

# From Coal to Conservation: The Remarkable Transformation of Summit Bechtel Reserve, Site of BSA's 2023 National Jamboree

*Scouting's Commitment to Sustainability and Respect for Natural Resources Evident at One of the Nation's Most Successful Reclamation Projects*

MOUNT HOPE, WEST VIRGINIA, USA, June 27, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Relatively few of the over 15,000 Scouts, Venturers, Explorers, staff, volunteers and local community members attending the Boy Scouts of America's 20th [National Jamboree](#), taking place July 19-28, 2023, are likely to know that for many decades, extensive coal mining, strip mining, and tree harvesting operations were located on the BSA's [Summit Bechtel Reserve's](#) 10,600 acres. Hundreds of people lived and worked in mining and forestry camps on the property, beginning in the 1850s.

In 2009, when Scouting selected the Summit property to develop as its permanent home for future Jamborees – and consistent with its longstanding commitment to sustainability – the organization committed to undertake what was a significant reclamation project, to convert the property back into an ecologically sound environment where forestation and wildlife could thrive and humans could enjoy



The Sustainability Treehouse is a living education center for visitors to the Summit Bechtel Reserve, not only providing information, but also immersing visitors in the concept of sustainability.



Scouts participating in a forest renewal project at the Summit Bechtel Reserve.

responsibly.

A few examples of Scouting's reclamation and sustainability efforts on the Summit property include:

— Resource Conservation – Initiatives targeted Abandoned Mine Lands (AML), including addition of a 2:1 slope over sheer rock faces left from strip mining, and planting seed beds to prevent erosion. The Summit participated in the Appalachian Forest Renewal Initiative which included the planting of 100,000 trees, and continues to partner with the American Chestnut Foundation to help repopulate the American Chestnut in West Virginia.

— Energy – Buildings are designed to use 30 percent less energy than conventional structures. Scouting has also made investments in on-site renewable energy generation, including geothermal wells, photovoltaic solar panels, and wind turbines to reduce operating costs.

— Water – Recognizing its role in protecting the New River, the Summit uses a network of 60 acres of swales and rain garden to treat runoff by filtering it through plants. The Summit also employs gray-water systems, low-flow fixtures, and composting toilets to reduce water use by two-thirds. On average, the Summit treats approximately 3.5 million gallons of water onsite daily. During a Jamboree, there is normally an additional 3 million gallons of water that is recycled, reused and or treated and then put back into the forest.

— Materials – Scouting is committed to thrifty and resourceful use of construction materials. Timber was salvaged for reuse in structures, while other materials were sourced from within 500 miles of the project to reduce emissions.

— Economy – By requiring at least a 25 percent local labor force and materials from nearby, developing the Summit supports the local economy. It's estimated that every dollar spent in a local business re-circulates seven more times in the regional economy.

— Habitat Conservation – More than 1,000 acres of the Summit's most ecologically- valuable land has been dedicated as a nature preserve. The Summit has also planted many thousands of hardwood trees, and established native grasses on campsites to restore wildlife habitat.

Regardless of whether they ever visit the Summit Bechtel Reserve, every member of Scouts BSA

**2023 NATIONAL JAMBOREE**  
SUMMIT BECHTEL RESERVE FACTS

**THE EARLY YEARS OF THE SUMMIT PROPERTY**  
Beginning in the late 1950s, the Summit property consisted of extensive coalfields, with 6-8 different **mining camps**, where hundreds of people lived and worked. Remains of the mining structures, including factories and coal-miners' cottages, can still be seen. There were approximately **10 miles of railroads** on the Summit site, with three different railroads having tracks. Some mine openings were closed with gates that allow bats to fly through. **300+ "bat caves"** can be seen along main roads. There are **3 cemeteries on the Summit property** from the coal mining period, with some graves dating as far back as 1859.

**THE SUMMIT PROPERTY IN THE 1950's**  
After around 1950, much of the Summit property was strip mined and by the 1980's all mining on the property had stopped. Harvesting and processing of timber also took place on the property, complete with a fully functioning sawmill, which was dismantled when SBR was constructed.

**A PERMANENT LOCATION FOR THE NATIONAL JAMBOREE**  
The Summit story began in 2007 when BSA leadership began looking for a permanent location for the National Scout Jamboree, which had been held at Fort A.P. Hill, Virginia since 1981. A committee in charge of site selection and project planning was created. The new website was called Project Summit, which grew to include not only a venue for the Jamboree, but also for a summer camp, a high adventure base, and a leadership center, all housed on the same contiguous property. More than 80 sites in 28 states were visited over an 18-month span and located as prime locations for the new venue. In November 2009, the BSA announced selection of the West Virginia site, known locally as the Garden Ground Preserve property as the future home of the Summit. One deciding factor in selecting the West Virginia site was its adjacency to **New River Gorge National River**. More than 10 miles of the property borders the park, giving Scouts and Scouters access to more than 70,000 acres of managed wilderness beyond the Summit property.

**THE PROTECTED ECOSYSTEM OF THE SUMMIT**  
Approximately 45 species of mammals are known to live in and around New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, including gray and fox squirrel, chipmunk, and white-tailed deer. Beaver, muskrat, and an occasional river otter may sometimes be seen along the river. Black bears and bobcats are reclusive and mostly nocturnal. Coyotes and red and gray foxes may also be seen here. The Spruce Forest and Pine Acrotentons protected of New River Gorge provide critical habitat for a number of threatened and endangered species, notably Allegheny woodrats, a species of special concern in West Virginia. The woodrat population in West Virginia may represent the core population for this species in the eastern United States. Diverse populations of birds such as wood thrushes, blue and thrasher, spend part of their lives in the forests but depend upon the unfragmented forests of the New River Gorge area for breeding. The region is a vital link in the north-south migratory flyway. Each year, thousands of birds fly over the region during the fall migratory season. The National Park Service and West Virginia Department of Natural Resources has initiated a multi-year program to restore peregrine falcons to New River Gorge. Look for these majestic birds soaring and diving near the cliffs.

**2023 NATIONAL JAMBOREE AT THE SUMMIT BECHTEL RESERVE - JULY 19-29, 2023**  
The National Jamboree is more than a destination. It's the adventure of lifetime. There is simply nothing else like it on the planet. See for yourself at [jamboree.scouts.org](https://www.scouts.org/jamboree)

The Summit Bechtel Reserve (SBR) is considered one of the nation's most successful reclamation projects. A former coal mine, SBR serves as a training, Scouting, and adventure center for the millions of youth and anyone who loves the outdoors.

is challenged to “think globally and act locally,” by following the BSA Outdoor Code:

— Be clean in my outdoor manners: I will treat the outdoors as a heritage. I will take care of it for myself and others. I will keep my trash and garbage out of lakes, streams, fields, woods, and roadways.

— Be careful with fire: I will prevent wildfire. I will build my fires only when and where they are permitted and appropriate. When I have finished using a fire, I will make sure it is cold out. I will leave a clean fire ring or remove all evidence of my fire.

— Be considerate in the outdoors: I will treat the land and other land users with respect. I will follow the principles of outdoor ethics for all outdoor activities.

— Be conservation-minded: I will learn about and practice good conservation of soil, waters, forests, minerals, grasslands, wildlife and energy. I will urge others to do the same.

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About the 2023 National Jamboree

Media can find more information about the National Jamboree throughout the 10-day event, as well as [register for media credentials](#) at <https://jamboree.scouting.org/media/> or contact PR@Scouting.org.

National Jamboree B-Roll

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/boyscoutsofamerica/albums/72177720307153593>

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2023 National Jamboree Logo

<https://scouting.webdamdb.com/bp/#/folder/10595459/>

About the Boy Scouts of America

The Boy Scouts of America provides the nation’s foremost youth program of character development and values-based leadership training, which helps young people to be “Prepared. For Life.®” The Scouting organization is composed of more than 1 million youth members between the ages of 7 and 21 and approximately 960,000 volunteers in local councils throughout the United States and its territories. For more information on the Boy Scouts of America, please visit [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org).

How to Join Scouting

For information on joining the Boy Scouts of America, please visit



<https://beascout.scouting.org/>.

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