



## Wilderness Louisville

### Wilderness Louisville Annual Retreat

The Wilderness Louisville Board & staff gathered for our annual retreat on March 14<sup>th</sup> at the beautiful Horine Conference Center in Jefferson Memorial Forest. We collectively planned for the year ahead, analyzed and refined our 3-year Strategic Plan that spans from 2026 to 2028, and we began working through our recently established Wilderness Louisville Development Plan, to continue raising funds for the Louisville is Engaging Children Outdoors programming, and other Natural Areas priorities.

We are excited for the year ahead and look forward to continued partnership with supporters such as you!



### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Kate Miller**

*Chair*

**Tiffany Ogunsanya**

*Vice-Chair*

**Sharon Bond**

*Treasurer*

**Patricia Tennen**

*Secretary*

**Kendall Boyd**

*Community Engagement  
Officer*

**Chase Coleman**

**Gad Niyiragira**

**Chuck Haddaway**

**Randal Strobo**

**Prasanthi Persad**

*Wilderness Louisville*

*Executive Director*

**Michelle King**

*Louisville Parks &  
Recreation Executive*

*Director*

**Jessica Kane**

*Natural Areas  
Parks Administrator*

# Nature is for Everyone



## A Note from the Board Chair

The forest is an essential resource for all of us. My daughter was born in 2019 and like a lot of moms - I got baby blues, while I had expected this (conceptually) I had a hard time facing it, especially when it dragged on far longer than I thought it should. My racing thoughts and loneliness felt like a weight I carried around and I hadn't registered for a carrier for those particular items. I got to put those items down when I got to the woods. Staring up at the leaves, watching the wind blow through the branches (alongside a smaller set of eyeballs) gave me immeasurable relief - a relief that absolutely every person in our community is entitled to.

— So when I was asked to join the board of Wilderness Louisville, I knew my answer right away. It is a privilege to serve alongside community leaders and to work towards something bigger than ourselves. This work includes all of you!

As your new board chair, please feel called to share your story with me, tell me why the woods matter to you (or any other feedback you think is important). Welcome to the spring 2026 newsletter!

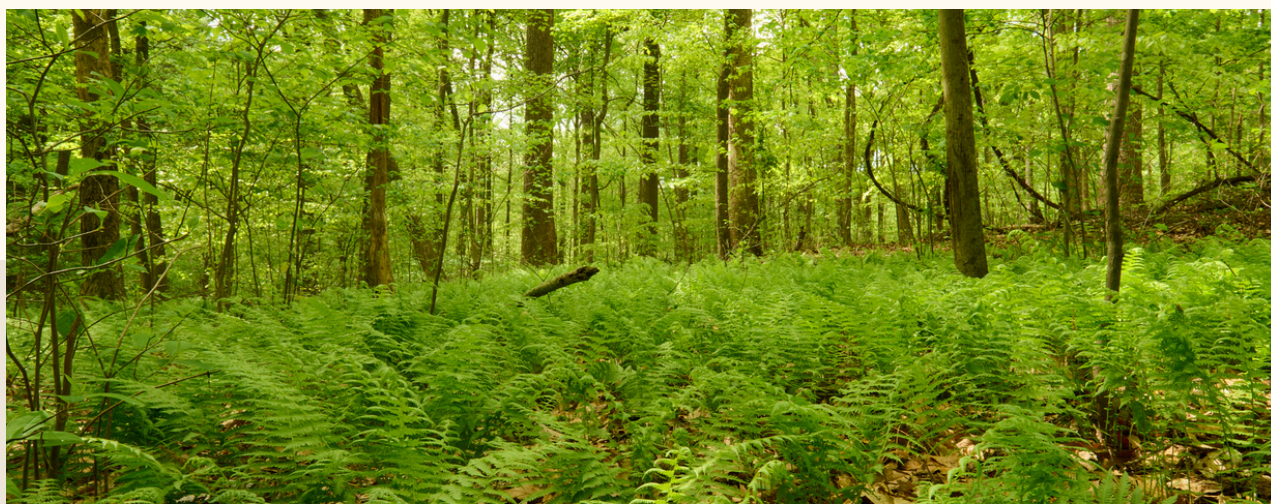
Kate Miller  
[kemiller1043@gmail.com](mailto:kemiller1043@gmail.com) (I mean it - please reach out!)



*Thank you to all of our Wilderness Louisville donors.*

*It is only through your ongoing generosity that we can steward natural areas & champion both nature education for youth and equitable access for the community to natural spaces*

# VIEW FROM JEFFERSON MEMORIAL FOREST



## Land Management

The JMF Land Management team has been busy this winter and spring. With the help of volunteers, they completed a ½ mile reroute on the Siltstone trail west of Bearcamp Road, in order to control erosion and establish a more sustainable route. The team and volunteers conducted invasive species removal at the Scott's Gap Recreation Area along the southwest corner of the trail, clearing approximately ¼ acres. Eagle Scouts have completed two more projects in JMF - Trent Desmond installed 3 benches along the Scott's Gap trail and Philip Dunn installed a 100 foot long railing along the Memorial Trail at Tom Wallace Recreation Area.

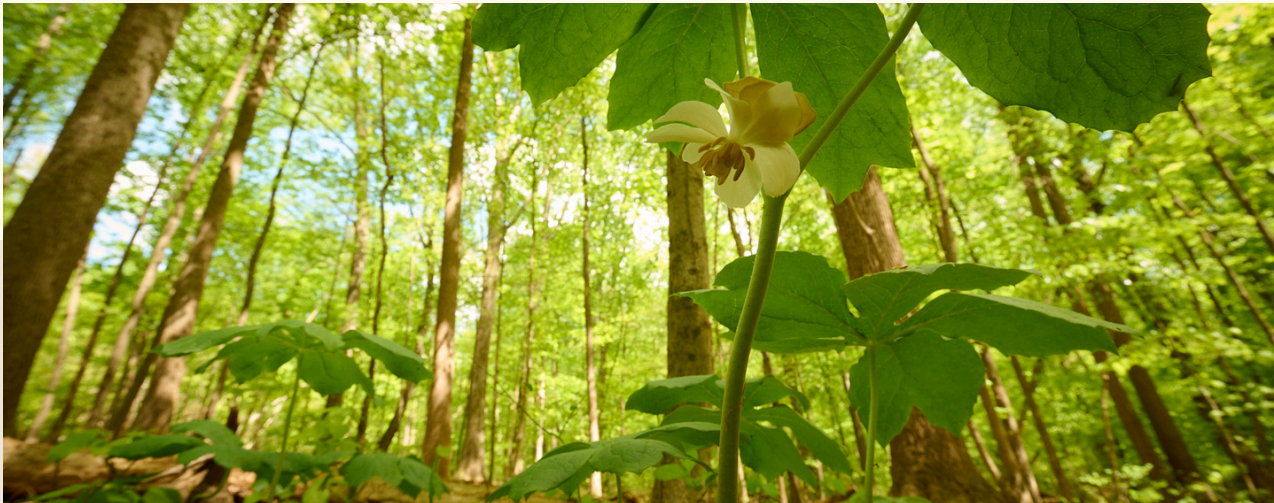


*Thank you to Trent and Philip, and all the volunteers who joined them! And thank you to 84 Lumber for sponsoring with discounted materials. Visit JMF to see the end results of their hard work and enjoy some time outdoors in the forest.*

Some of the larger projects accomplished included cleaning up 4 LARGE truckloads of trash and debris on the hillside along Jefferson Hill Road, with the help of the Maintenance team. Staff also completed the first phase of brush management for invasive species removal on 73 acres at Natural Resources Conservation Service - Environmental Quality Incentives Program (NRCS-EQIP) properties. The Natural Areas team also started construction of a new trail in partnership with Urban Forestry's Louisville Equitable Forest Initiative (LEFI) program. Ongoing efforts include updating trail maps and JMF area brochures.



# VIEW FROM JEFFERSON MEMORIAL FOREST (cont.)



Land Management worked with Catalyst Sports and Kentucky Mountain Bikers Association (KMBA) to make the Clinic Loop at Waverly more accessible for adaptive riders. They also removed 1 acre of Callery pear trees from Long Run Park, in coordination with KY Division of Forestry, as part of the new Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area group for Louisville.

Capping off their long list of duties this winter, the team performed routine maintenance which included tree removal on trails, installing mile markers every 0.25 miles along JMF trails, completing a paving needs assessment along the Louisville Loop, conducting trash cleanup along the Loop and installing, with the help of the Natural Areas Maintenance team, large boulders along Tom Wallace Road to prevent ATV access to the Recreation Area.

Finally, the Land Management team has grown with the addition of a Horticultural Park Worker - Charles Robb. Charles joined the team in late November. Welcome to the team, Charles!

## ECHO Programming

The Louisville is Engaging Children Outdoors Program (ECHO), supported by Wilderness Louisville, provided outdoor recreation and education programs to more than 3,200 youth across 106 programs throughout 2025 and they have just kicked off spring programming with the Breathe, Move, and Grove series, out-of-school time activities, and school field trips. Louisville ECHO and Wilderness Louisville are key partners in the city-wide Nature Everywhere Initiative focusing on nature connections in Early Childhood Education. You can check out more information here: [Nature Everywhere Louisville](#)





## Shawnee Outdoor Learning Center

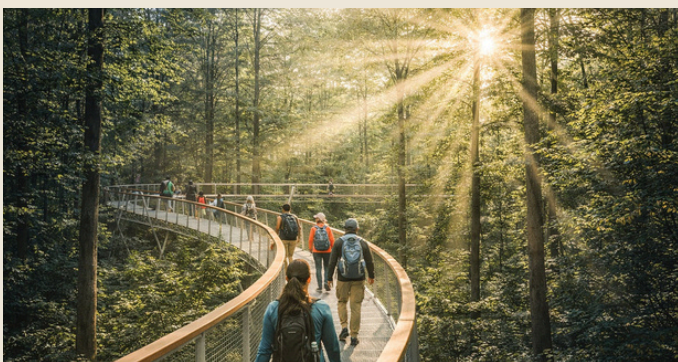
Wilderness Louisville is thrilled to announce the groundbreaking for the Shawnee Outdoor Learning (SOL) Center will take place April 21<sup>st</sup> in Shawnee Park! The Center is the culmination of more than a decade of work by Wilderness Louisville, Parks and Recreation Natural Areas Division, and the West Louisville Outdoor Recreation (WLORI) Community Council.

Without strong partnerships at the state level, Senator Gerald Neal leading the way, and at the local level, with Councilwoman Donna Purvis and Mayor Craig Greenberg, we would not have been able to raise \$10.5 million to construct the SOL Center.

This center will be the new program office and home base for Louisville is Engaging Children Outdoors (ECHO), as well as a shared community space for partnership programming, events, and family gatherings. Stay tuned for further updates!

## JMF Master Plan Announcement

On April 10<sup>th</sup>, Mayor Craig Greenberg, along with other state and local officials and partner organizations gathered together at the beautiful Horine Conference Center to announce the new Master Plan for Jefferson Memorial Forest. The plan encompasses new facilities, accessible amenities, and expanded mountain biking areas in the forest. You can find the full plan and an area to provide feedback at [JMFMasterPlan.com](http://JMFMasterPlan.com).



# WAYS TO GET INVOLVED



## **BECOME A MEMBER!**



You're ongoing support helps sustain youth programming, improve trail maintenance needs, tree plantings, and much more!  
Individual Memberships - \$10/month  
Family Memberships - \$20/month

## **DONATE**

Not looking for a membership? Make a one-time donation of any amount.



# COME OUT TO THE FOREST



[CLICK HERE TO CHECK  
OUT JMF PUBLIC PROGRAMS!](#)

<p>scan here for <b>camping</b></p>  	<p>scan here for <b>hiking</b></p>  
---	---

CHECK OUT NATURAL AREAS EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES: [HERE](#)

JOIN US FOR FOREST FEST ON

MAY 16, 2026



METRO COUNCIL



LOUISVILLE PARKS AND RECREATION

# FOREST FEST

5.16.26

11:30-7

A CELEBRATION OF MUSIC AND LOCAL MAKERS AT JEFFERSON MEMORIAL FOREST

AMELIA DAY

DENITIA

THE TILLERS

ROADIE

FRESH CUT GRASS

\$15/CAR ALL AGES

COOLERS/OUTSIDE ALCOHOL PROHIBITED



ForestFestLouisville

