

RACC  
NEWS RELEASE  
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Lexington, VA

The Rockbridge Area Conservation Council (RACC) is disappointed and frustrated by last Thursday's action by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) Board of Trustees to adopt a Resolution which unilaterally attempts to terminate the House Mountain Agreements of 1988 and 1989. VOF and RACC signed those Agreements to preserve and protect House Mountain in perpetuity for the benefit of future generations, but now VOF has decided it does not have to uphold its long-standing contracts with RACC.

The RACC Board of Directors will meet on July 2 to consider what action is necessary to uphold the principles of the original House Mountain Agreements, to honor the promises made to the thousands of donors who made the purchase of the House Mountain Preserve possible, and above all, to ensure the protection of House Mountain in perpetuity.

The original House Mountain Agreements have stayed in force amicably and with effective results for more than a quarter of a century. The success in preserving House Mountain has been due in large part to the House Mountain Management Committee, the public-private partnership established by the original Agreements which provides local expertise and allows for significant cost savings.

House Mountain Management Committee members include RACC, VOF, Virginia Military Institute (VMI), Washington and Lee University (W&L), and three appointed individuals. The House Mountain Management Committee's responsibility for preserving the Mountain has been carried out efficiently and effectively by the hard work of community volunteers in managing the Mountain, and the generous support of the Committee's member institutions and organizations, local businesses, individual donors, and Rockbridge County.

Following administrative changes at VOF, in early 2012 VOF developed a management plan that included significant new directions in the approach to managing the property. The new plan included timber harvesting to provide income for developments such as parking areas, gates, signage, and possibly even staffing. The House Mountain Management Committee created by the original Agreements, discussed these concepts and found several of them to be inconsistent with the goals to preserve the ecology and primitive setting of House Mountain. VOF subsequently declared that the original Agreements and the management partnership were no longer acceptable.

Since then, RACC and VOF have discussed a number of possible ways to address VOF's concerns, but VOF has been unwilling to commit to any changes short of terminating the Agreements. By their vote last Thursday, the VOF Trustees have now acted unilaterally in an effort to both terminate the Agreements, and assert exclusive authority over House Mountain, in a contradiction of both the spirit and purpose of the original management Agreements.

For more information, or to support the House Mountain effort, please contact RACC at 540-463-2330 or [racc@rockbridge.net](mailto:racc@rockbridge.net), or visit [www.rockbridgeconservation.org](http://www.rockbridgeconservation.org).