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THE CONSERVATION FUND HELPS PROTECT ANOTHER PIECE OF NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE

276-acre transfer protects one of the largest remaining privately owned tracts within the park's proclamation boundary

WEST VIRGINIA (September 28, 2026) — Today, The Conservation Fund announced the permanent protection of 276 acres along the rim of New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, helping expand the park's protected public lands and safeguard a highly visible and ecologically significant landscape for future generations.

The property is one of the largest remaining privately owned tracts within the park's proclamation boundary. This conserves forested lands along the New River Gorge, protects the viewshed of the Sandstone Falls Visitor Center and the New River, and supports opportunities for future public access and outdoor recreation, including hunting. The Conservation Fund acquired and held the property before transferring it to the National Park Service to become part of New River Gorge National Park and Preserve.

"This transfer continues The Conservation Fund's longstanding commitment to protecting the New River Gorge and helping build a more connected and accessible national park," said Ashton Berdine, West Virginia state director at The Conservation Fund. "We've seen firsthand how conservation can protect at-risk lands before they are lost to development, and we're proud to once again work with our federal, state and local partners to ensure this significant piece of the New River Gorge landscape is protected for future generations."

"I'm very excited to see this transfer completed. We rely heavily on partners like The Conservation Fund, who can act quickly to secure key properties when they become available — often much faster than we can," said Eric G. Laprice, Acting Superintendent of New River Gorge National Park and Preserve.

New River Gorge National Park and Preserve was established in December 2020, becoming the newest national park in the United States at the time. Since then, partners have continued working to conserve lands within and adjacent to the park's proclamation boundary, helping build a more connected and accessible landscape for visitors, wildlife and surrounding communities. The Conservation Fund purchased and protected the 963-acre Irish Mountain property in 2021, later transferring the land to the National Park Service with support from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

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This acquisition was also supported by LWCF, which was permanently funded with the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act and signed into law by President Trump in 2020. Established in 1965, LWCF reinvests a small percentage of offshore energy revenues — not taxpayer dollars — in conservation and recreation access projects that support critical natural resources, wild habitats, historic sites and working lands. LWCF was secured by West Virginia's federal Congressional delegation representing the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve including U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito, U.S. Senator Jim Justice, and U.S. Representative Carol Miller. In addition, this project was also made possible by a grant from the National Park Foundation, the congressionally chartered official nonprofit partner of the National Park Service.

"When I drafted the bill redesignating the New River Gorge National River as the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, I knew that the redesignation would have a positive impact on the region, but I also recognized the importance of looking out for the sportsmen of West Virginia. Today's announcement of the permanent protection of 276 acres of the park will protect the New River Gorge and help build a more connected and accessible national park," **Senator Capito said**. "I am thankful for the efforts of The Conservation Fund and all the work that they have put in to make this 276-acre land acquisition possible. I am committed to continuing to enhance the New River Gorge experience for visitors and sportsmen, and I look forward to continuing to work alongside partners like The Conservation Fund to do so."

"West Virginia is catching the attention of folks all across this country, and the New River Gorge is one of the greatest treasures we have. I was proud to help push for the New River Gorge to become a national park when I was Governor, and we've seen what that designation has meant for West Virginia. Protecting another 276 acres means protecting more of this incredible place for generations to come. Whether you're hunting, hiking, fishing, or enjoying our trails, we're protecting a gem that makes our state so special. I'm proud to see everybody pulling the rope together to preserve the New River Gorge and make sure this piece of Almost Heaven remains for generations of West Virginians to enjoy," **said Senator Jim Justice**.

"West Virginia's natural beauty is second to none, and the New River Gorge is a shining example of what makes the Mountain State so special. I'm happy to have supported this project from the beginning and to have been an early advocate for protecting these lands for future generations. I am grateful for the work done by the National Park Service and The Conservation Fund to secure this new addition to our beautiful park. Preserving these 276 acres will ensure future generations can experience the breathtaking views and West Virginia heritage that have made the New River Gorge a treasure for generations," **said Congresswoman Carol Miller**.

About The Conservation Fund

The Conservation Fund protects the land that sustains us all. We are in the business of conservation, creating innovative solutions that drive nature-based action in all 50 states for climate protection, vibrant communities and sustainable economies. We apply effective

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strategies, efficient financing approaches, and enduring government, community and private partnerships to protect millions of acres of America's natural land, cultural sites, recreation areas and working forests and farms. To learn more, visit www.conservationfund.org.

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