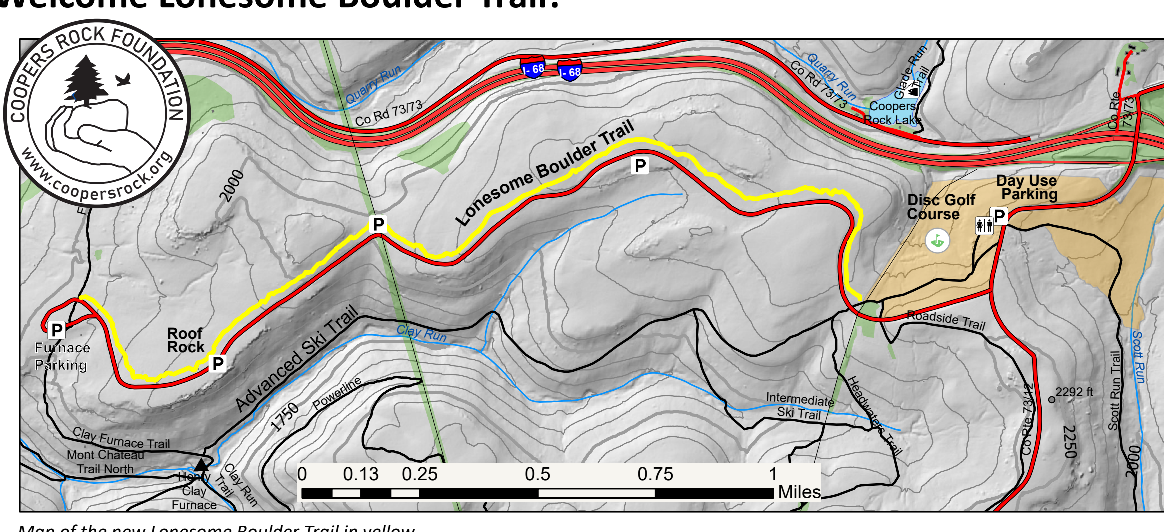
Newsletter Returns to Life

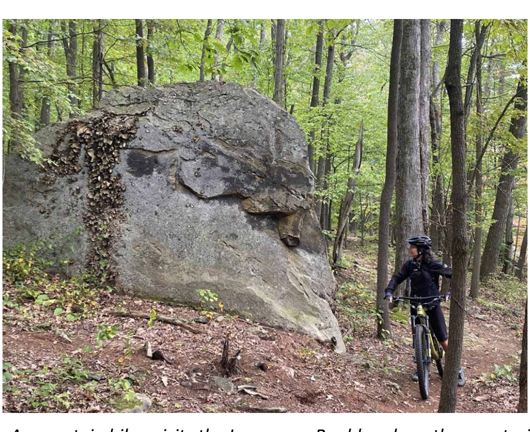
After a highly productive year, we are bringing back the Coopers Rock Foundation Annual Newsletter to keep our volunteers and supporters informed of our recent accomplishments and of plans for the coming year. The Forest is healthy and busier than ever with visitors from all over the region. The Foundation has been working hard to improve recreational opportunities while striving to preserve the Forest's historical significance and natural beauty.

Welcome Lonesome Boulder Trail!



Map of the new Lonesome Boulder Trail in yellow

In 2024, CRF volunteers built the Lonesome Boulder Trail, the longest addition to the Coopers Rock Trail system since we completed the Roadside Trail in 2007. The new trail is situated on the north side of the Clay Furnace Road and winds through rolling forested terrain down to the Clay Furnace Parking area. It offers 2.2 miles of pleasant hiking or moderately challenging biking or cross-country skiing, linking the Day Use Parking Lot to the Clay Furnace Trail. Lonesome Boulder Trail users include happy hikers, dog walkers, mountain bikers, trail runners, mushroom hunters, rock climbers, and skiers. In fact, it's possible the lonesome boulder is no longer lonesome. In 2025, Foundation volunteers helped WVDNR personnel build a new gravel pull-out along the Clay Furnace Road to provide parking for the new trail and for climbers headed to Roof Rocks.

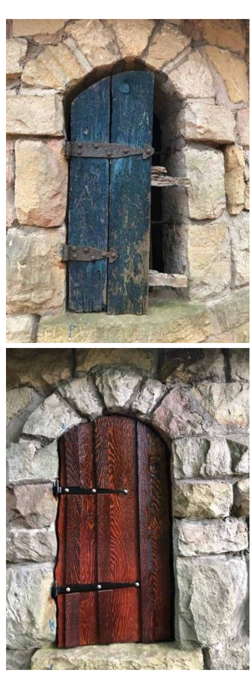


A mountain biker visits the Lonesome Boulder along the new trail

Historical Structures Restored

Structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression are one of the hallmarks of Coopers Rock, but time and weather take their toll. When first built by the CCC, the distinctive round Spring House sheltered a well—the only source of water for the Overlook area. Over time, its roof, door, and shutters fell into a state of decay that was both unsightly and concerning for the preservation of a structure on the National Register of Historic Places. In 2024, CRF hired a pair of tradesmen to replace the roof and fashion a new door and shutters in a style that retains the historic character of the originals. Continuing this initiative in 2025, the same pair replaced a badly deteriorated roof on the Information Station next to the trail to the Overlook. Funding for both of these restorations was provided by a long-time CRF supporter.

Before and After photos of Spring House window



Before and After photos of CCC Information Station

Imitating the Old to Give Access to the New

In 2018, the CRF obtained permission to build a new 18-hole disc golf course near the Day Use Parking Lot at Coopers Rock. The vision was to create a professional-quality course that would eventually attract players from far and wide. Currently, the course is near completion thanks to the hard work of members of the Morgantown Mountain Goats Disc Golf Club. The course is so well integrated into the forest, that it is almost unnoticeable from the Day Use Parking Lot. This is about to change: CRF has been working on a new kiosk to display a course map at the parking lot. Also, this year CRF volunteers built a beautiful new stone staircase to lead players down from the Day Use lot to the first disc golf tee. The rustic, hand-hewn steps were inspired by the style of historic Civilian Conservation Corps structures found throughout the Forest.

50 Km Coopers Rock Trail Race

Do you think running the Boston marathon is tough? Try running 50 km along the steep,rugged, rocky trails of Coopers Rock. For the past 9 years, CRF President Dave Hopkinson, has organized the **Coopers Rock 50K and Half Marathon** which covers practically every trail in the Forest. This past April, 150 runners competed in the event under drizzly Spring conditions. The top male racer was Kristian Robinnette who completed the course in 4 hours 44 minutes and the top female was Julia Mericle who finished in 5 hours 42 minutes. Apparently, it was not challenging enough because the plan for the 2026 trail race is to run it on the night of April 25. With some luck, none of the runners will be permanently lost in the Forest. As always, the Mountaineer Area Rescue Group will be on-hand to keep the event safe for all.

Nature Trail Loop Improved

This was a big year for trail improvements. The expansion of the McCullom Campground, carried out by the WVDNR in 2023-24, eliminated part of Nature Trail East. CRF and the Superintendent flagged a replacement 1,150' trail segment, and opened it in Spring 2024. This year, under the leadership of Adam Polinski, CRF volunteers added many upgraqdes to this one-mile loop over the course of 14 individual work-days. This work improved the marking by adding new signs, blazes, and cairns. Eight drainage dips were added around the loop, and a 75' bypass trail around some rocks was cut in. All four of the trail's wooden deck bridges were replaced with longer, wider, more durable bridges painted with non-slip textured paint for added safety in wet conditions. The lumber for new trail bridges, including a 32' bridge on Reservoir Loop Trail, and several shorter bridges on Headwaters Trail and Nature Trails Loop, was available for our use because of the single biggest volunteer work day of 2025. Twenty-five volunteers from First Energy Green Team worked a total of 141 Hours to deconstruct three tent platforms left behind from the brief attempt by TentRR to establish glamping sites at Coopers Rock. All the screws and wood were stored at Coopers Rock HQ for future use. CRF will continue to update and repair trail bridges using these materials.

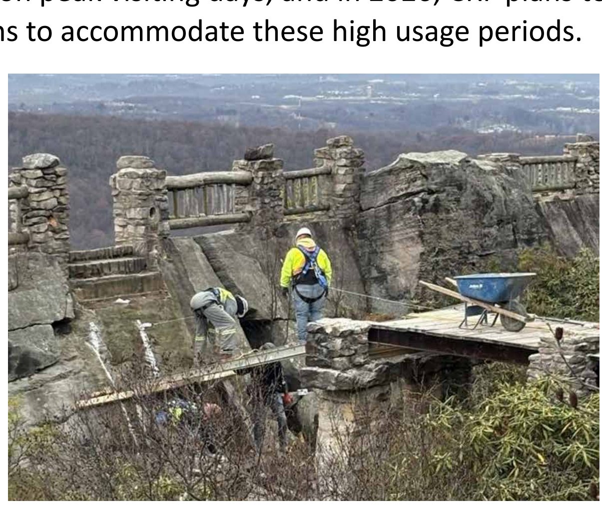
Volunteers working on trail decks at the Nature Trail ....

and at the Reservoir Trail.

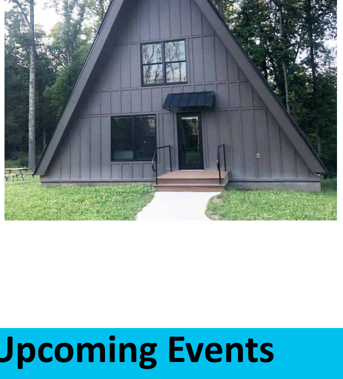
Big Changes at the Overlook

WVDNR has undertaken several major improvements in the vicinity of the iconic Coopers Rock Overlook. The supporting steel under-structure of the bridge to the Overlook rock was determined to be unsafe and the entire bridge is in the process of being replaced. In addition, a modern bathroom has been erected adjacent to the Overlook Parking lot. Those who remember the old bathroom will appreciate the new facilities. However, according to the Coopers Rock State Forest superintendent, the capacity of the new restroom is inadequate for the very high level of visitorship that the forest receives on peak visiting days, and in 2026, CRF plans to modernize the old Overlook bathrooms to accommodate these high usage periods.

Contractors remove the old bridge to the Overlook



Star Gazing Cabins Arrive at Coopers Rock



The inauguration of five A-frame rental cabins in 2025 marks the most impactful recent change at Coopers Rock. This project was entirely funded and executed by WV State Parks with the ultimate goal of having 12 cabins available for rental in the near future. Each cabin has two bedrooms, full furnishings, and modern amenities including Wi-Fi and a telescope. They are located near the Raven's Rock Trail and can be booked at wvstateparks.com. One of the indirect impacts of the new cabins is that the State Forest road will now be plowed and open through the winter months making the Overlook available year-round.

Upcoming Events

Winter Fest: Saturday February 7, 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM at Pavilion 1 by the Overlook Parking Lot.

Coopers Rock 50 Km and Half Marathon Race: Saturday April 25, 8:30 PM start time, for more information, **click here.**

Celebration of the Outdoors: Saturday , October 24 ,10:00 AM to 3:00 PM at Pavilion 2 by the Overlook Parking**.**

Volunteer Work Sessions: Most Saturdays 10:00 to 12:30 PM (weather permitting). Contact jtoro@wvu.edu to receive announcements.

Coopers Rock Foundation Needs Your Support

Donate:

The foundation's dual mission is to promote preservation and recreation in Coopers Rock State Forest and nearby Snake Hill Wildlife Management Area. Our work is fully funded by charitable donations and grants. To donate, go to CoopersRock.Org or contact our treasurer: Alan Collins (Alan.Collins@mail.wvu.edu)

Contribute through Kroger Community Rewards:

Here is how to set it up:
1. Log onto your Kroger rewards account or create one.
3. Click the **Community Rewards** Link.
4. Search for the Coopers Rock Foundation using ID number VV198.
5. Kroger will donate to us when you use your loyalty card, over the year this adds up!

Join our Board:

If you would like to help guide the activities of the CRF, we welcome you to attend our monthly meetings in the Morgantown area and eventually join the board. If interested, contact our president: Jaime Toro (jtoro@wvu.edu)

Join our Volunteer Work Sessions:

Most of the trail and construction work that we undertake is done using hand tools and traditional methods. We offer frequent opportunities to sweat under the beautiful Appalachian forest canopy with other happy volunteers, while contributing to lasting trail improvements at Coopers Rock. If interested contact jtoro@wvu.edu (Jaime Toro) or adamzapple88@gmail.com (Adam Polinski)

Coopers Rock Foundation
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