

P.O. Box 201
Waterford, Va. 22190

April 6, 1994

Mr. Dennis Eckberg
Prince William Historic Commission
13016 Sturbridge Road
Woodbridge, Va. 22192

Reference: State-owned Land Between Thoroughfare Gap and Hopewell Gap Proposed to be Transferred from the Virginia Outdoors Foundation to an Entity That Will Administer the Land as a Public Day-Use Park

Dear Mr. Eckberg,

Pur our telephone conversation yesterday, I am enclosing documentation relative to the historic and recreational attributes of land on and adjoining Bull Run Mountain between Thoroughfare Gap and Hopewell Gap (80% lies in Prince William County, and 20% in Fauquier County). Tab B of the indexed packet shows a map (page 14) of the land boundaries. This contiguous 1,200 acres of fee simple is owned by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF), a state agency created in 1966 to preserve historic sites, natural areas, and open space, as well as to set aside public parkland under these guidelines where the land would be suitable for public use. Tab L.

The VOF project had its origin in the late 1970's, when an organization called the Natural Area Council, through "straw" purchases of parcels by individuals, accumulated much of the present State-owned mountain land and then later donated it to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. George Freeman, an attorney who was one of the "strawmen" purchasers for the non-profit organization, states that the intent of the acquisitions was to create a public park from the Bull Run mountain land. Tab D. In correspondence dated February 16, 1994, Angela LaCombe, an environmental planner for the State Department of Recreation reports that since 1965, the Comprehensive Recreation Plan for Virginia has proposed the VOF Bull Run property as a public day-use park. See "Recreation Endorsement Correspondence" and Tab C (page 189) enclosed.

The VOF-owned sites comprising the Battle of Thoroughfare Gap include

- (1) the knoll just east of the Gap on which Harpers Pictorial History of the Civil War depicts Union cannon positioned and directing their fire toward the Gap (Tab I), which artillery were attacked and dispersed by

Confederate soldiers led by Evander Law (Tabs G & H);
and

(2) the quartzite quarry, across which both sides fired at each other at point-blank range as told by NPS Historian Noel Harrison (Tab F).

The other scene of fierce fighting occurred at the five-story stone mill in the Gap according to Harrison's account.

On the crest of the mountain is a Mosby camp and observation post, which is referenced in an almost contemporaneous book Partisan Life with Col. John S. Mosby written by Mosby's Major John Scott. Tab J. The National Park Service Chief Historian, Edwin Bearss, urges the VOF Board of Trustees to pursue nomination of the Battlefield and the Mosby sites to the National Register of Historic Places. Tab A.

Other historic points of interest are the 18th-century remains of "Meadowland", a residence listed on the Historic American Buildings Survey, and the family cemetery of the Chapmans who built the first mill in Thoroughfare Gap. Tabs E & F. Finally, a structure in serious need of repair lies in the valley between the lower and upper ridges. This was the homeplace of the Coram family, freed slaves who had settled the valley after the Civil War.

I have also enclosed endorsements from park authorities including State and County, supporting establishment of the State Bull Run-Catoctin Mountains Recreation Trail. The VOF Board members, whose names and addresses are enclosed, are very much interested in seeing this land become a public park, but lack the infrastructure to manage it as such. Based on an interview of their Chairman Robert Lambeth by Deborah Fitts (a writer for Civil War News), the Board is presently searching for an entity, which will take title and provide the resources to properly operate it as a public day-use battlefield/nature park.

In conversation last Friday with Wilson Green, Executive Director of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites headquartered in Fredericksburg, he was very positive toward his organization taking title to the land for purposes of opening the land to the public on a day-use basis. Narrative markers describing historic and natural points of interest, would be established on trails and a gravel parking area located on the State secondary road that leads from Turner Road down to the Beverley Mill.

The only condition Green imposed on APCWS taking title was that there be commitments by partner organizations to

assist in defraying the costs of the markers and establishing the parking area. I have identified a sufficient number of Potomac Appalachian Trail members who would maintain the trails, most of which already exist as old "public ways" that led through the valley and along the eastern base of the lower ridge.

I am canvassing the county organizations, both public and private, to express their support as partner organizations, and would hope your Commission would act accordingly. The monetary commitment would not be large, assuming four or five organizations would be involved, and would only apply to cover the markers and the parking area expenses. While I understand your agency cannot be specific until exact figures are known, it could still state its position with the APCWS that it wished to be counted as a partner organization. Your group along with Historic Prince William would represent a solid endorsement from the historic sector of Prince William County, which would send a strong signal to the APCWS Board of Directors in terms of their accepting the transfer of title to APCWS. The address and telephone number of APCWS, Inc., is 613 Caroline Street, Suite E, Fredericksburg, VA 22401 (703) 372-1860.

With your organization's expression of support, a day-use public park on "Mother Leathercoat Mountain" can be a reality. Please call me for questions: work number in D.C. is (202) 576-2531, and home number in Loudoun County, (703) 882-3027.1

Sincerely,

Philip D. Paschall

Philip D. Paschall
Co-Chair, Lands Committee
Potomac Appalachian Trail Club

Enclosures

Copy furnished: Charles Graf, PATC President