

## Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

# Lower Cowpasture Restoration Projects

2017–2019



Oak-pine forest and dense understory

Biodiversity hotspots have been identified around the globe as special places where many different plants and wildlife can be found one place. One such hotspot is located in the central Appalachian Mountains. Located at a headwaters of Chesapeake Bay in the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, the verdant oak and pine forests are largely unfragmented. The network of streams and waterholes running through the landscape support a variety of fish, amphibians, and invertebrates. Beneath the surface lies shale barrens and caves. These unique subterranean habitats are home to many rare species that are only found here. Conservation of these natural resources is important to the local communities and culture. Over the years many community partnerships have formed to champion collaborative restoration projects. This Joint Chiefs' project built on the past successes to bring controlled burns to fire-adapted forests, restore rare aquatic habitats, and apply conservation practices to private lands to protect aquatic resources.

### PROJECT IMPACT:

**\$2,000,000+**

More than \$2 million dollars were contributed by partners to this project.

USFS & NRCS JCLRP funds awarded 2017–2019: \$3,223,600  
Total USDA and partner project funds: \$5,223,600

## PROJECT RESULTS



James Spiny mussel (*Parvaspina collina*) prior to being re-introduced into the river  
(Credit: Brian Watson, Cowpasture River Preservation Association)



### Fuels reduction and habitat creation:

prescribed fire was used to reduce fire risk and forest stand improvement was used to restore early succession habitat on 6,169 acres.



### Re-introduction of endangered species:

restoration of James Spiny mussel populations in the Cowpasture River on national forest lands.



**Aquatic habitat:** five new vernal pools were created for native amphibians and stream-crossings improved for cold water fishes.

USDA's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service are working together to improve the health of forests where public forests and grasslands connect to privately owned lands. Through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership, the two USDA agencies are restoring landscapes by reducing wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protecting water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat.

Photos in this document are public domain or stock imagery unless otherwise noted.

# Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership LOWER COWPASTURE RESTORATION PROJECTS



*Walton tract prescribed burn*

## A History of Collaboration and Cooperation

Dave Peters' family has owned "On the River Farm" in Bath County, Va., since the 1880s. He has fond memories of fishing, canoeing and playing on the banks of the Cowpasture River and wants to protect his family legacy for future generations. Today, the committed conservationist is sustainably managing much of the land for commercial forestry and wildlife habitat while simultaneously producing a valuable specialty crop (shiitake mushrooms).

He and wife Sharon first began working with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) more than 20 years ago to attract bobwhite quail to the property. They planted 27 acres in native, warm-season grasses under a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract. While the quail never returned, these fields nevertheless provide habitat for a variety of hawks, woodcocks and other birds and mammals today.

In 2007, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provided financial assistance through the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program to establish a stand of American chestnut trees. Peters later participated in this 2018 Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership project to continue his restoration work, developing a long-term forest management plan that will make his timber a marketable resource for future generations. He's also planted forested buffers to discourage streambank erosion and is considering returning cattle to the land as part of a farm-wide conservation system.

"Dave's an open-minded person who's always looking to take the next step in terms of conservation," said Charlie Simmons, the NRCS district conservationist in Lexington. "He knows the water quality in his part of the river has an impact all the way to the Chesapeake Bay."

For more information, please visit [nrcs.usda.gov/JointChiefsReports](https://nrcs.usda.gov/JointChiefsReports)



*Spadefoot toad*

## Key Partners

Trout Unlimited  
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries  
Virginia Department of Forestry  
Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District  
Cowpasture River Preservation Association  
Farm Services Agency  
Virginia Department of Transportation

## Contact

USDA-NRCS Virginia State Office  
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 209  
Richmond, VA 23229-5014  
(804) 287-1691

George Washington & Jefferson National Forests  
James River and Warm Springs Ranger Districts  
422 Forestry Road  
Hot Springs, VA 24445  
(540) 839-2521