace Mann Educators Corporation. He also serves on the Boards of Directors for the North Carolina State University Foundation.

Wade leads an active life marked by involvement in organizations representing his professional, personal and community interests. His love of the outdoors is reflected in his memberships in the North Carolina Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, Ambassador for Land for Tomorrow and Trout Unlimited. He serves the community through his work with the Blue Ridge Conservancy, Preservation North Carolina and as a member of the Raleigh Moravian Church.

LAND PROTECTION & STEWARDSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

BRC HAS PROTECTED **20,040** ACRES IN **221** PLACES:

13,405 ACRES IN **141** CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

6,635 ACRES IN **80** FEE SIMPLE LAND ACQUISITIONS

View from the recently protected property on Grandfather Mountain

Grandfather Mountain, Watauga County, 210 acres

BRC acquired two critical properties on the northern forested slope of Grandfather Mountain. These properties were some of the only remaining unprotected properties along the ridge of the mountain. The properties extend to the ridgeline bordering Grandfather Mountain State Park and Julian Price Park and are not only ecologically significant but also highly visible from many vantage points around the region.

Both properties are located within the Grandfather Mountain Natural Area as defined by the NC Natural Heritage Program, with headwater springs flowing into the Watauga River. Each is located in the Grandfather Mountain Important Bird Area, and rank 10 out of 10 in the Biodiversity Wildlife Habitat Assessment completed by the NC Natural Heritage Program. NC State Parks considers both properties as 'critical' in its acquisition plans for Grandfather State Park. BRC plans to transfer ownership to NC State Parks. Funding for these projects was made possible by Fred and Alice Stanback.

Middle Fork Greenway, Watauga County, 12 acres

BRC completed its first acquisition for the Middle Fork Greenway in 2017. This 12-acre linear tract borders the Middle Fork for approximately two-thirds of a mile and will allow for the expansion of the Middle Fork Greenway from Tweetsie Railroad to Goldmine Branch Park on Niley Cook Rd.

In addition, the land will also help to provide a vegetated buffer to protect the water quality of nearby streams feeding into the Middle Fork New River, one of the main water sources for Boone.

Funding for the project was made possible with a matching donation from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina and the NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund.





Tater Hill Bog, Watauga County, 200 acres

BRC completed two acquisitions at the Tater Hill Bog adding 200 acres to the preserve. One acquisition is a 30 acre inholding that protects headwater streams of Meat Camp Creek. The second acquisition is 170 acres on the north slope of Harmon Knob. This property contains over a mile of Norris Branch and is home to several rare plant species. Harmon Knob is a large, broad, highly visible mountain located in the Amphibolite Mountains. Both properties are situated in the Potato Hill Bog, Rich Mountain Bald, and Harmon Knob Natural Area, as designated by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program (NHP).

The Tater Hill Bog Preserve is 1,200 acres of rare bog ecosystem, is home to an array of endangered and threatened plant species, and contains the headwaters of Howard's Creek, an outstanding fisheries resource. Tater Hill Bog is identified as a top conservation priority by the NHP and is used for ecological research. Tater Hill Bog Preserve is managed by the NC Plant Conservation Program, a division of the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Resources.

These projects were made possible with funding by a public/private partnership. Fred and Alice Stanback made a generous donation toward the acquisition, which helped leverage public funds from the NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund.

Blue Ridge Parkway, Alleghany & Ashe County, 175 acres

BRC purchased a 103-acre property along the Blue Ridge Parkway in Alleghany County. The land borders the Parkway and Doughton Park for approximately 4,000 feet, and features both scenic vistas and important wildlife habitat. This property is the main vista below the section of the Parkway known as "Ice Rock."

This section of the Parkway was cut into the north side of Bluff Mountain where ice coats the rocks above the road, thus giving this area the name "Ice Rock." The Ice Rock is a popular destination for ice climbing in the winter when the Parkway is closed.

In addition, BRC was generously donated land in Ashe County along the Parkway. This property is located near the Blue Ridge Parkway's Cascade Falls Overlook and borders the Parkway for 3,500 feet. The property has 5 springs that ultimately feed the South Fork of the New River. The land was donated to BRC by Jane Logan in honor of her brother, Phil, and her father, Howard, who left the property untouched and enjoyed spending time hiking on the property.

BRC plans to donate both tracts of land to the National Park Service to be managed as part the Parkway. The addition of these properties to the Parkway will preserve the scenic vistas and increase the connectivity of protected lands in the area. Funding for both projects was made possible by a generous donation from Fred and Alice Stanback.



Bullhead Mountain State Natural Area, Allegheny County, 75 acres

In 2000, BRC was instrumental in creating Bullhead Mountain State Natural Area along the Blue Ridge Parkway in Allegheny County. In the late 1990's the "Protectors of the Parkway" were created to save Bullhead Mountain. This group was led by former BRC Executive Director James Coman and Andy & Frances Huber. Bullhead Mountain is important for hawks during their migration and provides scenic views from the Parkway and all around Allegheny County. Public access to Bullhead Mountain has always been an issue so BRC partnered with NC State Parks and worked with three landowners to acquire land along US Hwy 21. These properties are key to providing adequate public access off of US 21. BRC and State Parks acquired two properties along the highway through funding from Clean Water Management Trust Fund. These acquisitions were only made possible because Frances Huber agreed to donate her land to be used as matching funds for the grant. Mrs. Huber's continuous generosity and dedication is the reason Bullhead Mountain is a State Natural Area. Now, all three properties are managed by NC State Parks. There is only one remaining property to purchase to link the existing public land with this property for full protection of the mountain and public access from Hwy 21.



Peak Mountain, Watauga County, 18 acres

Following on the heels of the 245 acre property acquired in 2015, BRC purchased the adjacent property, bordering Valley Creek and across the creek from Otter Falls Park. This was the key property to link Peak Mountain to the park, owned by the Town of Seven Devils. With this purchase, over 1.5 miles of ridgeline along Peak Mountain is protected, which is the heart of the Dun Vegan Mountain Natural Area. BRC is partnering with the Town of Seven Devils to construct a trail from Otter Falls Park to the top of Peak Mountain. 50 blight resistant chestnut trees were planted on the portion of the property that was recently timbered. BRC utilized ASU volunteers to erect cages around the trees to protect them from wildlife. This project was made possible by Fred and Alice Stanback.



Reece Conservation Easement, Watauga County, 11 acres

Wade and Kathy Reece have been doing their part to protect the Watauga River valley in Valle Crucis. Since the early 2000's they have been purchasing and protecting farmland along the river. Continuing on their conservation efforts, the Reece's purchased 11 acres adjoining the 8 acres they conserved in 2014. The property is prime farmland that includes open pasture and mixed hardwood forest. Like their other properties, these 11 acres buffer the Watauga River. The Reece's donated an agricultural conservation easement that allows for agricultural use and restricts subdivision and residential development. Through their 16 year effort the Reece's have protected 60 acres including $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of riverfront along the Watauga.

Backbone Ridge, Caldwell County, 26 acres

Backbone Ridge is a prominent ridge on the on the Blue Ridge Escarpment in Watauga and Caldwell County. Conservation of this ridge has been ongoing for many years and BRC helped expand it along Curtis Creek. Bern and Ellen Schumak sold the property to BRC at a deep discount as they were committed to seeing it protected forever. This property will buffer Backbone Ridge in Pisgah National Forest and land owned by NC State Forest Service from potential negative development/land use impacts. Curtis Creek, which flows along the eastern boundary, contains “Catherine Falls,” and unique water fall of approximately 15 feet. A number of other headwater streams and springs flow through the property and are protected by forested buffers. The property will ultimately be transferred to the NC State Forest Service. Funding for this purchase was made possible by Fred and Alice Stanback.



Elk Knob State Park, Watauga County, 40 acres

BRC has a long history of protecting land at Elk Knob State Park. Over the past decade BRC has partnered with State Parks to add over 600 acres to Elk Knob including all of the protected land on Snake Mountain. This 40 acre property helps link Elk Knob to Snake Mountain and will allow future trail access linking the two mountains. The land is located along Meat Camp Road and Maine Branch, a headwater tributary of the North Fork New River, flows through it. BRC purchased and transferred the property to be managed by the park. Elk Knob State Park is now over 3,000 acres and includes the summit of Elk Knob, Snake Mountain and The Peak. Funding for the project was made possible by Fred and Alice Stanback.



BRC STEWARDSHIP AT A GLANCE

BRC’s stewardship responsibility begins when we accept a conservation easement or acquire a piece of land. BRC’s obligation to ensure the permanent protection of each property’s conservation values forms the backbone of our stewardship program. BRC’s Stewardship Program consists of annual property monitoring and land management (i.e. invasive species removal, riparian buffer planting, etc).

As an Accredited Land Trust, BRC is required to annually visit (monitor) each of its conservation properties. We currently monitor 159 conservation easement properties consisting of 13,438 acres. BRC currently owns 25 properties covering over 1,300 acres and, just like our conservation easements, we visit these annually as well.





BUILDING A GREENER WAY

Want to learn more and get involved?

Visit our website to learn more, sign up for our e-newsletter,
and donate to the Middle Fork Greenway.

www.middleforkgreenway.org

12 new acres will extend the Middle Fork Greenway nearly another mile

Blue Ridge Conservancy purchased 12 riparian acres with funding from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina and the NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund. This land will permanently protect the Middle Fork New River and link the existing trail at Tweetsie Railroad to Goldmine Branch Park on Niley Cook Road extending the Middle Fork Greenway nearly another mile.

This next mile of the Middle Fork Greenway (MFG) is getting “shovel ready” with funding from the Watauga County Tourism Development Authority. This section requires over \$1,000,000 in construction costs which still needs to be raised through private donations that can leverage state and federal grants.

Federal Government Funds \$2 Million for Section One of Middle Fork Greenway in Blowing Rock

The Town of Blowing Rock has been awarded \$2 million from the Eastern Federal Lands Access Program (EFLAP) to construct a 1.3 mile segment (Section One) of the Middle Fork Greenway to connect to National Park Service (NPS) property.

Section One will connect Blowing Rock’s MFG Trail Head in front of Shoppes on Parkway to the Appalachian Regional Healthcare System’s (ARHS) recently constructed post-acute care facility, The Foley Center at Chestnut Ridge. In 2016, ARHS’s board provided a 2,000 foot easement through The Foley Center property for the MFG to follow the Middle Fork New River’s meandering path, and NC Department of Transportation provided greenway access underneath the Reba and Grady Moretz bridge.

The Town of Blowing Rock is eligible for this grant because of connections the Greenway will provide across federal lands managed by the NPS on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

In 2016, The McCrory Administration’s Department of Transportation statewide contingency fund awarded \$145,000 for a pedestrian bridge on NPS land. A 90-foot bridge will cross the Middle Fork New River and is part of the 1.3 mile section in Blowing Rock funded by EFLAP.



12 linear acres purchased north of Tweetsie Railroad.



Trailhead and parking established, connecting Shoppes on the Parkway and Roots Restaurant to downtown Blowing Rock.



Chestnut Ridge easement donated by Appalachian Regional Healthcare System through the Foley Center.

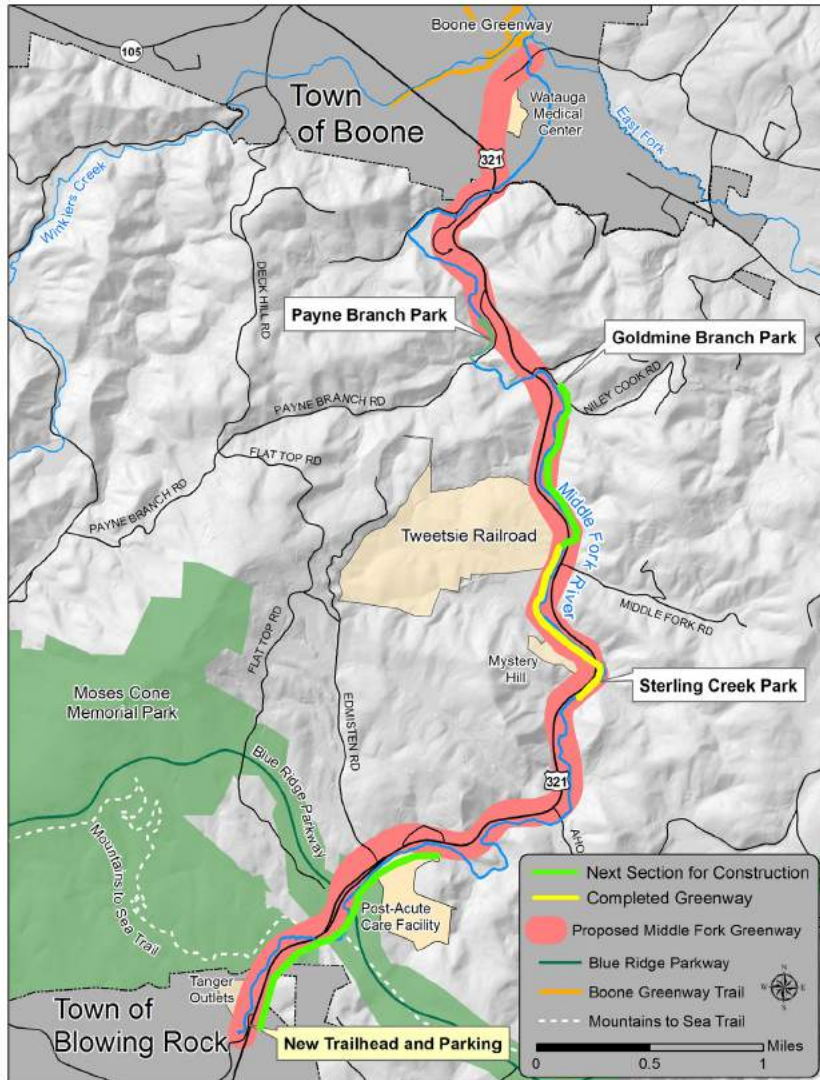
The EFLAP grant requires a 20 percent match of \$514,000 which the Middle Fork Greenway is raising through numerous grants and private donations. There is still a financial gap for Section One, and additional private donors are needed to complete the match.

This investment in the MFG project will help drive economic activity in our region and foster healthy activities by providing pedestrians and cyclists with a safe way to experience beautiful mountain landscapes and waterways.



Aho Road Bridge Replacement to accommodate Middle Fork Greenway under bridge

The North Carolina Department of Transportation will be replacing the bridge crossing over the Middle Fork New River on Aho Road. The Middle Fork Greenway received \$160,000 from Recreational Aid Funds and the Watauga County Tourism Development Authority for NC Department of Transportation to accommodate the future Middle Fork Greenway project.



Congratulations, Wendy!

Wendy Patoprsty, BRC's Director of the Middle Fork Greenway, was presented the inaugural Baker-Jones Woman of the Year Award at the 68th Annual Membership Meeting of the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce!

The award was presented by Appalachian Regional Healthcare System and Blue Ridge Energy in honor of Gillian Baker and Susan Jones recognizing Wendy's dedication and leadership.

The Chamber also presented a check for \$1,000 for the Middle Fork Greenway from the High Country Toast benefit hosted by the Chamber in support of the greenway.



BRC IN THE COMMUNITY



Appalachian Mountain Brewery and High Gravity Adventures bring exciting new events to benefit BRC & other local non-profits

The Middle Fork Greenway had two sponsored athletes competing in the first ever Mountain Ninja Warrior competition at High Gravity Adventures in Blowing Rock on August 20th, 2016. Brought to the High Country by Appalachian Mountain Brewery (AMB) and High Gravity Adventures, this fundraising event was taken from the concept of the American Ninja Warrior TV show, where athletes will race through the three levels of the aerial adventure theme park.

The competition put athletes to the test as they raced against the clock to reach the top of High Gravity Adventures' aerial ropes course. Each team was comprised of one male and one female competitor representing a High Country business, and all competitors were on a mission to raise money for their team's selected nonprofit organization.

Mountain Ninja Warriors collectively raised over \$11,000 for local non profits. The Middle Fork Greenway placed second in overall fundraising with \$2,961 raised. Thank you



to all who contributed! Appalachian Mountain Brewery and the We Can So You Can Foundation sponsored the first ever AMB Zombie Run on November 12th, 2016 where 100 participants ran through a fun, but scary obstacle course at High Gravity Adventures.

The course was a mile long with nine obstacles, including interactive zombies trying to steal flags worn by participants during the run. Crossing the finish line with a flag not only meant surviving the zombie apocalypse, but also prizes from AMB and Appalachia Cookie Company. Thank you Appalachian Mountain Brewery and High Gravity Adventures for providing these fun, community events and supporting the Middle Fork Greenway!





Restoration along Glen Burney Trail enhances safety and trail sustainability

The Glen Burney Trail is located in the heart of Blowing Rock approximately a half mile from the Blue Ridge Parkway Moses Cone trails and the Mountains to Sea Trail. The trail head is located in town adjacent to the Mayview Lake and the Annie Cannon Park providing easy public access.

BRC received a grant from NC State Park's Recreational Trail Program to restore sections of the trail worn and eroded from heavy foot traffic. Stone staircases and switchbacks were replaced and fallen logs were removed. BRC and the Town of Blowing Rock worked with Jeremy Early Trailworks to complete the restoration.

On January 21st, Appalachian State University students participated in the Martin Luther King Jr. Challenge, a volunteer work day sponsored by Appalachian & the Community Together (ACT) program. The students spent the morning climbing down the steep grade along New Year's Creek and hauling out debris from a fallen observation platform and picnic table.

With the help of Jeremy Early Trailworks and the ACT student volunteers, the Glen Burney Trail offers a great hiking experience convenient to downtown Blowing Rock. To get directions and trail information, visit our public access lands information and interactive map at www.blueridgeconservancy.org.





Volunteers create riparian buffer at Lansing Creeper Trail Park

BRC hosted a volunteer work day to plant live stakes and restore the stream bank along Big Horse Creek at the Lansing Creeper Trail Park. Live stakes are dormant cuttings from plants that can be inserted into the ground to reduce erosion by creating root networks as the plants grow. These cuttings eventually grow into mature shrubs and trees that will not only help to stabilize the soil, but will provide shade over the creek and keep the water temperature cool.

Volunteers came together from the High Country Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Blue Ridge Conservancy Student Club, GLAD - Greater Lansing Area Development, Foggy Mountain Nursery and Stream Restoration, and the Appalachian State Fly Fishing Club.



Peak Mountain Celebration in Seven Devils

On July 25th 2017, BRC staff and over 75 members of the Seven Devils Community gathered on the porch of Hawksnest Snowtubing & Zipline to celebrate the protection of Peak Mountain, 265 acres purchased by BRC in 2016.

The property is highly visible from Seven Devils, the NC Hwy 105 corridor, Grandfather Mountain, Hanging Rock and other mountains and ridges in the vicinity. Its close proximity to other protected lands, such as Grandfather Mountain, Bear Paw State Natural Area, and Otter Falls Trail adds to the conservation significance.

BRC is working to fund a proposed hiking trail connecting Peak Mountain to Otter Falls Park, also located in Seven Devils.



Annual Guided Hikes

BRC's guided hikes provide a great opportunity to get outside and explore some new places in the High Country.

Each hike is located on lands that BRC played an integral role in conserving. They range in season, geographical location, and landscapes-- all with unique but magnificent experiences.

All hikes are guided by a naturalist and BRC's staff, and are free to BRC members. Non-members are encouraged to sign up for a membership prior to the hike.



Gamekeeper Wine/Beer Tasting & Auction a Success at New Venue

Keeping with a 17 year tradition, Ken and Wendy Gordon of the Gamekeeper Restaurant hosted another amazing wine/beer tasting and auction benefiting BRC. Over the years, the event has certainly evolved.

Originally held at the Gamekeeper Restaurant, popularity of this annual party grew and the location changed to Camp Sky Ranch to accommodate more supporters. 2017 marks another sign of growth as we moved the event again in search of more space. The Blowing Rock American Legion provided the capacity to welcome new and familiar faces in a comfortable, fun, and convenient environment.

The event drew support from over 75 local businesses and individuals, creating an evening filled with a silent and live auction, delicious food, live music, beautiful decor, and photo booth fun.

Thank you to all of the business sponsors, individual sponsors, and participants for making this event a continued success.





John & Faye Cooper Receive Inaugural Stanback Conservation Leadership Award

Blue Ridge Conservancy hosted an intimate party with BRC's most invested donors to celebrate BRC's 2016-2017 accomplishments, and honor John and Faye Cooper: Owners of the Mast General Store, well-known leaders of the community, and longtime conservationists, by awarding them the Inaugural Stanback Conservation Leadership Award. The event site was well suited for the celebration, as it was located behind the Original Mast General Store on the farm that the Coopers donated to BRC in 2016.

The Stanback Conservation Leadership Award was named after Fred and Alice Stanback, the premier conservationists in North Carolina and the Southeast. Their support has transformed the ability of many land trusts, including BRC, to forever protect special environmental resources that millions of people treasure. The Stanbacks inspire others to take leadership in the protection of places we love. As such, the Stanback Conservation Leadership Award honors the Stanbacks' legacy.

The Coopers were awarded with a Dawn Redwood tree, donated by local tree expert and BRC Trustee Sonny Church. An ancient tree that existed when the dinosaurs roamed, the dawn redwood was thought to be extinct until it was discovered in a remote mountainous area of China. You can visit this unique tree in front of the gray barn behind the Original Mast General Store.



Stick Boy Mayview Madness 5k Tradition Continues

The idea for the Mayview Madness 5K race came in 2000 from Brenda Moretz Speckmann, a native of the area. Both Brenda and her husband, John, were committed to protecting the mountains. They felt that hosting a fundraiser 5k in Blowing Rock would be challenging to runners, provide beautiful vistas, and remind everyone of the beneficiary of the race proceeds.

The Mayview Madness 5K race name came from a hotel that once sat overlooking the gorge. The legendary Mayview Manor was a summer destination for authors, celebrities and movie stars seeking respite from the heat of the flat-lands. The hotel closed in 1966 and was demolished in 1978, before interest in preserving historic structures would have saved it from the wrecking ball. The race route passes where the inn once stood.

The Mayview Madness 5K could not happen without the continued help of the town of Blowing Rock. The police and emergency response staff ensure road safety. In addition, loyal sponsors contribute to promotion and financial support of the race. Of course, volunteers and runners are truly the backbone of this amazing event.

BRC is proud to continue this 18 year tradition to give all who participate - volunteers, citizens & visitors of the High Country, BRC staff and trustees, sponsors, and eager runners - the opportunity to help save the places we love!



Volunteers of the year

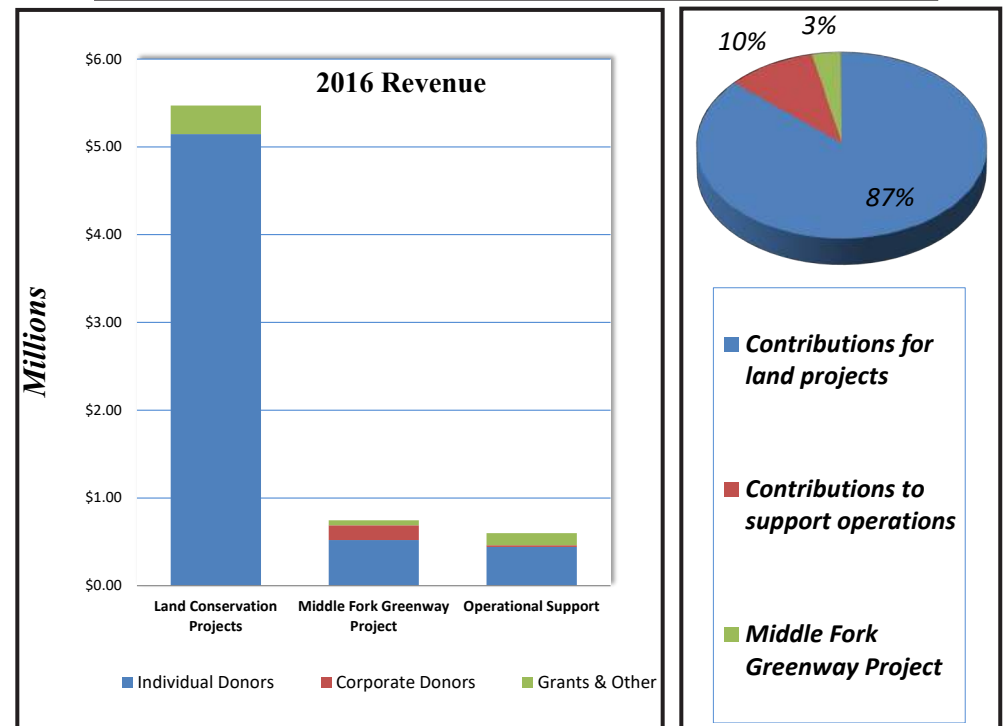
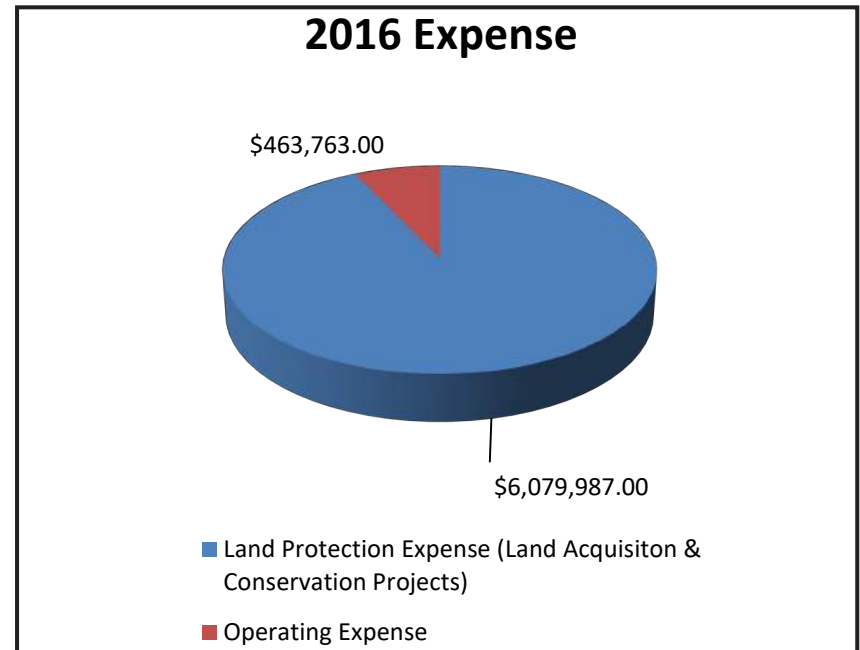
Each year, Blue Ridge Conservancy recognizes special supporters who go above and beyond volunteering their time and talents to support our mission of “Saving the Places You Love.” This year, BRC would like to recognize Ken and Wendy Gordon as our Volunteers of the Year.

More like “Volunteers of the Decade,” Ken and Wendy have sponsored BRC’s annual wine & beer tasting and auction event for the past 18 years through their renowned restaurant, The Gamekeeper. The event raises money and support from the local community as it draws hundreds of people excited to enjoy Ken and Wendy’s delicious and creative cuisines.

The Gamekeeper, located in Blowing Rock, is a true farm to table restaurant offering fresh, regional ingredients. Ken and Wendy are big advocates of sustainable agriculture, and not only do they support BRC, they also support the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, Appalachian Sustainable Agricultural Project, New River Organic Growers Association, Humane Farming Association, Watauga County Humane Society, ACES, and the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation.

Thank you, Ken and Wendy, for being such amazing supporters over these past 18 years! We hope to have many more successful Wine/ Beer Tastings and Auctions in years to come. We could not do it without you!

BRC Financial Summary 2016



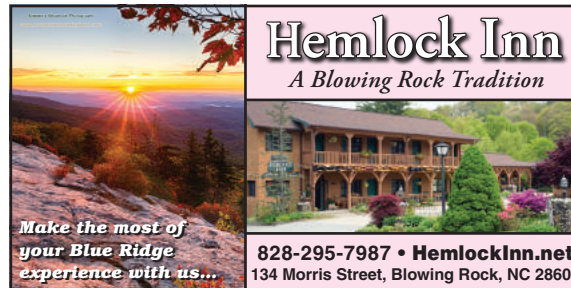
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In Honor of Walter Clark



BRC SHIRTS AND HATS ARE FOR SALE ON OUR ONLINE STORE!

M-Prints produces top-quality embroidered hats and screenprinted shirts. Order your BRC hat, shirt or baby/toddler shirt or onesie by calling BRC at 828-264-2511 or visiting our website at www.blueridgeconservancy.org. There are various sizes and various colors available. The cost for any merchandise item is only \$15.

A great year of events has brought another great group of event sponsors. BRC's events are important to sustaining our mission. Land Trust Day, Stick Boy Mayview Madness, and The Gamekeeper Wine/Beer Tasting and Auction, along with guided hikes, give our supporters the opportunity to meet us and their fellow BRC supporters while enjoying fun and active events.

A special thanks to our event sponsors:

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