

EMERY

the land
steward

MAINSRING 2017

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Executive Director

Sharon Willard Burdette
Administrative Assistant

Rock Curlee
Chief Administrative Officer

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Stewardship Coordinator

Ben Laseter
Associate Director

Bill McLarney
Senior Scientist

Jason Meador
*Citizen Science Program
Manager*

Kelder Monar
Stewardship Associate

Molly Phillips
Advancement Coordinator

Sara Ruth Posey
Hiwassee Programs Manager

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From the Director

I recently started playing the online game Words with Friends with my sister. Like Scrabble, the objective is to use the letters dealt to you to create a word that will have the most impact, i.e. the most points.

That exercise came to mind as I searched for the perfect words to say to you in this letter. What words can portray the struggles and successes Mainspring has had over the past 20 years and, at the same time, show our excitement about the future? What words can express our appreciation for your partnership? I couldn't find the words, so I decided to let the impressive content of this *Land Steward* speak for me.

On page 16, you'll read an inspiring article from Paul Carlson, Mainspring's founding director. Paul formed this organization in 1997 with a group of citizens that included Dr. Bill McLarney, who writes about the importance of a Cowee to Nantahala Mountains wildlife corridor on page 12. You'll see an article showcasing the extensive stream restoration on Little Savannah Creek (page 14), and on page 28 you'll learn about Mainspring's "out of the box" idea to reconcile mountain neighbors. You'll also see an exciting opportunity in Fires Creek, and read about how so many chipped in to help purchase a tract at Panthertown Valley.

Many wonderful words are written in this publication, yet they can't fully describe the significant difference we've made over the past 20 years or the impact we'll have during the next 20.

With much gratitude for the past and hope for the future,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sharon". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sharon Fouts Taylor
Executive Director

PS. Help us continue to protect the character of this place by conserving land, restoring water quality, and connecting our community to the natural and cultural resources of this region. Please take a moment and make a gift today.

PPS. My sister and I are about even in the number of wins in Words with Friends, but who's counting?!

The annual publication
about the activities of
**Mainspring
Conservation Trust**

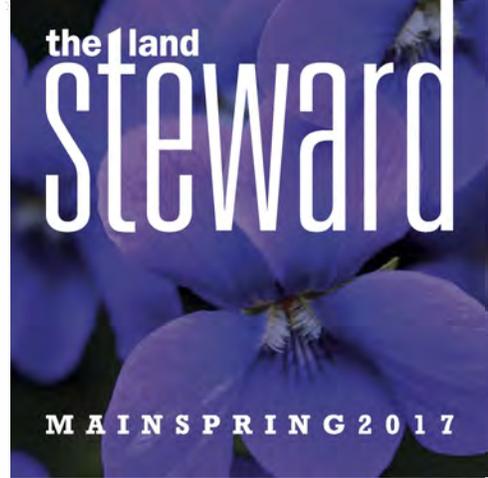
November 2017



MAINSRING
CONSERVATION TRUST

557 E. Main St., Franklin, NC 28734
828.524.2711

46 Valley River Ave., Murphy, NC 28906
828.837.6383
www.mainspringconserves.org



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Hold That Tiger





When Peggy Tiger passed away in 2012 at the age of 84, the lifelong Clay County resident had a particular request for her sons: that their family farm, the only farm within Hayesville city limits, be placed in a conservation easement.





“Mainspring was her choice and, after talking with other conservation trusts, it was our choice as well. They have been a huge help in making a complicated decision easier.”

Jim Tiger

Brothers Jim and John Tiger on their family's farm in Clay County.

This year, her request will be fulfilled, and 30 acres will be forever protected.

Owned by a member of the Tiger family since 1938, the land is bordered by 1,300 feet of the Hiwassee River. It is believed to have been part of the Cherokee Town-site of Quanassee, one of the major trading hubs between the British and Cherokee from the early 1700s to 1725. Two of the four main soil types

found on the property are classified as prime farmland soils, while the other two are classified as being of local importance.

Jim Tiger is glad to see his mother's request finalized. "Mom's wishes were to preserve the property as a farm and prevent it from being divided and developed. She had looked at conserving it in a farm easement and we are seeing that her intentions are carried out. Mainspring



was her choice and, after talking with other conservation trusts, it was our choice as well. They are great folks to deal with and have been a huge help in making a complicated decision easier."

Sara Posey, Hiwassee Programs Manager, says this project embodies what Mainspring's work is all about. "This picturesque farm showcases our mission in so many ways: conserving a working farm that

contains prime farm soil, river frontage, cultural significance, and scenic viewshed. It's been great working with landowners who have employed best management practices such as fencing livestock out of surface water and allowing woody vegetation to shade their streams.

"We're proud of this project, and so happy the Tiger family's farm will be conserved forever."



T.M. RICKMAN
GROC.
GENERAL STORE



Friends of Rickman Store and Mainspring mark 10 years of connecting the West's Mill community, just like it was in 1895.

STOP BY THE T.M. RICKMAN STORE in Cowee any Saturday between May and December and you'll feel the warmth and love of a small community.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: T.M. Rickman and his wife, Fannie, who owned and ran the store for 69 years; Friends of Rickman Store celebrate their 10th with a new sign; the store today is a museum of vintage goods; two generations relive simple pleasures.

In August, Friends of Rickman Store and Mainspring celebrated 10 years of bringing people together to meet neighbors, enjoy great music and food, and learn about history, gem mining, conservation, and other topics important in Cowee Valley.

Built by John Hall in 1895, the T.M. Rickman General Store is named for

the man who purchased the store in 1925 and operated it for 69 years. Rickman Store was the go-to shop for general supplies and groceries, a hub to join friends for a game of checkers, a voting precinct, and a place for town meetings.

Mainspring purchased the building in 2007, and, led by Friends



of Rickman Store, a dedicated group of volunteers, conserved it like a museum. Shelves filled with antiques and walls covered with primitive tools let visitors see how the store looked when Rickman owned it. Modern souvenirs and goods, including locally crafted pottery, dishcloths, jewelry and other items, are for sale at the store.

The friends group organizes jam sessions with musicians from around the region on Saturdays during the season. Part of the fun is the spontaneity of the musicians, so while visitors may not know exactly what

combination of instruments they will hear, they can always expect great music and a chance to join in.

The Friends of Rickman Store welcome new volunteers to participate and help Mainspring connect the community to culture and to one another through the T. M. Rickman Store. To learn more, visit our volunteer web page at mainspringconserves.org. To receive Rickman Store event updates, "like" the Friends of Rickman Store's Facebook page.



Another Store, Another Opportunity

A stone's throw from Rickman Store in the Cowee-West's Mill Historic District stands the C.N. West General Store, built around 1927 by Clyde and Minnie West. Along with the adjacent mill, it served as a hub for a community.

Mainspring purchased the store in September 2017. The lower floor had been used as a pottery studio, but the original floors, counters and shelves remain intact. The upper floor was living quarters for the owner.

Mainspring has again partnered with Preservation North Carolina (PNC), a private nonprofit historic preservation organization, to find a conservation buyer to restore this historic building. PNC has listed the

building and one-acre property on its website, presnc.org, for \$39,900. The organizations' previous projects together include the Vonnie West House next door, which is being restored by its conservation owner.

Land Conservation Manager Jordan Smith says preserving the store is another important piece of the Cowee-West's Mill puzzle. "The cultural heritage of the historic district is uniquely diverse in that Native, European, and African-American influences have all played a role in this landscape at some point. By saving these historic structures, we are preserving a place that was special to folks from different backgrounds for many, many years."



Bear Crossing

How Mainspring is protecting the crucial biological corridor that links highlands to the river and provides a unique, flexible ecosystem for regional species

DR. BILL MCLARNEY
Senior Scientist

If you were a bear, you could start at Cowee Bald, the highest point in the Cowee Mountains at 4,944 feet, walk down to the Little Tennessee River as it runs through the Needmore Game Lands at 1,800 feet, then hike back up to Wesser Bald at 4,627 feet, the highest point in the Nantahala Mountains. You could do this without coming out of the woods and only crossing two roads. As a human you can do this, too, but it's more important for the bear, and for many other creatures.

The route just described is what Mainspring staff calls the Nantahala-to-Cowee Corridor. It is a great example of the "biological corridor" concept, a major theme among conservationists since the 1967 publication of the *Theory of Island Biogeography* by E.O. Wilson and Robert H. MacArthur. The theory applies not only to literal islands but also to isolated forest patches in a developed landscape. In essence, it states that if a species disappears from an "island," the probability of repopulating is very low. The bear will walk across a field, but it doesn't like large open spaces (think "oceans"). Other animals, even some species of birds which are physically capable of

flying anywhere they want, will not cross a major expanse of unforested land. Many plant species are unable to propagate outside the forest, and may eventually disappear from small forested "islands."

Sometimes, corridors need to be created or restored through reforestation. Fortunately, a forested Nantahala-to-Cowee Corridor currently exists; it just needs to be conserved in spots. Mainspring's task is to effectively work with landowners to protect forested areas of privately owned land within the corridor.

Any time we can protect and link patches of land in their natural state it is a good thing. But the Nantahala-to-Cowee Corridor is especially valuable because it connects some of the highest and lowest elevation lands in our area. Many animals, from bears to songbirds to butterflies, need this connectivity in order to make altitudinal migrations throughout the year. This will be increasingly true with the specter of climate change looming; animals will be looking for higher and cooler habitat. Many species of plants may need to move upslope with them. Continuous bands of forest from low to high elevations enhance the landscape's resilience in the face of climate change. In that context, openings in the form of





early successional habitat can enhance biodiversity and benefit wildlife. What a forest corridor can't handle and what is harmful to wildlife is discontinuity in forms like housing developments or parking lots.

The Nantahala-to-Cowee Corridor is even more special because it contains a major river. Rivers also function as biological corridors, allowing fish and other aquatic animals to travel up and down. Many species of terrestrial wildlife also take advantage of forested riverbanks as travel corridors when available. This certainly applies to the Needmore Game Lands, which are among the last bastions of what ecologists call "montane alluvial forest" in the Southern Appalachians. And, through

the efforts of Mainspring's "Shade Your Stream" initiative and other programs, it increasingly applies to the river, its tributaries, and their banks upstream of the Needmore boundary.

Much of the land base that makes up these land and water corridors is permanently protected, and private landowners, government agencies, and Mainspring have all done a lot of good work to **Conserve** natural conditions in the two intersecting corridors. Where necessary, we have **Restored** pieces of the landscape. What remains is to finish **Connecting** pieces of the Nantahala-to-Cowee Corridor and the intersecting Little Tennessee River Corridor.

The corridor links the Nantahala Mountains to the west with the Little Tennessee River and the Cowee Mountains to the east.

Go with

Mainspring brings together 12 landowners, 5 parcels of land, and a group of private and public partners to restore a damaged section of Savannah Creek and protect the Tuckasegee River.



the Flow

With the completion of a complex restoration project, more than 5,000 feet of Savannah Creek now flow sediment-free into the Tuckasegee River in Jackson County.

The project affected 12 different individuals who owned all or part of the five parcels of land involved in the restoration. Associate Director Ben Laseter says that the level of complexity required three grant funding extensions, but was worth it. "We knew this project would be beneficial to adjacent landowners for stability of their land, but restoration

of almost one-half mile of this stream affects everyone. Savannah Creek flows into the Tuckasegee River, and both are recognized notable trout waters. By keeping the sediment out of the water, fish can thrive, which directly impacts the local economy."

This project was made possible through funding from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Duke Energy Riparian Enhancement Fund.



Before and after photos of a bend in the creek. The failure of the bank was repaired with a rock vane on the inside of the curve and geolift and bank sloping on the outside.



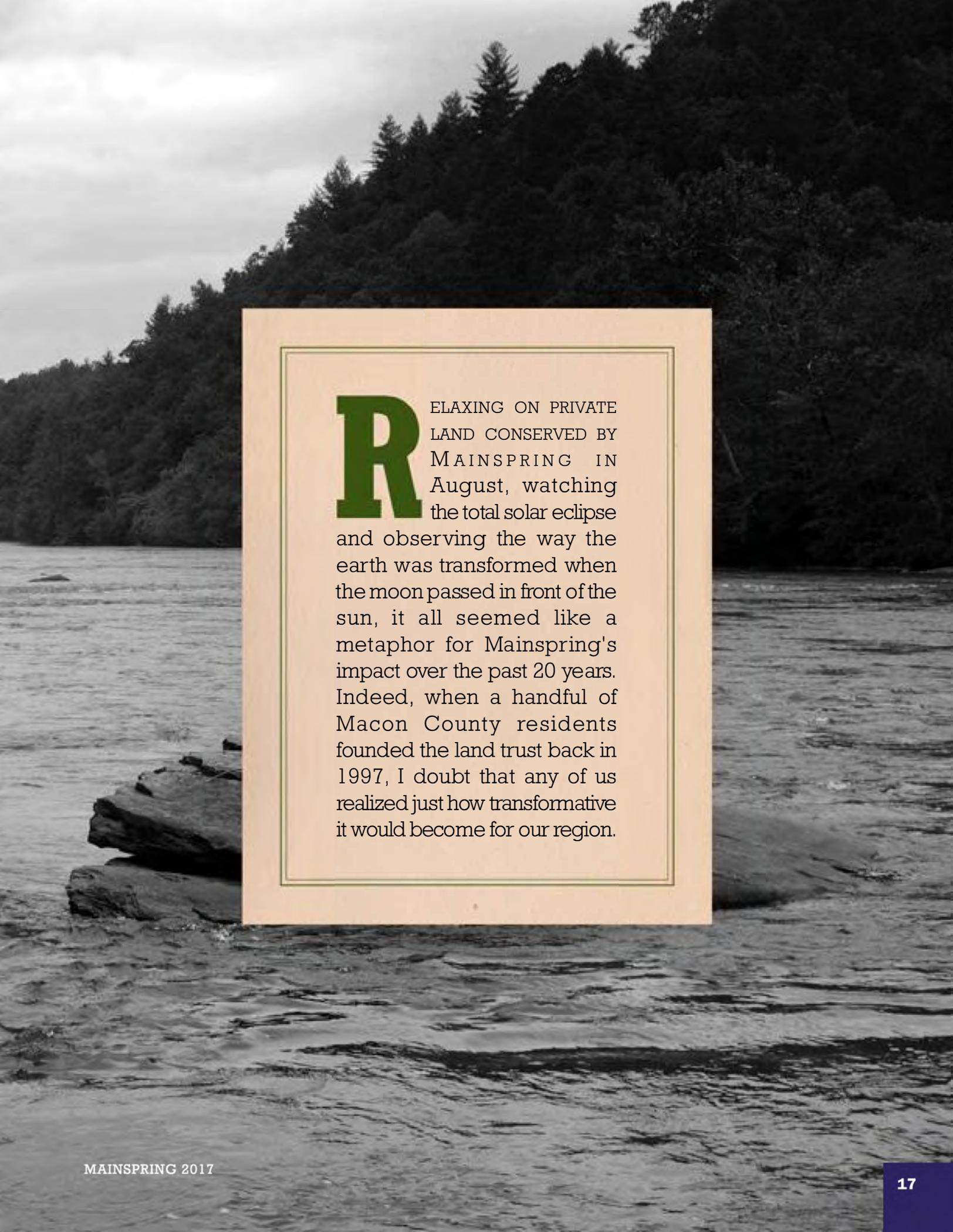
Before and after photos of the mid-channel. The build-up of a bar was corrected with a rock vane and a shifting of the channel.

a
Commitment
to
Place

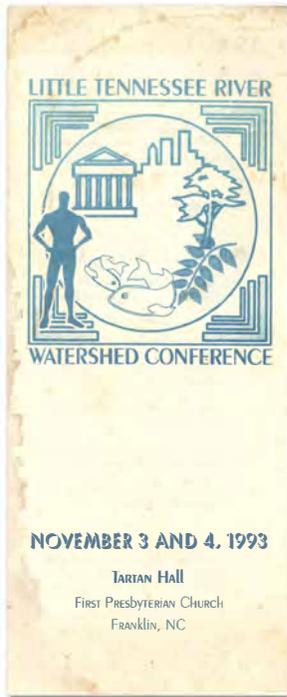
**THE EVOLUTION
OF MAINSPRING**

PAUL CARLSON
Founding Executive Director





RELAXING ON PRIVATE LAND CONSERVED BY MAINSPRING IN August, watching the total solar eclipse and observing the way the earth was transformed when the moon passed in front of the sun, it all seemed like a metaphor for Mainspring's impact over the past 20 years. Indeed, when a handful of Macon County residents founded the land trust back in 1997, I doubt that any of us realized just how transformative it would become for our region.



Little Tennessee Watershed Association



a Commitment to Place

Two years earlier, a diverse group had organized the Little Tennessee Watershed Association to conserve the clean waters and rich aquatic habitats of the upper Little Tennessee River and its tributaries. While they focused on the aquatic side, the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee began building a conservation vision, including bold ideas of expanded public and private land protection, to ensure that the rich natural and cultural history of our fast-growing rural counties could be conserved as building blocks for the future.

We launched those dual conservation efforts at the right time.

Since 1997, when the N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund first came on line, the Little Tennessee has received one of the greatest investments for its size of any river basin in the state—tens of millions of dollars have enabled key riverfront and watershed protection efforts.

When the 4,500-acre Needmore Tract came up for sale in 1999, Mainspring was inspired to raise the bar higher and expand partnerships with local, state and federal partners to permanently protect this one-of-a-kind property. Today, thanks to these efforts, the state-owned Needmore Game Lands span more than 32 riverfront miles, from the head of Fontana Reservoir in Swain County to the Coweeta Bottomlands in Macon County.

When asked in 2006 to extend the successful land trust model from the Little Tennessee and Tuckasegee river valleys westward to the Hiwassee and Cheoah watersheds,



The grassroots impact in the Southern Blue Ridge began with a conference about the health of the Little Tennessee River and grew to include land conservation, merged organizations, educational connections, and restored cultural sites.



we stepped up to meet those needs.

When the time was right for the watershed association and the land trust to join forces in 2012 to strengthen our collective conservation capacity, we got it done.

When it came time in 2016 to rebrand this organization, born in the Little Tennessee but now with an expanded landscape, Mainspring Conservation Trust arose. From the beginning, this effort has been about committed people stepping up for this magnificent region, with great respect for its rural heritage.

Mainspring flourishes today as it continues to build upon its local roots, while pursuing a smart business model based upon a clear mission, entrepreneurial spirit, and commitment to place. It has matured into a strong organization that is here for the long haul, with systems in place to manage its long-term conservation obligations, solid experience in making smart conservation investments, and a commitment to a future of healthy, vibrant communities.

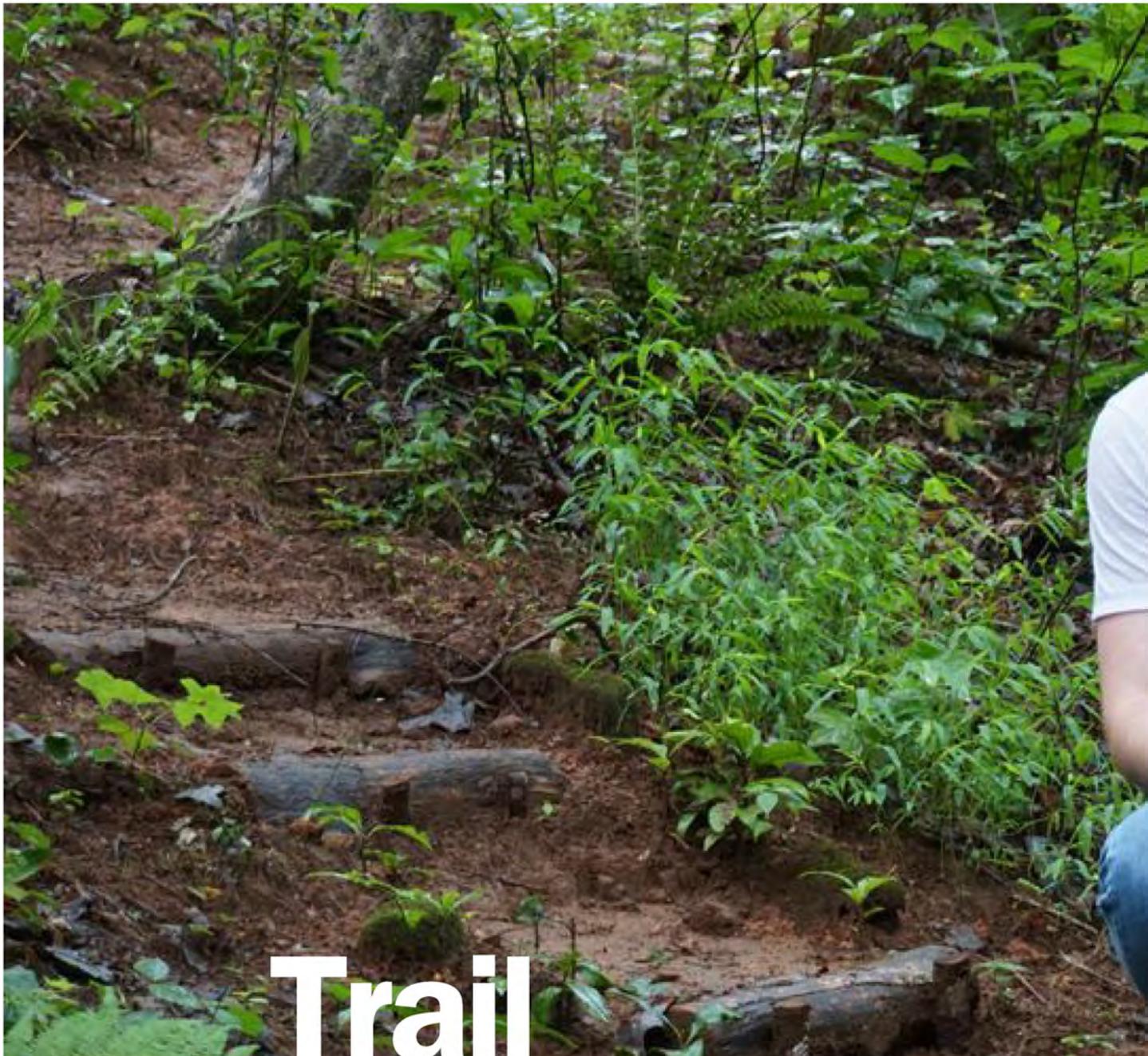
Mainspring works on projects that inspire us all with a non-partisan approach that appeals to the volunteerism, goodwill, and love for this place that is found in so many of us.

It gives me hope to read of thousands of school children sampling their streams. It gives me hope to know that folks are tracking the health of native brook trout in the face of a warming climate. It gives me hope to see prime soils dedicated to farming forever. It gives me hope to see reforested riverbanks that were eroding a quarter century ago. It gives me hope to see the Cherokee and local governments come together to restore and revitalize ancient places.

Mainspring is a transformative organization that gives me hope.



TOP TO BOTTOM: Land along the Little Tennessee was the land trusts' first priority; Dr. Bill McLarney has been gathering data with volunteers for more than 25 years; Mainspring's brownfield cleanup; Paul Carlson enjoys August's solar eclipse; the staff has grown over the years.



Trail blazer

Recent Franklin High grad leaves a trail behind before college

Before 18-year-old Logan Mossbarger began college at North Carolina State University in Raleigh this fall, he wanted to create a legacy in his hometown of Franklin—a hiking trail at Mainspring's 64-acre Gibson Bottoms property.

Logan connected with Mainspring to complete his senior project, a requirement for twelfth-graders at Franklin High School.

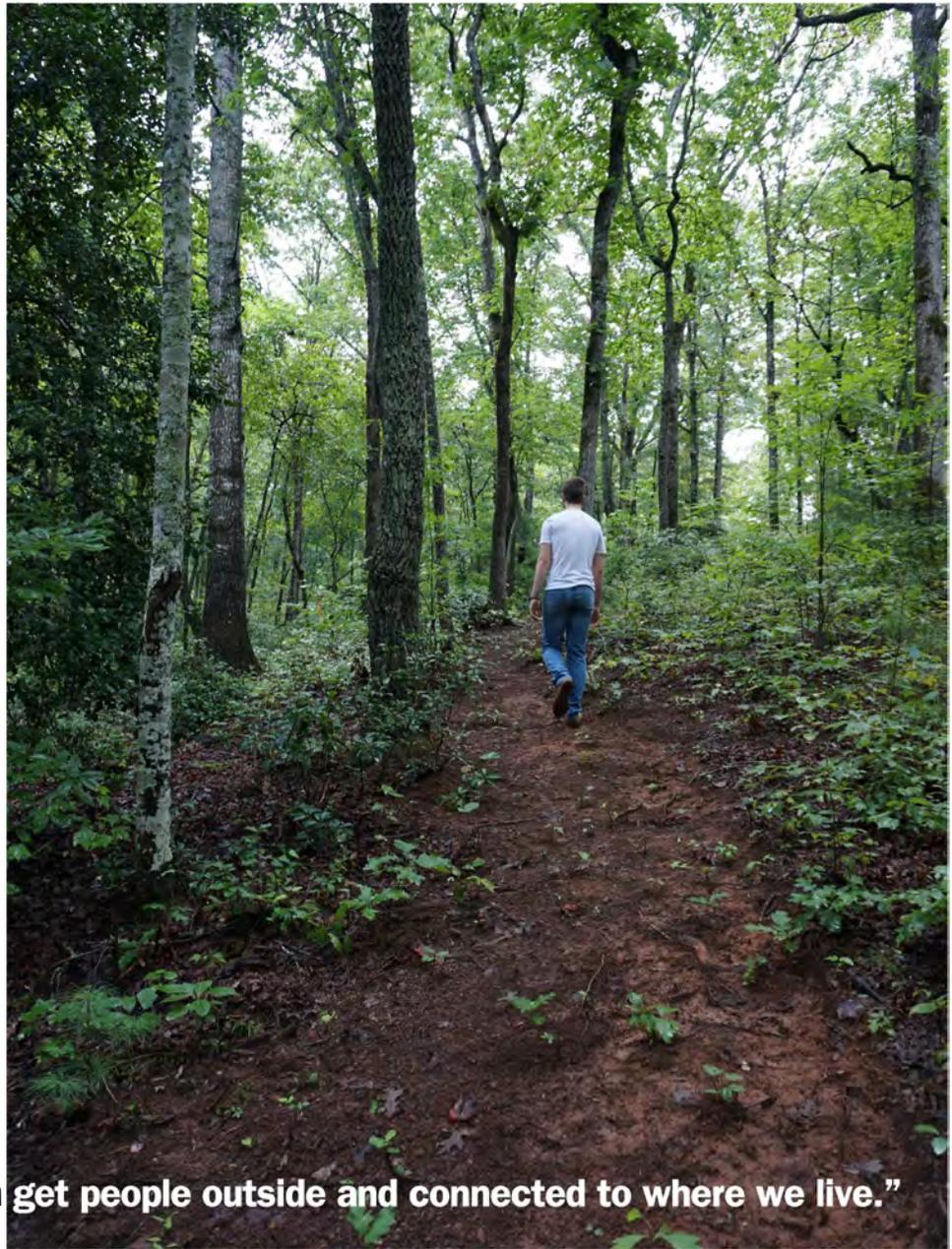
With the help of volunteer John Garrison, Logan created a plan to build a hiking trail—a project Mainspring had been interested in doing for some time. Logan's plan included the design, layout, and construction of the trail.

THE LAND STEWARD



Initially assuming it would be a simple project, Logan was surprised at the complexities he encountered. "There is a lot more that goes into making a hiking trail than some people may think. It's not just taking out vegetation and moving some leaves; there is also the removal of a layer of soil where most plants grow, always keeping the slope in mind, and how easy the trail is to hike."

Garrison said Mossbarger learned a lot. "I think he was able to see the complexity of a land management project. There is no substitute for taking a project from inception through planning, compliance, organization, and on-the-ground work. But Logan had solid ideas, was receptive to other thoughts, and has an outstanding work ethic. It
(continued on next page)



“I’m proud to have worked on something that can get people outside and connected to where we live.”

(continued from previous page)
was a pleasure working with him.”

Logan and John were able to fully complete 700 feet of the 1.7-mile trail before his senior project ended in May. In early July, 21 students from Haywood Community College’s Fish and Wildlife Management Technology program, under the guidance of instructor Shannon Rabby, contributed a half-day of service to the construction of the trail. The students cleared downed logs and ground

vegetation and raked away leaves and soil duff on over 2,100 feet of trail.

More work is needed, but, once it’s finished, Logan hopes it will be used for many years. “It has some amazing views and the forest changes so much while you hike through it. This project was an incredible experience, and I’m proud to have worked on something that can get people outside and connected to where we live. It will be a great place to visit when I’m back home.”

As the Gibson Bottoms Trail project unfolded, Mainspring supporter Michael Fleenor, who is working on a Blue Ridge Naturalist Certificate of Merit through the North Carolina Arboretum, volunteered to develop interpretive material for the trail that will include an inventory of the plants, birds and butterflies found on the property, as well as Cherokee historical information.



Fleenor going over a draft of a sign with Mainspring volunteer Jean Hunnicutt and Stewardship Coordinator Dennis Desmond.



Snail Mail

In May, fourth-graders from South Macon Elementary School in Macon County went beyond the playground to tally species right on their school grounds. Mainspring participated with other environmental partners at Bioblitz Day, teaching students about macroinvertebrates and fish native to Skeenah Creek, which flows along the boundary of the school property. Students used kick nets, identified the species of macroinvertebrates found, and learned how these species indicate stream health. Below is a letter from fourth-grade teacher Vickie Hubbs, following the event.

From Mainspring's participation in Bioblitz Day

I wanted to take a moment and thank all of you for the fantastic experience you provided for our students today. They came back in so excited about what they had seen and learned. Water and mud made it that much more enjoyable! One girl found a small snail in her sock and was determined to return it to its habitat. Each year my class sets up a terrarium to host a frog/toad or two. They are thrilled to see them eat insects, bathe in the water and bury themselves. Today was light years beyond our little terrarium.

Hopefully we can partner up again and continue to educate and inspire our next generation to preserve the community they live in.



FIRE SALE

**MAINSRING
TO PURCHASE A PIECE
OF PROPERTY IN CLAY
COUNTY AND
EXTINGUISH A YEARS-
LONG CONTROVERSY**

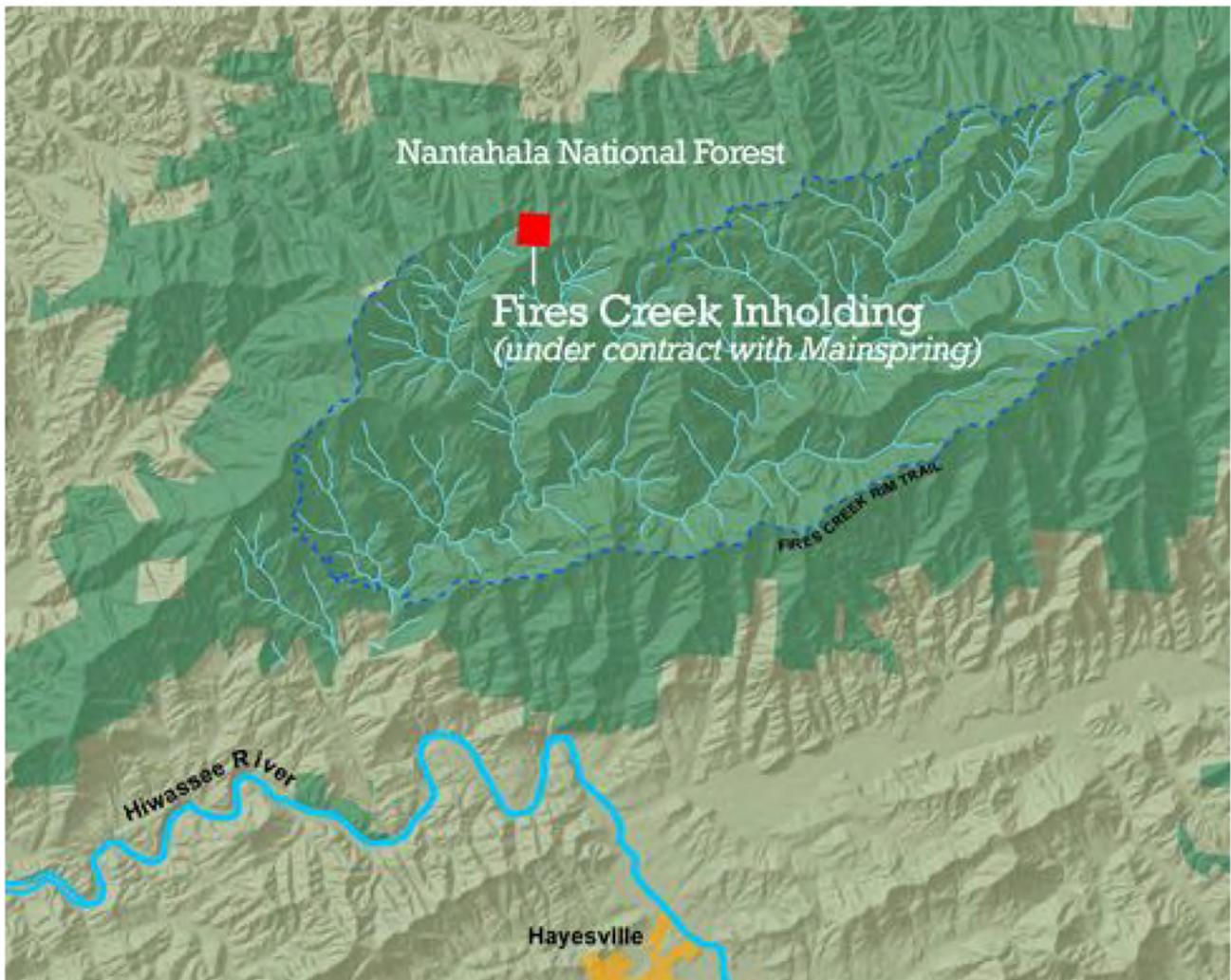
In September, Mainspring entered into a contract with four landowners to purchase 50 acres in the Fires Creek watershed, setting in motion a conservation solution to a decade-long controversy in Clay County.

The property, surrounded by U.S. Forest Service land, is well known throughout western North Carolina. The owners acquired it in 2006 and drew public criticism from across the region when they petitioned the Forest Service for permission to build an access road to their land.

Michael Anderson, owner of Lot 3 of the Fires Creek property, says he and the other titleholders never intended the ownership to be so controversial. "Most of us grew up in

this area, and, as little kids, we dreamed of owning the only private property in Fires Creek. Our intent was to have a place to grouse hunt and make memories with our families. The parcel was privately owned long before the Forest Service obtained the land around it and could have been sold to anyone. We never wanted that property to be anything but a place for us to get away."

Anderson said he contacted Mainspring because the nonprofit understands private property rights, in addition to caring for the land. "We are interested in protecting the property, just like everyone else. I've been in conversations with (Mainspring Executive Director) Sharon Taylor for years about the potential to sell for



conservation and, once all the owners were on board with divesting, Mainspring was open to additional discussions. We are glad the property will stay as pristine as it is now."

Fires Creek is designated as an Outstanding Resource Water, the highest designation available in North Carolina. Over 85 percent of the property under contract is in the Fires Creek watershed, but it extends across the Valley River Mountains into Cherokee County. It previously contained more than one-third of a mile of the Fires Creek Rim Trail, but the popular trail was rerouted by the Forest Service in 2013 to bypass the private land.

Conserving this important tract with its high conservation and recreation values is important, and Taylor

says she's glad Mainspring has this opportunity. "The landowners overcame a lot of obstacles to obtain the Special Use Permit needed to access their property. I'm extremely pleased that, even with the permit in place, they chose to give us an opportunity to raise the funds to purchase the property before proceeding with their original plans. They've always been willing to talk to us about a conservation option. I look forward to continuing the positive relationship we've built over the past decade."

Want to help with this project? Visit mainspringconserves.org and click the "donate" button, then follow the steps to designate your gift to the Fires Creek Project.

Panthertown Progress

Thanks to dozens of individuals, Fred and Alice Stanback, the Jackson County Commissioners, and the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority, Mainspring purchased the 16-acre Salt Rock Gap property at the edge of Panthertown Valley, which was featured in the 2016 *Land Steward*.

Through volunteer efforts from members of the Friends of

Panthertown, visitors now enjoy expanded parking space at the Salt Rock Gap entrance. The conservation project protects two headwater streams that feed into the valley and a prominent knoll that overlooks this treasured recreation area.

Mainspring will hold the land for public use until it is transferred to the U.S. Forest Service, to become part of Panthertown Valley.

Public parking expands for better access to Panthertown Valley Recreation Area



A ribbon-cutting in June hosted by Friends of Panthertown opened the public parking access on Mainspring's property.

Common Ground

Mainspring facilitates a reconciliation in an old community conflict

One of Mainspring's most innovative efforts to date began in 2015 when it initiated a reconciliation process between neighboring citizens of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and the Town of Franklin. At the time, Mainspring had been in its new office, a few yards from the historic Nikwasi Mound, for a couple of years.

Unfortunately, a clash over maintenance of the ancient mound, which is owned by the town, had led to conflict between the two governments. Although the elected officials were at odds, people of both communities shared a 200-year history of love for the mountains. Mainspring's staff recognized that common love; they shared it too. With a goal of conserving heritage and healing relationships between mountain neighbors, Mainspring convened grassroots leaders from both communities to meet and seek common ground. The early conversations, facilitated by Catalpa Circle and longtime Mainspring consultant, Dr. Tom Hatley, quickly progressed beyond the mound maintenance issue. The group began developing plans for a cultural corridor to conserve important cultural sites and inspire heritage tourism in the region. To signify their mutual commitment, the citizen group named itself Mountain Partners.

Reconciliation was new, but partnership and trailblazing conservation and restoration projects with the EBCI have been a big part of Mainspring's 20-year history. As early as 2004, Mainspring entered into a cooperative agreement with Cherokee basketmakers to harvest rivercane on the organization's Tessentee Creek property. The

harvest of artisan supplies now includes white oak and butternut trees that were planted over a decade ago for that purpose.

In 2007, Mainspring spearheaded a project to permanently conserve Cowee Mound and return it to Cherokee ownership. The effort was one of 12 case studies nationwide highlighted in the 2011 book *Conserving the Land: New Directions in Tribal Land Conservation*.

Following that success, Mainspring and its partners worked with tribal leaders to secure funding in the very first round of grants from the federal Community Forest and Open Space Program. Those funds were used by the tribe in 2013 to acquire 108 acres of Hall Mountain, which stands prominently above Cowee Mound. This area, along with Nikwasi Mound, will be among the first sites highlighted on the Nikwasi-Cherokee Cultural Corridor being developed by Nikwasi Initiative—the legal, nonprofit entity formed by Mountain Partners.

In August, EBCI Principal Chief Richard Sneed and other tribal leaders traveled the future Cultural Corridor path and met with Town of Franklin and Macon County leaders at the Little Tennessee River Greenway near the Nikwasi Mound. It was a historic day as the leaders shared the stage to give their vision

for renewing a kinship and partnership. The event was organized by EBCI Secretary of Agriculture Joey Owle. During his remarks, Owle noted that history had been made with the initial success of Mountain Partners.

Mainspring is proud to have set the table for reconciliation, but as Dr. Hatley so appropriately said of the Mountain Partners initiative, "It's an accomplishment of individuals, all

following the very human, and frequently underestimated instinct of working together across boundaries for the long haul."

Funding for this project provided by: Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, Cherokee Preservation Foundation, Town of Franklin, Macon County Commissioners, and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.



TOP TO BOTTOM EBCI Principal Chief Michell Hicks (2003-2015), makes a presentation to then-LTLT staff at the Cowee Mound celebration in 2007; a historic image of Nikwasi Mound; current EBCI Principal Chief Richard Sneed meets with Mainspring staff in 2017; Nikwasi Mound today.



Mainsprinklings

Fishing for Friends

Through a special private gift, Mainspring was able to expand its staff this summer and hire Cris Weatherford of Whittier as its first director of development.

Weatherford joined Mainspring in June, one month after receiving a Master of Public Affairs degree from Western Carolina University, with a concentration in nonprofit management. Cris also holds a Bachelor of Science in social work. He recently served as supervisor of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians' Family Safety Program.

As director of development, Cris

manages Mainspring's major gift and legacy planning strategies and goals. For this fly-fisherman who loves the outdoors, it's a perfect fit. "I truly love meeting people who are as committed to conserving and protecting land and water as we are. Daily, I am learning more about what Mainspring does and sharing our mission with supporters. It is so inspiring to see my colleagues' talents, skills and resources align in ways that benefit this landscape, and I'm glad to have a role in expanding Mainspring's capacity to make a difference for the future."

"I truly love meeting people who are as committed to conserving and protecting land and water as we are."



Elon University senior Guido Schutz spent 10 weeks as a summer intern at Mainspring through the Conservation Trust for North Carolina's Diversity in Conservation internship program, and the experience proved positive for both the environmental studies major and the regional nonprofit.

Funded through a partnership of CTNC AmeriCorps, the Land Trust Alliance, and the United States Forest Service, the initiative was formed to encourage future conservation leaders by creating employment pathways to careers in land trusts and other agencies. Mainspring applied to be a host site, and Schutz was selected to organize its Geographic Information Systems data and be part of Mainspring's aquatic biomonitoring crew.

Born in Germany, Schutz has also lived in Mexico and Argentina. A graduate of Farmington High School in Connecticut, he had extensive travel experience, but not a lot of knowledge of western North

Carolina. He left with an appreciation of the area, and of Mainspring's work. "I came into the internship looking to learn as much as I could about conservation and learned even more just by participating in all the different things that Mainspring does. It was a great learning experience."

As Mainspring, like other land trusts around the United States, looks to expand its supporters and grow to serve a more diverse community, Schutz brought a unique perspective to the staff. "I think it's important for conservation organizations to think about diversity because the fundamental thing they are protecting is the biodiversity of nature," he says. "If staff and volunteers all share the same culture or views, there are elements that could be overlooked because they may not be seen as important in their society. Diversity and inclusion in conservation organizations allow for a unique blend of ideas and, ultimately, a global understanding of conservation."

Natural Diversity



"Diversity and inclusion in conservation organizations allow for...a global understanding of conservation."



M A I N S P R I N G

CONSERVATION TRUST

Celebrating 20 Years as Stewards of the Southern Blue Ridge

P. O. Box 1148, Franklin, NC 28744

Conserving the waters, forests, farms and heritage of the Upper Little Tennessee and Hiwassee river valleys in western North Carolina and northern Georgia.



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Twenty years ago, a group of visionaries formed a small nonprofit, dedicated to conservation of the unique natural resources and rich history of our region and to thoughtful development. Today, Mainspring Conservation Trust spans a seven-county region, covering a service area of more than 1.8 million acres. The impact we have in the Southern Blue Ridge would not be possible without the support of hundreds of people, all pitching in to save the places we love.

Thank you for making a difference.

