Mountain

Continued from Page 1A

The acquisition could also help guard delicate headwater streams. Black Bear Fold sits near the headwaters of the Cumberland River, which begins in Harlan County and runs nearly 700 miles through Kentucky and Tennessee before joining the Ohio River near Paducah.

The history of Black Mountain involves years of fervent conservation advocacy. In the 1990s, pressure was mounting from coal companies to conduct surface mining near the peak, drawing the ire of Harlan County residents and a letter-writing campaign by local schoolchildren.

"How do we explain the destruction of the tallest and most beautiful mountain in Kentucky?" one man asked officials at a public hearing in 1999.

That year, the state made an agreement with coal companies to eliminate mining in an 1,800-acre area at the top of the mountain, forming a timber purchase area. Below that, an 18,000 acre timber conservation easement created "a buffer zone between the top of the mountain and the mineable areas" below.

The Black Bear Fold acquisition adds a new protected tract on the mountain's north face, along a ridge that stretches miles from the summit. It overlooks adjacent Pine Mountain, where KNLT has worked to preserve a 125-mile forested migratory corridor stretching from Virginia to Tennessee. That project represents "one of the largest conservation efforts in Kentucky history," group officials said.

Other organizations have also been involved in conservation and restoration efforts in southeastern Kentucky. This summer, The Nature Conservancy announced a 1,700-acre acquisition near Cumberland Forest in its ongoing efforts to string together habitat. The group has also worked to reforest former mine lands in the region, where the scars of mountaintop removal are apparent.



Forests cover the slopes of Black Bear Fold, an 1,100-acre property in Harlan County along a ridge of Black Mountain. PROVIDED BY KENTUCKY NATURAL LANDS TRUST

Local governments in the region have seen tax revenue from coal mining decline as the industry has waned.

KNLT, which is tax-exempt as a nonprofit, contributes a portion of its waived property taxes in Harlan County directly to local schools, according to the organization.

Coal mined from Harlan County and Central Appalachia helped build the U.S. into a global economic superpower. Now, "there's more and more realization of the global significance of this region," Abernathy said, in confronting crises of biodiversity loss, habitat loss and climate change.

Conservation efforts in Eastern Kentucky help rebuild habitat for rare species that could otherwise vanish from the state and support migratory bird populations, patching together a flyway that runs the length of the western hemisphere.

"It's a local action that really transcends the geography," Abernathy said, "and has global significance."

Connor Giffin is an environment reporter at The Courier Journal. Contact him at cgiffin@courier-journal.com.

Humana

Continued from Page 1A

After the initial push for leadership to start working in-office, the company-wide initiative will expand in late 2027 and early 2028 to include all employees in director level or higher jobs to report in office at least three days per week and include workers in the Boston, Chicago, New York City and Tampa, Florida areas.

Through 2028, as the return to office plan is fully rolled out, additional associate roles will be added to the in-office work policy.

The nine cities chosen to be part of the "Talent Hub" return to office push by Humana are "centers of gravity" for the company's operations, a spokesperson said.

A company spokesperson told The Courier Journal the return to office policy does not have a relocation requirement for employees but over time, future hiring for office-based rolls will be concentrated on the Humana's "Talent Hub" cities. Workers living more than a 45 minute commute from one of the "Talent Hub" offices would not be required to work in-office. The company used a GPS modeling service to determine employees' rush hour commute times so Humana could properly alert employees that live within the 45 mile range that would be expected to work in-office in the coming years.

A Humana spokesperson said the new policy impacts "a small percentage" of the company's more than 65,000 employees nationwide. The company does not have a definitive number of roles it expects to be impacted as it continues identifying what roles are best suited for in-office working, a spokesperson said.

Humana plans to use its badge scanning technology to ensure eligible employees are working in-office at least three times per week once the initiative rolls out.

In Louisville, following the February sale of the iconic Humana Tower in downtown on Main Street, Humana moved all of its employees into the Humana Waterside and neighboring Clocktower buildings located at 101 E. Main St., noting the consolidation of workers into one office would boost collaboration among workers.

"What we've done in Louisville has kind of been a model for how collaboration could exist in these other hub cities as well," the spokesperson said.

Contact Business Reporter Olivia Evans at oevans@usatodayco.com or at 502-582-4144.

China

Continued from Page 1A

The three men will meet on the sidelines on Nov. 19 and potentially discuss Russia's war with Ukraine and the U.S. war in Iran, as well as other flashpoints such as trade, AI and nuclear weapons.

The meeting has drawn comparisons with the 1945 Yalta Conference between the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union that formalized spheres of influence, set the stage for the post-World War II order and became shorthand for great-power deals imposed on smaller countries.

It has also unnerved some European and Asian capitals, which fear the world's greatest military powers will disregard their interests.

Xi's remarks came after Washington announced further restrictions on China's access to advanced AI chips from companies such as Nvidia, which could further complicate a fragile trade truce with Beijing. China has pledged to retaliate.



President Donald Trump, left, is welcomed by China's President Xi Jinping at Shenzhen Bao'an International Airport on Nov. 18. WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

"We must firmly uphold the rules-based multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization at its core, support free and open trade and investment," Xi told an audience of business executives.

Western trade partners have criticized China for running annual trade surpluses exceeding $1 trillion through policies that support its manufacturing sector at the expense of its consumers.

Beijing says its growth model is appropriate for an economy still catching up with the world's richest, but Washington, Brussels and others are concerned about China's supply chain dominance providing the country with geopolitical leverage and say its policies threaten their industries and jobs.

Xi said China will continue to invest in its industrial complex and new technologies. The world's second-largest economy will lower tariffs and further open up its markets, while standing up against protectionism and unilateralism, he added.

His "message is likely to resonate with many Global South countries and reinforces Beijing's effort to contrast its technology strategy with that of Washington," said George Chen, partner and chair of digital practice at The Asia Group.

Trump's trip to Asia is his first since his Republican Party's defeat in midterm elections this month, while allegations involving Nvidia founder Jensen Huang and a suspected Chinese spy add to the tension.

Leaders from Australia, Canada, South Korea and others were met by dancers and soldiers hoisting rifles, but Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi landed without any welcoming ceremony.

Her visit to China comes amid a rift between Beijing and Tokyo that began a year ago after she said Japan could deploy its military if a Chinese move on Taiwan also threatened its territory.

On Nov. 17, Taiwan and Japan flagged incursions by Russian aircraft into their airspace.

Putin, who was speaking after Ukraine crippled the vital Kerch road bridge linking Crimea to Russia in a major blow to his four-year-old war, followed Xi on stage with a speech that described Western powers as "former hegemons."

He said Europe was in a "humiliating decline" and anti-Russian sanctions imposed after his invasion of Ukraine had backfired.

"Experience has shown that the traditional tools of economic dominance and de facto coercion have largely run their course, having lost much of their intimidating power," Putin said.

"While sanctions, tariffs, and export restrictions may still exert a certain deterrent effect, they are incapable of halting growth – let alone crushing the economies of competitors."

In Manila, Trump vowed to deepen defense cooperation with the Philippines, amid its growing friction with Beijing over disputed features in the South China Sea. Earlier, he floated the possibility of meeting North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in China, but that has not been confirmed.

The Kremlin this week dismissed comparisons with the Yalta Conference as "games of political scientists," but said the meeting will have a major impact on global affairs.

Beijing said the trilateral will promote world peace.

Putin described the world as "turbulent" but said disagreements can be addressed by "sitting at the table."

"I therefore expect big potential benefit from the upcoming trilateral meeting," he said.