

## For Immediate Release

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**Photos:** [http://www.virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org/media/ingles\\_photos.zip](http://www.virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org/media/ingles_photos.zip)

## Historic Ingles Ferry Farm Permanently Protected

Ingles Ferry Farm, one of Southwest Virginia's most significant historical sites, is now fully and forever protected. The property's three owners, all direct descendants of pioneer heroine Mary Draper Ingles, have donated a permanent conservation easement to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR). The New River Land Trust (NRLT) also played a key role in the project by securing funding for it through the Virginia Land Conservation Fund, which leverages federal, state, local and private funding to conserve land in the commonwealth. The easement was recorded on August 18, 2009.

The 313-acre tract in Pulaski County is part of the ancestral home of Mary Draper Ingles, an American pioneer who was captured by Shawnee warriors in 1755 and taken to an area near present day Cincinnati, only to escape and walk hundreds of miles back to Virginia following the Ohio, Kanawha, and New rivers. Her story has been recounted in numerous books, films, and documentaries, including Alexander Thom's 1981 best-selling novel, *Follow the River*.

The property contains the historic Ingles Ferry Tavern (circa 1772), which was placed on both the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places in 1969. It also includes portions of the original Wilderness Road, a major migratory route in the westward expansion of colonial and later U.S. citizens. In addition, the property contains the remains of Ingles Ferry, which operated from the mid-1700s to the 1940s, and remnants of the Ingles Ferry covered bridge, which was destroyed in the aftermath of the Civil War Battle of Cloyd's Mountain. VDHR has also identified several Native American archaeological sites in the property's mile long riverfront meadow.

Mary Ingles Barbour, a fifth great-granddaughter of Mary Draper Ingles, stated, "I am pleased that my family, through a conservation and historic preservation easement, has been able to protect the historic Ingles Ferry Farm and Tavern. While the story of Mary Draper Ingles is well known, her bravery and ability to endure incredible hardships were characteristics shared by many of the early settlers and explorers of this region. I hope that this easement will help preserve the legacy of all those who settled this region of Virginia and those who crossed the ferry to continue westward to settle and explore what was then uncharted wilderness."

"Ingles Ferry Farm evokes epic history," said Kathleen S. Kilpatrick, director of VDHR. "There is the site's Native American pre-historic archaeological resources, and its ties to the legendary Mary Ingles Draper, whose heroic story foretold the vital role women would play in America's pioneering history. There is also the site's significance as a major river crossing on the Wilderness Road, when settlers poured through the Valley of Virginia and onward to the Ohio Valley. And then there is its association with the Civil War. Amazingly, the property remains within the Ingles family, who have secured it for all Virginians, now and into the future, with this easement."

Another part of Mary Draper Ingles' ancestral home is located on the eastern side of the New River. That property, known as Ingles Farm, was placed under easement with VOF in 2002 by Lewis Ingles "Bud" Jeffries, another direct descendant of Mary Draper Ingles. Jeffries and his son, John, have rebuilt Mary Draper Ingles' cabin at this site and it is open to visitors at various times during the year.

In addition to the historic resources on Ingles Ferry Farm, the property contains large open pastures, hayfields, mixed hardwoods, and more than one mile of frontage on the New River. All of these natural resources will be protected through the easement.

"Some easements protect farmland, some protect historic resources, some protect water quality, some protect scenic landscapes—this one protects it all," said Hank Hartz, chairman of VOF's board of trustees. "It's a prime example of why Virginia's land conservation programs are the best in the nation."



The New River Land Trust applied for a state grant in 2007 to protect the tavern and farm. The proposal was the top-ranking Virginia Land Conservation Fund project that year. The grant allowed for the purchase of a portion of the easement at its appraised value. The three landowners—Robert Steele, Mary Ingles Barbour, and Andrew Ingles, Jr.—are donating the balance of the easement’s value.

The push to protect Ingles Ferry Farm began in 2002, when the late Roberta Ingles Steele, one of the family owners, contacted the New River Land Trust about protecting the historic property with a conservation easement. Earlier, she had also contacted VDHR for advice on maintaining the historic tavern—a centerpiece of her family’s rich heritage.

“Mrs. Steele invited me to come out and give some pointers on maintaining the building,” recalls Mike Pulice, an architectural historian with VDHR who is based in Roanoke. “I put together a little report with suggestions on what the family could do to help conserve it a little better. She paid close attention to everything I said. If there’s any property in this area that is deserving of such close and diligent attention over the years, this is certainly one of them. Mrs. Steele was an excellent steward of that property. Without her, it might not be there today.”

Mrs. Steele passed away in 2004, but her niece Mary, son Robert, and nephew Andrew continued the effort to protect the property, culminating in their generous donation of the conservation easement.

“The sight of this intact 237-year-old tavern where settlers stopped on the way west is amazing because it is virtually unchanged from days when Daniel Boone visited there,” said Elizabeth Obenshain, executive director of the New River Land Trust. “The Ingles Family has cared for this tavern and farm for generations—protecting one of Virginia’s unique historic sites. Roberta Ingles Steele contacted us 7 1/2 years ago to determine how the tavern and ferry site could be protected forever. We are elated that her son, niece, and nephew have now realized Roberta’s dream.”

Conservation easements are voluntary agreements with landowners that permanently protect the land’s natural, scenic, historic, recreational, and open-space values from intense development while keeping the property in private ownership. State tax incentives have increased the benefits of gifts of easement, especially for landowners of modest means. Landowners who donate an easement receive a state Land Preservation Tax Credit for 40 percent of the appraised value of the easement. This credit can be sold for cash.

VOF now protects more than 535,000 acres across 102 Virginia counties and cities. Pulaski County now has about 2,600 acres of private land under permanent protection through VOF. Many of VOF’s easements protect working forests and farms, which represent the Commonwealth’s largest industry, contributing \$79 billion to the economy each year.

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### **About the Virginia Outdoors Foundation**

Established in 1966, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation is Virginia’s largest land trust, preserving more than half a million acres of natural, scenic, historic, recreational, and open-space lands for future generations. [www.virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org](http://www.virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org)

### **About the Virginia Department of Historic Resources**

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) fosters, encourages and supports stewardship of Virginia’s significant historic, architectural, archaeological and cultural resources. The department provides a range of programs and services, technical advice, and financial incentives to property owners and managers. [www.dhr.virginia.gov](http://www.dhr.virginia.gov)

### **About the New River Land Trust**

The New River Land Trust is a local non-profit formed to protect the farmland, forests, open spaces and historic places in Virginia’s New River region. We preserve precious land by educating landowners and other stakeholders about the benefits of voluntarily donating conservation easements on their land, protecting it for future generations. Since 2002, the New River Land Trust has worked hard to help conserve over 31,000 acres in the New River region. [www.newriverlandtrust.org](http://www.newriverlandtrust.org)