



West Virginia Division of Forestry
www.wvforestry.com
Joe Manchin III, Governor
Randy Dye, Director/State Forester

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\$3.67 Million in Forest Legacy Funding to Conserve West Virginia Forestland

**Congress appropriates Forest Legacy funding to conserve forestland in the
South Branch of the Potomac**

CHARLESTON, W. Va. – This week, Congress appropriated \$3.67 million in federal Forest Legacy funding to conserve significant forestland in the South Branch of the Potomac River.

“The Forest Legacy Program funding comes at a critical time for West Virginia as many families are considering the future of their land in these challenging times,” said Gov. Joe Manchin. “Through this new appropriation, West Virginia will have the resources to help private landowners retain ownership and protect their forests benefitting all West Virginians.”

Forest Legacy provides moneys to states to acquire conservation easements that protect productive, working forestlands from being converted to non-forest uses by development. It is a voluntary program and has interested many private landowners in West Virginia since the program began in the state several years ago.

“Protecting our forestland helps to keep West Virginia wild and wonderful,” said U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd. “I am proud to have been part of this effort to conserve this land that is so valuable to the people of West Virginia and beyond for its economic and scenic benefits.”

The forestlands in the South Branch are increasingly under pressure for conversion to other uses. The South Branch flows northeast through the Eastern Panhandle and feeds into the Potomac River, which flows through Washington, D.C.

The program provides long-term benefits to people and nature, according to U.S. Rep. Alan B. Mollohan. “This Forest Legacy funding will conserve important riparian buffers of the South Branch, helping to protect two things important to West Virginians: drinking water and wildlife habitat,” said Mollohan. “I am pleased to have had an opportunity to support conservation of this special place.”

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Page 2

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West Virginia Forest Legacy Program to Receive \$3.67 Million in Funding

This congressional appropriation of Forest Legacy funding will allow for the conservation of thousands of acres of forestland, including land in the Smoke Hole portion of the South Branch, an area known for its rich plant and animal life such as the endangered Virginia big-eared bats, the world's largest populations of Virginia nailwort, and native brook trout.

"We applaud the leadership of Sen. Byrd and Rep. Mollohan in dedicating Forest Legacy funding to the conservation of one of the state's most outstanding landscapes," said Rodney Bartgis, The Nature Conservancy's West Virginia state director. "And we are happy to have been able to work with the West Virginia Division of Forestry to support funding for the conservation of such significant forestland in the South Branch."

Forest Legacy funding is limited to private forest landowners. The federal government may fund up to 75 percent of the land acquisition or cost of the conservation easement. The remaining 25 percent is provided by private conservation organizations, state funds, or other local sources. This year, The Nature Conservancy is providing several hundred thousand dollars worth of land interests – and participating private landowners are providing donations in land interests – to match the federal investment.

"It is a powerful conservation tool that is already working to protect West Virginia's rich forest lands," said Bartgis. "The West Virginia Division of Forestry manages the program very well in West Virginia and is using the funding to protect the state's most special places for future generations who will depend on a healthy forest for jobs, recreation and wildlife."

This Congressional appropriation will add to the first Forest Legacy investment already made in West Virginia. The West Virginia Division of Forestry in 2008 successfully conserved a more than 700-acre tract in the Trough, an area of the South Branch that is widely known for its incredible scenic beauty and nesting bald eagles.

For more information about West Virginia's Forest Legacy Program, visit the Division of Forestry's Web site at www.wvforestry.com.

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