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### Six Decades of Good Fire

Half of Earth's land ecosystems need fire to thrive, including our Appalachian forests and Southern pine savannas here in Virginia. This year marks The Nature Conservancy's 60th anniversary of putting good fire on the ground to restore critical habitats. Our strategies have evolved to include helping people live more safely with fire, supporting equitable policy and funding, elevating Indigenous leadership, and growing skilled, diverse fire workforces. Advancing these goals, Virginia recently hosted both the National Fire Learning Network and the Women-in-Fire Training Exchange. Your support has made Virginia a leader in shaping the evolution of fire as a conservation tool across the nation and around the globe, and I thank you for your commitment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Locke W. O.", written in a cursive style.

Locke Ogens, Virginia Director



#### SUPPORT NATURE

To learn more and support our work in Virginia, use the QR code or go online to [nature.org/virginia](https://nature.org/virginia).



WTREX participants conducting a controlled burn at Piney Grove Preserve © Daniel White/TNC

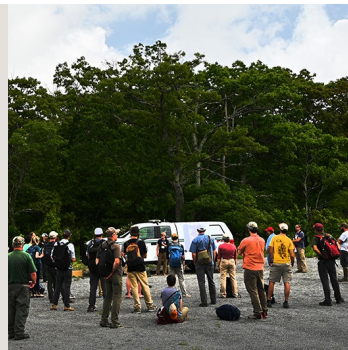
## Burning to Learn

### Virginia Hosts Training for Women Working in Fire

Spanning two weeks of intensive workshop and field experiences, the Women-in-Fire Training Exchange (WTREX) aims to support and retain the women working on wildland fire lines around the world. Virginia fire team member Nikole Simmons was one of six female fire practitioners who, in 2017, developed the idea of a safe, supportive learning environment for women. In the spring, after a two-year pandemic delay, Simmons worked with colleagues from The Nature Conservancy and agency partners to host WTREX in southeast Virginia. Participants traveled from across the U.S. and as far away as South Africa to learn together in the Virginia Pinelands and conduct training burns at TNC's Piney Grove Preserve. Learn more at [nature.org/virginia](https://nature.org/virginia).

### National Fire Learning Network Meeting Comes to Virginia Mountains

Led by staff from TNC's North America Fire Initiative, the Fire Learning Network fosters collaboration and training among the nation's fire practitioners. Virginia hosted this year's national meeting, highlighted by a guided tour of the restoration area at our Warm Springs Mountain Preserve.



FLN participants touring Warm Springs Mountain © Daniel White/TNC



Stream cleanup © Jennifer Dalke/TNC; seagrass seed collection © Mark Schwenk; oyster “table” installation © Mark Schwenk

## My Snorkeling Adventure

By Kai D., Eelgrass Volunteer, Age 11

We drove an hour and a half north up to the Eastern Shore. Once we got there, we suited up in wetsuits and got on one of two boats. On the way, we got a class on eelgrass and the history of the estuary.

The water was above my knees, almost to my waist. Floating through the shallow water above the eelgrass was such a peaceful and calm place with all kinds of sea life. I found a toadfish hiding inside a whelk shell and a bunch of scallops—did you know that if you take a scallop out of



© Laura D.

the water for a bit it slowly opens its mouth and then snaps shut? I also learned the little blue dots around the rim of their shells are actually eyes.

The group collected a total of 25 bags of eelgrass seeds, which were dumped into big tanks. I learned that the seeds will pop out of the shoots, and the grasses will decompose. In October, they will throw the seeds out in the areas that need more eelgrass and then check back in March and hope they grew!

If you can volunteer, it is a fun way to meet people while having fun, learning something new and making a difference. This was a really awesome experience, and if you go, I hope you will enjoy it, too!

# Nature’s Helpers

## Volunteers make a world of difference

The Nature Conservancy’s volunteer programs in Virginia continue to rebound from pandemic impacts in a big way. Volunteer program manager Jennifer Dalke leads recruitment and compiles results, and the following are some of our most successful events that TNC has hosted this year.

**Clean the Bay Day:** In partnership with Fairfax County Parks, TNC recruited well over 500 volunteers for cleanups at 22 different sites. Volunteers donated almost 1,200 hours of labor and removed about 5.5 tons of trash from the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

**“If you can volunteer, it is a fun way to meet people while having fun, learning something new and making a difference.”**

Kai D., Eelgrass Volunteer

**City Nature Challenge:** TNC hosted spring citizen-science events on the Eastern Shore and in Charlottesville, with 240 combined participants recording almost 2,500 observations of plants and animals.

**Eastern Shore Seagrass Restoration:** The world’s largest seagrass restoration project continues to grow. About 80 volunteers joined TNC staff and partners in late spring to harvest seed-bearing eelgrass shoots from coastal bays. Seeds will be extracted for replanting in the fall (see sidebar).

Explore volunteer opportunities at [nature.org/getinvolved](https://www.nature.org/getinvolved).