



## Spring 2022 Newsletter

### DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Thoughts from Laura Hassell,  
WHFF Executive Director

I am thrilled to send you our very first quarterly newsletter! There are many exciting things happening at the White House Farm Foundation and Leopold's Preserve, and as our friends and supporters, we want you to know about them first.

I'm most proud to announce two new hires that have joined our team this year. Nick Davis is the new Park Manager at Leopold's Preserve. Nick has worked in national and state parks, and most recently at the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute. Nick has years of experience with natural resource management, and we're so fortunate to have him using that experience on a daily basis as he cares for Leopold's.

Marie Pinto is our new Communications Manager. Marie brings experience in communications and outreach from her recent AmeriCorps term with Richmond National Battlefield Park, and she studied Environmental Science and Archaeology at the University of Virginia. She's managing our social media pages, websites, and newsletters (thanks Marie for your hard work on this newsletter!)

Learn more about Nick and Marie [here](#), send them a message to welcome them, and say hi if you see them on the trails. As you read about the exciting activities taking place at the Foundation and Leopold's, I hope you'll think of ways that you can participate. Hike the trails at Leopold's, join us for an interpretive walk, tag us on social media, or sign up for an upcoming volunteer opportunity.



Prescribed burn of Test Plot 6 at the White House Farm.

### RESTORATION PROJECTS

Much of the land at the White House Farm and Leopold's Preserve has been affected by past farming, logging, and development. These disturbances upset the ecological balance, making it difficult for native organisms to thrive. WHFF is working to restore and maintain native habitats on our land while helping to conserve Piedmont ecosystems for generations to come. Read on to learn more and keep an eye out for updates in future newsletters!

#### Test Plots at the White House Farm

We manage 7 plots of former cattle grazing land at the White House Farm, with the ultimate goal of restoring them into native meadow habitats. Over several years, these "test plots" have allowed us (and our partners!) to experiment with different treatments and determine how they affect the emerging meadow ecosystem. Surveys conducted on these plots by SCBI's [Virginia Working Landscapes](#) program have shown a connection between controlled burns and diversity of plants, pollinators, and birds. Earlier this month, we conducted a burn on one of our plots in cooperation with the [Virginia Department of Forestry](#). We're excited to monitor the results as succession begins this spring!



Scott Plein walks along a trail at Leopold's Preserve.

## RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE

Congratulations to our founder, Scott C. Plein, for being awarded 2021 Conservationist of the Year by Prince William Ducks Unlimited! The award recognizes outstanding achievements and extraordinary commitments to land conservation. Plein has worked tirelessly to promote environmental awareness, and he consistently advocates for sensible land planning and a holistic approach to creating human habitat that adjoins conserved and protected land. [Click here to learn more about Scott's lifelong commitment to conservation.](#)

## Friday Conservation Corps

The White House Farm Foundation is proud to offer volunteer opportunities for anyone looking to participate in environmental stewardship. In partnership with the [Bull Run Mountains Conservancy](#), we've launched a new volunteer program at Leopold's Preserve: the [Friday Conservation Corps](#)! Every Friday from 12:30 PM - 3:30 PM, volunteers can drop in to work on a series of rotating stewardship projects across the Preserve. Volunteer for an hour, or stay all afternoon - just be sure to [sign up ahead of time](#) so our Park Manager, Nick, knows to expect you. All volunteers under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Upcoming projects include brush clearing, trash removal, and trail maintenance. We hope you can join us!

## Savanna Habitat at Leopold's Preserve

Work is well underway on this exciting project at Leopold's Preserve. We hope to convert a 2.25-acre former farm field into a representative oak-hickory savanna habitat, along with examples of many other native tree species. This will provide unique niches for native wildlife and will serve as an educational opportunity about the diversity of Piedmont tree species. This spring, we're putting the next steps of our plan into action; reducing ground cover, thinning out redcedars, and preparing to plant additional native trees in the fall. Watch this space as we continue making progress!



A wood frog floats in a vernal pool at Leopold's Preserve.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT LEOPOLD'S

### Updates from the Preserve

As the warm weather of spring arrives, we are moving ahead with improvements across the Preserve's trail system. Last October, trail signage was added to help with wayfinding and to boost safety for visitors. Efforts are now underway to add structure to the existing trail network by defining trails, rehabilitating trail surfaces, removing encroaching vegetation to improve line of sight, and complying with trail standards. Our goal is to eventually work through the entire trail system to ensure greater accessibility and better trail maintenance while protecting soil and water resources. Visitors can assist with trail stewardship by practicing [Leave No Trace](#) principles.

## Tree Walk

We're excited to announce our newest education and outreach initiative, the Leopold's Preserve Tree Walk! Visitors will soon be able to follow the Tree Walk Map to locate representative examples of tree species within the Preserve, including a champion-sized Hackberry and a towering White Oak. Each tree will be marked with a botanical identifier stake featuring a link to the Preserve's PlantsMap website, which includes information about the unique qualities of each individual tree. Keep an eye on our social media pages for the official launch of this self-guided experience!

# THE PLEIN ENVIRONMENTAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

## A Conversation with Jackie Plein

WHFF was excited to announce the launch of the [Plein Environmental Scholarship Fund](#) last fall, an initiative backed by the Plein Family Charitable Trust. "We hope to support the next generation of environmentalists, conservationists, and well-rounded citizens," says Jackie Plein, the Fund's architect. "Our scholarship acts as an incentive to attend college and graduate with the skills necessary to help the environment and change the world for the better."

The scholarship is open to graduating high school seniors who are pursuing an associate's degree at Northern Virginia Community College with the intent to transfer to a four-year Virginia public university to receive their bachelor's degree in an environment-related field. Though Environmental Studies or Forestry might first come to mind, Jackie clarifies; "There are many academic and career pathways related to the environment. From economics and politics, to forestry and biology, to engineering and architecture - we want to give students the opportunity to pursue their interests."



College students conduct research at the White House Farm's riparian buffer.

Community college played a role in Jackie's own educational journey, and she frames it as "a stepping stone to a better future". Nowhere is this more true than Virginia, whose community colleges offer a guaranteed admission program allowing students to easily transfer into four-year institutions across the state. The Plein Environmental Scholarship was designed to follow students through this program, providing support for two years of study at NVCC followed by two years at a Virginia public university.

Applications will be reviewed by a panel of five judges who are dedicated to environmental education and equal opportunity. Jackie is particularly excited about the essay submissions, hoping they "allow the student's values and passion to come through." Applications for the 2022-2023 academic year are open now through April 30. For more information and to apply, [click here](#).

## JOIN US: UPCOMING EVENTS

### Volunteer Trash Cleanup

Saturday, April 2, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM  
Leopold's Preserve

Be ready for some heavy lifting as we remove appliances, car parts, and more from a former dump site in the Preserve. Bring your work gloves and a bottle of water!

### Spring Birds & Blooms Hike

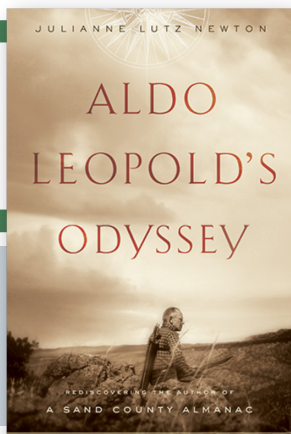
Sunday, April 24, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM  
Leopold's Preserve

Join us for another guided hike led by our partners at the [Bull Run Mountains Conservancy](#). Enjoy the start of the spring bird migration and explore the spring wildflowers in bloom!

### Friday Conservation Corps

Every Friday, 12:30 PM - 3:30 PM  
Leopold's Preserve

This drop-in/drop-out volunteer activity is perfect for students, scouts, and anyone looking to earn community service hours. All participants must [register through our website](#).



### Aldo Leopold's Odyssey, Julianne Lutz Newton

Aldo Leopold's foundational conservation principles continually inspire us. Newton's meticulous research shines through in this biography; her thorough examination of Leopold's writings gives us a glimpse into his monumental life.

### What We've Been Reading



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