Salt Rock Property Acquisition Opportunity

Exciting news!

We have an opportunity to protect an important property directly adjacent to Panthertown Valley at the Salt Rock entrance.

Friends of Panthertown is partnering with Mainspring Conservation Trust, a 20 year old regional land trust based in Franklin (formerly the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee, or LTLT), to purchase 16 acres that borders the west side of Panthertown, immediately to the right of the Salt Rock entrance. This property was on the market for several years and could easily have been lost to development.

Ultimately, this land will be transferred to the U.S. Forest Service, expanding the acres included in Panthertown Valley’s protected borders.

(Continued on page 3)
In Appreciation

We would like to thank our friends from Nantahala Area SORBA and WCU Bike Team who helped us maintain mountain biking trails in Panthertown earlier this winter, including Mac’s Gap Trail and parts of Panthertown Valley Trail.

Contact us to find out more about volunteering in Panthertown. Everyone is welcome and all are appreciated!

We are grateful for our community partners who have made generous commitments to help us protect Panthertown and maintain our conservation efforts: Mainspring Conservation Trust, the Laurel Falls Community Association, The Orchard Restaurant, and Flickinamazing.

Thanks to Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center and United Community Bank of Cashiers for allowing us to use their beautiful community rooms for our meetings.

Volume 12 - Winter 2017

News & Happenings

Welcome to our Winter edition of The Panther’s Roar. 2017 marks the 12th year our volunteers have worked with U.S. Forest Service to maintain trails in Panthertown. Thanks for supporting the important work we continue to do.

Cover photo of frozen Schoolhouse Falls was contributed by Todd Ransom of Waterfalls of Panthertown Valley. Submit your stories and photos to appear in an upcoming issue!

Forest Service: Stay Safe in the Woods this Winter

The U.S. Forest Service encourages visitors to the National Forests of North Carolina to use caution when recreating this winter because of additional hazards in the woods.

Natural settings have inherent risks and winter weather can increase the danger. Falling trees and branches are an ever-present hazard; the addition of snow and ice makes tree failure more likely. Motorists and hikers should also be aware of the potential for icy conditions on shaded areas of roads and trails.

Know before you go. Many places in the forest do not have cell phone service. Plan and prepare accordingly. Check the National Weather Service before your trip so you know what weather to expect but be prepared for changing conditions. Contact USFS to get latest info about current trail conditions and seasonal closures.

Your safety is your responsibility. Take these preventative measures to help keep yourself safe: Avoid traveling alone. If you must travel alone, share your plans. Tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return. Know your limits and choose activities that are appropriate for your physical condition. Use appropriate tires and footwear and adjust your speed or pace where there is snow or ice. Carry emergency kits containing water, food, blankets, and matches. Dress in layers which can be adjusted to the conditions and bring extra clothing in case you get wet.

2017 Board of Trustees

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Friends of Panthertown is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All donations and memberships are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowable by law.
**Friends maintain Panthertown**

Our volunteers protect and maintain over 30 miles of public trails in Panthertown Valley spread out over 6,295 acres. Your membership contributions support our mission to work in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service to conserve this outstanding natural resource while improving the quality and experience of recreational opportunities in Panthertown Valley for everyone.

We are an equal opportunity volunteer organization. Everyone is welcome to get involved. If you are interested in volunteering or would like information about adopting a trail in Panthertown, please call (828) 269-HIKE (4453) or send an e-mail addressed to: friends@panthertown.org

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**Salt Rock Property Acquisition Opportunity**

(continued from Page 1):

Ultimately, the Salt Rock entrance land will be transferred to the U.S. Forest Service, expanding the acres included in Panthertown Valley’s protected borders. This property will enhance the Panthertown user experience at the Salt Rock entrance by allowing enhanced trail access, providing good camping sites, improving the Salt Rock entrance’s limited parking, and protecting the view from inside Panthertown Valley when looking at the Valley’s Salt Rock perimeter.

While Mainspring negotiated a favorable price, together we still need to commit more than $195,000 to acquire the land and we need your help for this important project. Find out more on our website: www.panthertown.org/SaltRock
A brief history of Friends of Panthertown

Panthertown is public land that has been part of the Nantahala National Forest since 1989.

In 2003, the U.S. Forest Service began planning for a Panthertown Trail Project. The project consisted of creating a sustainable trail system that would reduce resource conflicts between hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians, the primary users. Local stakeholders from the conflicting groups started to come forward with concerns about the future of Panthertown. Some of these stakeholders offered to volunteer and help.

In 2005, these volunteers came together under the leadership of Jackson-Macon Conservation Alliance to begin the work of reducing user conflicts by gathering input from the public. They began to establish a relationship with the U.S. Forest Service to help protect Panthertown Valley. The original goal was to create a group of supporters that would provide volunteers and raise funds in an effort to address the many unmet conservation and maintenance needs in Panthertown. This project became known as Friends of Panthertown. In 2007, the J-MCA hired a coordinator for the Friends of Panthertown project, created a Board of Supervisors, and formalized a partnership with the USFS with a volunteer agreement to maintain the Panthertown Trail System.

In 2009, working with Friends of Panthertown to gather public input and maintain the trail system, Nantahala District Ranger Mike Wilkins signed a decision memo concerning the Panthertown Trail Project. A trail system map was released and trail uses were designated by the USFS for hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians.

In 2010, at the request of the USFS, and due to many visitors getting lost in Panthertown, Friends funded and installed trail-head bulletin boards with maps, and trail markers with trail usage designations at each of the major intersections.

In 2011, after several years under the fiscal sponsorship of J-MCA, and having grown its funding and membership base, Friends of Panthertown, Inc. was recognized by the IRS and the State of North Carolina as an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Currently in 2017, ten dedicated volunteers serve on our Board of Trustees. These Trustees serve as leadership for Friends and a part-time Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day organizational duties. Our monthly Board meetings are open for anyone from our membership to attend, and an annual membership gathering is typically held in the summer or fall. Everyone is welcome to participate, join our organization, and help protect Panthertown.
Thanks goes to these hard working volunteers from Nantahala Area SORBA and WCU Bike Team for partnering with Friends of Panthertown earlier this winter to help us maintain bike trails in Panthertown, including Mac’s Gap and Panthertown Valley Trail. Photos submitted by Mike Despeaux.
Raffle tickets will soon be available for your chance to win a Big Green Egg Grill in our 2017 raffle with proceeds to benefit Friends of Panthertown

Raffle tickets will be $5 each or 5 tickets for $20.

Visit www.panthertown.org for more info.
You will not need to be present to win.
Contact us at: friends@panthertown.org (828) 269-HIKE (4453)

Friends of Panthertown
PO Box 51
Cashiers, NC 28717

Happy New Year and thank you for your support!