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conservation plan comments - attachments 2

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Dear Ms. Mandell:

On behalf of the Virginia Chapter of Sierra Club, the following are attachments to our previously submitted comments on the the NiSource Gas Transmission and Storage (“NiSource”) draft multi-species habitat conservation plan (“HCP”) and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (“Service”) draft environmental impact statement (“EIS”).



Draft of Virginia Mountain Treasures Virginia's Mountain Treasures1.pdf

For descriptions and maps only. The final version was published in 2008. Some content may have changed between 2007 and 2008.

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# Virginia's Mountain Treasures

ARTWORK  
DRAWING

## *The Unprotected Wildlands of the George Washington National Forest*



A report by the Wilderness Society

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Founded in 1935, The Wilderness Society works to protect America's wilderness and to develop a nationwide network of wild lands through public education, scientific analysis, and advocacy. Our goal is to ensure that future generations will enjoy the clean air and water, wildlife, beauty, and opportunities for recreation and renewal that pristine forests, rivers deserts, and mountains provide.

Our membership of more than 200,000 people is a potent force that gets the attention of Congress, the White House, and federal agencies who manage our public lands.

You can join the growing number of Americans who believe that preserving wilderness is essential by calling 1-800-THE-WILD (1-800-843-9453) to speak with a representative of our membership services. Or, you can join online at our website—[www.wilderness.org](http://www.wilderness.org).

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# Virginia's Mountain Treasures

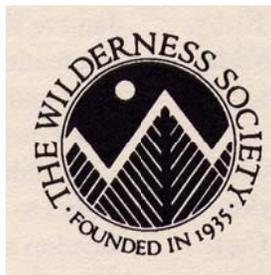
*The Unprotected Wildlands of the  
George Washington National Forest*

by

Mark Miller

for

The Wilderness Society



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# Preface

During the course of my career, long before working full time for the conservation community, I had the pleasure of spending four years at Sweet Briar College in central Virginia. It is difficult to describe what that lovely setting meant to me, except to say that one of the highlights of living there was the panoramic view of the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains right outside my door. I fell in love with the state back then, captivated by its simple beauty, and mention this brief piece of personal history because preserving Virginia's wild landscapes and hidden wonders has become a personal quest for all of us at The Wilderness Society.

Eastern wilderness is an uncommon and very precious commodity. Before passage of the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act of 1975, many people believed unspoiled wilderness simply no longer existed east of the Mississippi River. Thousands of dedicated activists proved them wrong. The Wilderness Society's report, *Virginia's Mountain Treasures: The Unprotected Wildlands of the George Washington National Forest*, describes more than 600,000 acres of potential wilderness, an assortment of dazzling natural jewels that remain intact even today. This booklet is a guide to the best of the best of these special places—little known corners of the wild that provide safe havens for endangered species, rare plants, clean water, historic sites, spiritual respite and renewal, breathtaking vistas and unforgettable outdoor experiences.

The good news is that every citizen of Virginia has a singular opportunity to take action right now and help create more wilderness in their own backyard. The bad news is that the fragile roadless areas found within this forest lie in the shadow of the fast-developing Mid-Atlantic region—within one day's drive of at least a third of the population of the United

States. As wild country and open space disappear from private land, every acre of public land becomes more precious. We have a once-in-a-lifetime chance to permanently protect a priceless forest legacy and bequeath it to our grandchildren. But that opportunity is fleeting.

No one understood the impermanence and fragility of nature's web of life better than the late Ernie Dickerman, the indefatigable champion of Virginia wilderness to whom we owe endless gratitude. Place after place listed in our *Mountain Treasures* report is intact today because a warrior like Ernie refused to let logging and development encroach on his beloved wild lands. Luckily for us another generation of advocates and heroes now carries the torch he passed on: Bess and Jim Murray, Steve Kirchbaum, Don Giecek, Lynn Cameron, Juliana Simpson, and the entire Virginia Wilderness Committee to name just a few. We offer our sincerest thanks to them too.

As you read this document I trust you will feel the spark of hope it is meant to engender. Virginians and others turned hope into reality in 2000 when Congress designated more than 10,000 acres of new wilderness in the Priest and Three Ridges Wilderness Areas of the George Washington National Forest. It will happen again—if we can activate the collective power of thousands of individuals who believe in conservation. Together we will transform the words written on these pages to real and lasting changes on the land. Virginia's wildland treasures are our gifts to the future. I hope you will join us in creating that future.

William H. Meadows  
President,  
The Wilderness Society

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## Dedicated to the Virginia Congressional Delegation Faithful Conservators of Our Mountain Heritage

This volume of Virginia's Mountain Treasures describes the finest selection of wildlands to be found within the George Washington National Forest. All of them deserve some degree of protection from the pressures of development. It will be evident, of course, to all our readers that we do not expect all of these lands to become wilderness, but it is from this bountiful reserve that any future additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System must be drawn.

The Members of Congress, on both sides of the aisle have consistently recognized that Virginia needs wilderness as a source of clean air and water, a harbor for biological diversity, a playground for primitive recreation, and a wellspring of spiritual regeneration. The list of supporters is long, but the leadership is clear. Senator Harry F. Byrd, Jr. carried through on the early vision for the Shenandoah National Park with a bill to establish wilderness within the Park. The major push for wilderness in our National Forests we owe to a powerful coalition: Senators John Warner

and Paul Trible, and Congressmen Rick Boucher and James Olin, sponsors of the two bills that serve as the foundation stones of wilderness in Virginia.

Senator Warner had another team-mate in Senator Charles Robb when he joined Congressman Virgil H. Goode, Jr. in sponsoring legislation to place two more outstanding mountains in the wilderness system. And as we go to press, the work continues with the drive of Senator Warner and Congressman Boucher to extend their contribution by naming additional wilderness areas in the Jefferson National Forest.

One should also remember that the first wilderness declared in Virginia came from legislation proposed by a westerner. We are ever thankful to Senator Henry M. Jackson, whose Eastern Wilderness Areas Act established the principle that the Wilderness Act applied to the east as well as to the west, and which named the James River Face Wilderness as the first unit of the National Wilderness Preservation System in Virginia.

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# Overview

In the National Forests of the Southern Appalachians, there are still some lands that are largely wild and unroaded. Some of these are set aside as Wilderness, the Appalachian Trail corridor, National Recreation Areas, or as Special Biological and Scenic Areas. Others are in administrative management categories that currently are considered unsuitable for logging and road building. However, many important wildlands are still open to future timber cutting, road construction, and other development.

This publication focuses on the unprotected wildlands of the George Washington National Forest. The Wilderness Society and sponsoring groups have identified *62 areas that need and deserve protection*. Maps and descriptions are presented for each area. This report also briefly explains some of the values of wild areas and discusses how wildlands in the George Washington National Forest contribute to the overall health and beauty of the entire Southern Appalachian ecosystem. These areas constitute some of the wildest and least-developed tracts remaining in Virginia. A part of the George Washington National Forest extends into West Virginia; thus all or portions of **eight** of the wildlands in this report are in that state.

Some of the Mountain Treasures currently are protected by the Forest Service and we recommend continued protection for these lands. But many are not. For areas currently open to timber cutting and road building, we recommend protection from future logging operations and development. In 1993, the Forest Service adopted a plan for management of the George Washington National Forest that opened up many wild areas to logging and related road construction. That Plan was challenged by a coalition of environmental groups, including the Citizens Task Force, the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, the Southern Environmental Law Center, Virginians For Wilderness, and Trout Unlimited. This administrative appeal and others were dismissed by the Forest Service without changing the Plan to address the appellants' concerns.

There are two primary laws governing the management of our National Forests. The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) requires on-the-ground protection of the Forest's components such as wildlife populations, soils, and water quality. The

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is procedural in nature and requires the Forest Service to study and disclose the affects of its activities. In addition, it requires the public to be informed about and involved in the agency's management proposals.

The Forest Service is now in the process of revising the management plan for the George Washington National Forest. However, the process for doing so has been changed. Under NEPA, previous National Forest Plan revisions had to undergo the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Such an endeavor is supposed to entail not only thorough fact-finding and analysis, but also open opportunities for public participation.

However, in 2002 the Bush administration proposed new regulations that if adopted would allow the process for developing the management plan for the entire 1.1 million acre GWNF to be "categorically excluded" from full NEPA review. Now it is not clear whether Virginians and other Americans will have to opportunity to participate in determining the future management of the George Washington National Forest. In addition, the administration also changed the NFMA regulations, significantly weakening the requirements for on-the-ground protection.

*It is more important than ever before that the public state their views on the many issues affecting the Forest.* One of these issues will be to determine which areas should be open for future logging and mining and which areas should be off limits to industrial extraction. The Forest Service also will consider Wilderness recommendations for eligible lands. We urge everyone to *write to the Forest Service now and ask to be included in the Forest Plan Revision mailing list*. This will ensure your opportunity to comment on the draft plan and its development.

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# Why Protect Wild Areas?

In the United States, the practice of setting aside selected lands to remain in a primitive, undeveloped condition dates back more than a century. It is recognized that wildlands provide important benefits for people. Yet, how does one measure the joy of exploring an old-growth forest to see how nature works over time? How valuable is the experience of fishing for native brook trout in a pristine river, or camping deep in the woods where the sights, sounds, and smells are only those of the forest

In 1996, an interagency effort, including leadership by the Forest Service, led to the publication of the *Southern Appalachian Assessment* (SAA). This multi-volume study described the resources of this 37-million-acre region, which includes national forests and parks, and extensive surrounding private lands.

According to the SAA, only 1 percent of the Southern Appalachian region is designated as wilderness, consisting of 39 areas totaling about 430,000 acres. Another 2 percent of the land in the region is included in national forest roadless areas, which are eligible for wilderness designation. These roadless areas comprise about 715,000 acres, affording opportunities to establish wilderness areas in each of the region's national forests.

## Increasing Recreation

As detailed in *Charting a New Course: National Forests in the Southern Appalachians* (Morton, 1994), the demand for recreational opportunities that wildlands offer is increasing in the Southern Appalachians as the population of the area continues to grow. The Forest Service expects a doubling of current rates of dispersed recreational use by the year 2040 in the South. With adventure-based recreation becoming increasingly popular, there is increased demand for more natural settings that hold greater challenges for outdoor enthusiasts with enhanced skills and experience. The remaining roadless areas in the national forests afford backcountry recreation opportunities that can meet future demand.

## Ecological Benchmarks

Among other benefits of wilderness, the SAA notes that “these areas can serve as ecological benchmarks for assessing human-induced impacts in more developed settings. They can be baselines for global monitoring studies and living laboratories to see how natural systems interact and evolve.” The SAA lists a wide variety of scientific studies in the region's wildernesses on topics from the effects of air pollution, to old growth forest dynamics, to visitor satisfaction.

## Culture and History

Wildlands also provide cultural enrichment. If we leave some land in a natural condition and secure living space for our native plants and animals, we can more fully understand the kinds of landscapes experienced by earlier generations of Americans, including Native Americans. Accounts of life in America in the 17th and 18th centuries have more meaning if we can see and experience wild forestlands in conditions similar to those found in colonial times.

Our culture has been shaped by the exploration and use of wilderness in the past. Aldo Leopold, a noted conservationist, writer, and founding member of the Wilderness Society, said in his book, *A Sand Country Almanac*: “Wilderness is the raw material out of which man has hammered the artifact called civilization. Wilderness was never a homogenous raw material. It was very diverse, and the resulting artifacts are very diverse. These differences in the end-product are known as cultures. The rich diversity of the world's cultures reflects a corresponding diversity in the wilds that gave them birth.”

## Biodiversity

Another important reason for conserving large tracts of unfragmented forest is their contribution to biodiversity. Nineteen federally listed threatened and endangered species are found in 16 roadless areas. Older forests (stands over 100 years old) can be found in 125 of the 139 national forest roadless

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areas, totaling 174,000 acres. The SAA shows that some ecological classification units are not represented by a designated wilderness or even an inventoried roadless area, and it is important that they should be.

Wildlands also serve as prime black bear habitat in the region. In particular, the SAA finds that large populations of Black Bear are associated with areas of low road density, and, conversely, that areas of higher road density generally have lower populations. Wilderness, roadless areas, and other wildlands provide the habitat security that Black Bears require, as well as the greatest amount of hard mast — food — from mature oak forests.

Neotropical migratory songbirds associated with forest interior habitat also benefit from the large tracts of unfragmented forest found in wilderness and roadless areas. These include species in decline, such as the Wood Thrush, Ovenbird, and Cerulean Warbler, as well as cavity-nesting birds like the Pileated Woodpecker.

The SAA also found that 11 percent of the region's trout streams are in remote settings. Roadless areas contain pristine watersheds and streams that offer outstanding opportunities for high-quality fishing in backcountry settings.

During the years ahead, while we add to our knowledge of the habitat needs of our native flora and fauna, it makes sense to keep some of our land in an undeveloped condition. This will help ensure that we do not destroy the sustaining resources that are critical to the well-being of these species.

### **Potential Benefits to Human Health**

Wild nature yields products used in medicine and other disciplines that affect many aspects of our daily lives. For example, many antibiotics, including penicillin and cephalosporin, are derived from natural substances. Taxol, from the Pacific Yew tree, is used in the treatment of ovarian cancer. For years, the yew tree, with little market value, was eliminated routinely from the forests of the Pacific Northwest.

Considering that only a small number of the plants and animals on earth have been studied for their medicinal properties, there are undoubtedly many

other useful substances yet to be discovered. These secrets of nature may have important and far-reaching benefits for humankind, and these discoveries may be possible only if portions of our natural environment remain intact.

In the book, *The Lands Nobody Wanted*, by William Shands and Robert Healy, the authors recommend that future management of the eastern national forests gives priority to “providing public benefits that cannot be supplied by private land, either because resources are unavailable, or because an economic incentive is absent.” Because, as stated in the SAA, large tracts of the region's privately owned land are expected to decrease over time, national forests and other public lands offer the best option for protecting large blocks of wild land in the Southern Appalachians.

### **Wilderness**

Established by Congress, wilderness areas are permanently preserved by law in their natural condition, with multiple benefits for clean water, backcountry recreation, high-quality fisheries, scenery, and old-growth habitat. They are protected from logging, road construction, and mining. Recreation in wilderness includes hiking, nature study, horseback riding, camping, canoeing, fishing, and hunting. Under bills passed in 1984, 1988, and 2000 approximately 43,000 acres, or about 4 percent, of the George Washington National Forest is wilderness.

### **Roadless Areas**

Lands eligible for future wilderness designation are called roadless areas. To qualify as roadless, areas must be generally wild (with less than 1/2 mile of improved road per 1,000 acres, must be natural (less than 20 percent of the forest less than 10 years old), and must provide outstanding opportunities for backcountry recreation or solitude. The current Management Plan for the George Washington National Forest, lists about 260,000 acres, or 24 percent, of the land as roadless. (Since the Plan was drawn up, 10,000 of those acres have been congressionally designated as wilderness.) Many conservationists contend that the Forest Service failed to identify additional qualified lands as roadless. In any case, the treatment of roadless areas has been thrown into confusion by a change of policy by the current administration. Governors of states must now petition the Secretary of Agriculture to retain protection for roadless areas, and the Governor of Virginia has submitted such a request.



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# The Southern Appalachian System

The George Washington National Forest comprises 1,061,000 acres of mountainous forest land in Virginia and adjacent West Virginia. It is part of the Southern Appalachian ecosystem, which contains millions of acres of federal public land stretching from Virginia to Alabama. This is the largest concentration of public lands in the eastern United States. In addition to the National Forests, the ecosystem includes the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and Shenandoah National Park.

The great diversity of plant and animal life in the Southern Appalachians reflects the fact that these highlands have remained dry land and unglaciated for millions of years. These mountains owe their beginnings to the great crustal movements that closed the Paleozoic Era. Throughout the Paleozoic, enormously thick sediments had accumulated in a basin on the margin of continental America. These sediments were compressed laterally by the collision of continental plates with the result that the strata were folded and faulted into a series of overlapping slabs. Subsequent erosion then sculpted the terrain into many individual mountain ranges stretching from Georgia all the way to Newfoundland. Indeed the effects of this Appalachian Revolution can be traced across the Atlantic into southern Britain and Europe.

The resulting landforms have been produced by two types of drainage. In some cases, the original eastward flowing rivers, such as the James and the Potomac, must have been in place before the mountains were built. These powerful streams were able to maintain their original positions despite the rise of the mountains. In other cases, the streams have sought out the less resistant rocks to develop rivers that follow the grain of the folding, a classic example being the two forks of the Shenandoah.

In the George Washington Forest two of the major physiographic provinces of Virginia are represented. The Blue Ridge is made up of ancient Precambrian sedimentary, volcanic, or metamorphic rocks. These have been thrust westward against and even over the Paleozoic sediments. West of the Blue Ridge these sedimentary rocks have been thrown into multiple

folds to create the Ridge and Valley Province. The crests of the ridges are held up by hard Silurian sandstones, while the valleys are sculpted from the softer limestones and shales.

The mountains in the George Washington do not match the greatest heights of the Appalachians, such as North Carolina's Mt. Mitchell at 6,684 ft., but with many summits topping 4,000 ft. they have enough elevation to establish steep ecological gradients with the deep valleys and water gaps separating the mountain masses. Consider, for example, Reddish Knob at 4,398ft. To the south and east stretches the drainage of the Shenandoah; to the southwest lie the headwaters of streams that will join to form the James; and to the northwest are the upper reaches of the Potomac.

Although these mountains have never been covered by the ice age glaciers, they have not been unaffected by climate change. Studies of pollen deposition show that the plant associations have advanced and retreated in step with the ice. Present day climatic warming has left pockets of northern vegetation isolated on the highest peaks. Red Spruce and Balsam Fir occur as relict populations. The movement of plants and animals up and down the mountain chain has resulted in many cases of speciation as a result of the isolation of populations. An especially notable example is the flora of the shale barrens, patches of stony shards where temperatures are extreme and water is limiting. Species found nowhere else in the world, such as Virginia Clover and several species of Clematis, grow here. In other cases southern endemics find their farthest northern extension in the George Washington, notably Carolina Hemlock and Catawba Rhododendron.

Animals have also produced localized species found here and nowhere else. The George Washington is home to an endemic species of salamander, the Cow Knob Salamander while the Shenandoah National Park is the only home of the Shenandoah Salamander. Other species of vertebrates, such as the Northern Flying Squirrel, here reach the limits of their southern distribution.

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The Southern Appalachian Assessment (SAA) predicts that large tracts of forest and associated forest interior habitats will continue to decrease due to development and conversion to other land uses. The SAA concludes that “priority should be given to maintaining existing larger tracts that have the potential to support the species associated with mid- and late-successional forests. Currently, national forests and national parks contain the largest portion of these large tracts, and will most likely continue to provide the core habitat for source populations of deciduous forest species.”

The Southern Appalachian region has long been one of the major tourist destinations in the United States. In 1995, there were more than 100 million outdoor-recreation-based trips in the Southern Appalachians, with more than 80 percent of those visits made by people from outside the region. The value of recreation-based tourism is nearly \$6 billion per year, with an annual employment of more than 100,000 people.

Wilderness, fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, and nature study activities contribute significant numbers of jobs and income to the region. The SAA estimates that 30,602 jobs are directly related to recreation on federal land. This is almost a third of the annual employment from recreation-based tourism. The

number of employees doubled between 1977 and 1991.

### **Recreation**

People enjoy recreation on the George Washington National Forest in large part because of the natural settings for hiking, hunting, fishing, scenic driving, bird watching, nature study, and other pursuits. For almost all the land on the George Washington National Forest, the Forest Service describes these settings as two general types:

**Roaded Natural.** These are lands within 1/2 mile of roads. The area is largely natural-appearing, but may show signs of logging and related road construction. Conventional motorized use typically is allowed along roads. Most of the George Washington National Forest, about 65% of its 1,061,000 acres, is roaded natural. Many such settings also are found on extensive private lands in western Virginia. **Semi-primitive.** These are lands further than 1/2 mile from roads. The area is predominantly natural, offering opportunities for solitude and backcountry experience. Where motorized use is not allowed, the area is considered semi-primitive non-motorized. Where motorized use is allowed, such as motorcycles on primitive trails, the area is called semi-primitive motorized. In other respects, however, the areas may be virtually identical. Less than 30% of the George Washington National Forest consists of lands with semi-primitive recreational opportunities, with most of those dedicated to non-motorized uses. These kinds of settings are found almost exclusively on federal lands in western Virginia.

There are other categories in the recreational spectrum. However, primitive recreation, found in remote tracts 3 miles from roads, is largely unavailable, due to the density of roads.

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# George Washington National Forest



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# The Unprotected Wildlands of the George Washington National Forest

The wildlands in this report — 62 areas totaling about 602,575 acres — are special places that should be protected from logging, road construction, and other forms of harmful development. These federally owned lands, selected for their outstanding wild and natural values, include high-quality fisheries, mature and old-growth forest, wildlife habitat, backcountry recreation opportunities, intact watersheds, and beautiful scenery.

Although many ecosystems of the central Appalachians have been degraded by past environmental impacts, these Mountain Treasures offer a unique opportunity for us to retain a system of large, connected, and unfragmented natural areas, providing habitats for forest-dwelling plants and animals and genetic reservoirs for the future.

The region's remaining natural areas are coming under increasing assault from road construction, logging, and mechanized recreation. It is essential to maintain the size and connectedness of the National Forest roadless areas in order to provide for wildlife movements, genetic interchange, and the functioning of natural ecological processes.

Some of these Mountain Treasures were identified and "inventoried" in the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation II (RARE II) conducted by the Forest Service in the late 1970s. These areas received initial protection under the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, although the status of that rule is still in doubt. Many of these areas would be suitable for Congressional Wilderness designation. (For acreages of "inventoried" roadless areas, see the Summary Table.) The Forest Service also evaluated eligible waterway segments for possible recommendation as wild and scenic rivers.

Currently, only about 4% of the George Washington National Forest is permanently preserved as Wilderness — about 43,600 acres. This is well below the national average of 18% for National Forest acreage. The six Wilderness Areas on the Forest are generally small, averaging about 7,300 acres — far below the national average for national forest Wilderness of around 40,000 acres. For the

environment and our quality of life, more and larger Wilderness areas are needed.

Under the current Plan adopted in 1993, the Forest Service established a variety of administrative categories to designate special areas for their values as biological sites, backcountry recreation, scenery, and watershed protection. This usually ensures that these lands are protected from logging and road construction during the 10-15-year life of the Forest Plan. However, such protections are not permanent and can be altered or rescinded by agency action.

Roads are, of course, one of the most serious issues in contemporary conservation. Roads produce habitat fragmentation, edge effects, problems with access, and other impacts. As of 2003 there were 1790 miles of classified system roads within the George Washington National Forest. In addition, an enormous number of "temporary" roads (certainly hundreds of miles), which have been constructed for logging and other management purposes, are not maintained by the Forest Service and do not figure in the agency's inventories. Though "temporary", their impact will be discernable for a lifetime.

In the selection of Treasures proposed for protection, attempts were made to identify areas with few or no roads, to keep watersheds intact, and to cluster areas to form wildlife corridors and reduce fragmentation. One area in particular, Shenandoah Mountain, deserves mention as the largest and least fragmented block of contiguous wildlands remaining in the Central Appalachians.

Twelve clusters of Mountain Treasures have been identified on the GWNF's five Ranger Districts. The bulk of these lands are on the west side of the Valley, in the Ridge and Valley physiographic province. The Pedlar RD, however, on the east side of the Valley, is part of the Blue Ridge Mountains province; and a small portion of the Warm Springs RD lies in the Allegheny Mountains & Plateau province. The lands of the GWNF are situated in two major watersheds, the James River and Potomac River, both of which drain into the Chesapeake Bay.

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The peaks and ridges of the GWNF are some of the driest lands in the East. Most precipitation falls on the western slopes of the Allegheny Plateau and eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge. Lying in this double rain shadow, the bulk of the Forest only averages about 35 inches of precipitation annually. The lands constituting the GWNF are some of the steepest, rockiest, driest, thin-soiled, most remote, and most difficult of access in the state. Consequently, from a commercial timber perspective, they are of relatively poor value economically.

Nevertheless, this has not prevented the development of beautiful old growth on the Forest. Shenandoah Mountain in particular has a concentration of such sites. Old-growth forest provides many unique benefits for fish and wildlife, recreation, scenery, and overall biodiversity. The Forest Service has done a preliminary identification of “possible” old growth on the GWNF, based on the agency’s computerized database of ages for each individual “stand” on the Forest (there are over twenty thousand of these). Depending on the type of forest, “stands” must generally be at least 100-150 years old to potentially qualify as old growth. Despite the use of the Regional Old Growth Guidance issued by the Forest Service in 1997, the cutting of old-growth forest continues on the GWNF.

This landscape of the GWNF is one of extremes. The lowlands in the Shenandoah Valley are heavily developed, with the I-81 corridor, manufacturing, municipalities, suburban sprawl, industrial agriculture, and streams with poor water quality. In contrast, the headwaters of these drainages, many of which lie within the GWNF, retain some of the best water quality in the region. Unfortunately, in addition to direct management threats from within, the Forest’s aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems are at risk of degradation from air pollution and acid precipitation from outside the area.

Both the Forest’s content and its context must be kept in mind in our conservation decisions. The fragmented and degraded quality that characterizes

much of our landscape limits us to thinking “small” as the norm in contemporary conservation. The 1.1 million acre GWNF in its entirety and these Mountain Treasures in particular give us the rare chance to think “Big” in the East. To pass up this remarkable opportunity will be to betray not only science and reason, but also life and all the generations who follow us.

Many of these Treasures possess outstanding wilderness attributes and would be invaluable additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System. While some Treasures may not be suitable for Wilderness designation, they have the potential to recover from past degradation. If not further disrupted, they will be of ever growing value in maintaining the biological diversity and ecological integrity of the region.

With increasing population and development pressures, places to escape to the “sounds of silence” and enjoy nature’s song are increasingly rare in our landscape. Places to be treasured, they are where the wild things are. These remote sanctuaries are our natural heritage and a vital necessity for sustaining the health of not only ourselves, but also all that we call home. They are where we go to hike, camp, watch birds, bike, hunt, and fish. *In a sea of noise and development, this place we call the George Washington National Forest is nothing less than a modern-day Ark, precious and irreplaceable.*

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Bailey’s Ecoregions Section M221A, Northern Ridge and Valley (Bailey 1995)

The maps used in this report are the Forest Service recreation maps for the George Washington National Forest, dated 1983, and available from the agency for \$6.75 each. On the maps in this report, a heavy black line denotes the general boundary of the wildland. Shaded areas represent land in federal ownership. Heavily shaded areas are designated Wilderness or the Shenandoah National Park. Unshaded areas are private land. The cluster maps are much reduced in scale, and vary to fit the page.



A view from Coates Mountain

Mark Miller

*“When I was a boy, before World War II, my father took me to the top of Apple Orchard Mountain to see the spring warbler migration and the spectacular rhododendron groves. I remember his indignation when those lovely mountain forests were turned into an industrial site by the FAA and the Bedford Air Force Station. True, some of the devastation has been cleared away, but the mountain will never be the same again.*

*As a result of this early experience I have worked all my adult life to see that this does not happen again to Virginia’s Mountain Treasures. The challenges change with time – logging, aircraft navigation, gas and oil development, cell towers, and wind factories – but the only way to ensure the integrity of our finest Treasures is to place them in the National Wilderness Preservation System.”*

*In the late 1960’s I was very involved at home with a young family, and I remember that my husband was often away, “doing something about wilderness with Ernie Dickerman”. I was too busy domestically to follow exactly what. Later, when the children were old enough to go along on family hikes, we would often go to wilderness or potential wilderness areas. I remember saying to Jim, “why didn’t you tell me that all this was out here?” And he replied, “Ernie and I have been trying to – for years.” Thus began my commitment, which continues today, to the National Wilderness Preservation System.*

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# Recommendations

**The Forest Service should defer timber sales and road construction in these areas while the new George Washington forest plan is being developed.** This will ensure that these areas are protected during their study in the planning process and during public comment on their future. In December 2005, the Governor of Virginia petitioned the Secretary of Agriculture to prohibit road construction and commercial timber harvesting in all of the inventoried roadless areas in Virginia, consistent with the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. The Forest Service should include all the wildlands in this report meeting roadless inventory criteria in the new plan's revised roadless inventory. All of the areas meeting the roadless inventory criteria should be

protected consistent with the 2001 Rule until the completion of the planning process.

**In the upcoming plan, the Forest Service should remove all of the areas in this report from the timber base, and ensure their long-term protection through a variety of management prescriptions. The Forest Service should recommend suitable candidates for designation by Congress as wilderness or national scenic areas.** In addition, the agency can and should use administrative designations in the forest plan such as backcountry, old-growth forest, high-quality watershed, or scenic areas for protection of the remaining wildlands in this proposal.

## What You Can Do To Help

Strong citizen support is needed to protect these mountain treasures. You can help in the following ways:

Get on the mailing list to comment on the proposed forest plan revision. Contact:  
George Washington National Forest Plan Revision  
5162 Valleypointe Parkway  
Roanoke, VA 24019

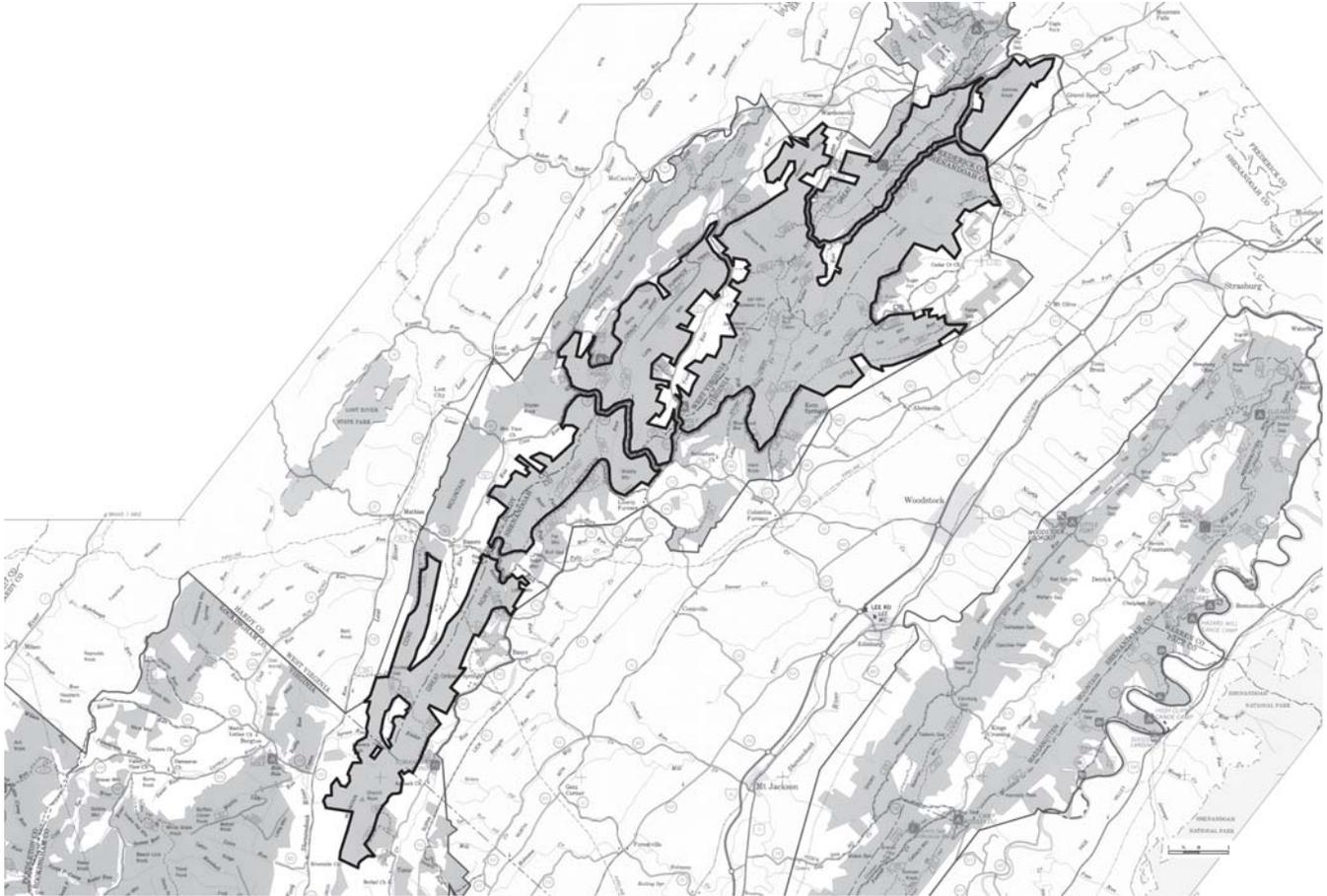
For your convenience, a request card is included in this report. Also, visit the agency's web site at [www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/) or call the Forest Service toll-free at (888) 265-0019.

Contact any of the groups cosponsoring this report, as listed on the inside back pages, and participate in their forest conservation activities. For your convenience, a request card is included for Virginia Forest Watch. Visit and enjoy these areas, and become a knowledgeable advocate for their protection. Maps and guides are available from the Forest Service, the Appalachian Trail Conference, the National Geographic Society, and other sources. Some of the cosponsoring groups host trips to these wildlands.

Comment on the draft forest Plan, urging the Forest Service to protect these mountain treasures in the Plan, and to recommend suitable areas to Congress for preservation as Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and National Scenic Areas. Also send your comments to your federal representative and two senators at:

US Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

US House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515



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## Big Schloss Cluster

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### **Jonnies Knob Great North Mountain Falls Ridge**

Straddling the Virginia/West Virginia state-line on the Lee Ranger District is the Big Schloss cluster. There are six areas totaling around 71,000 acres.

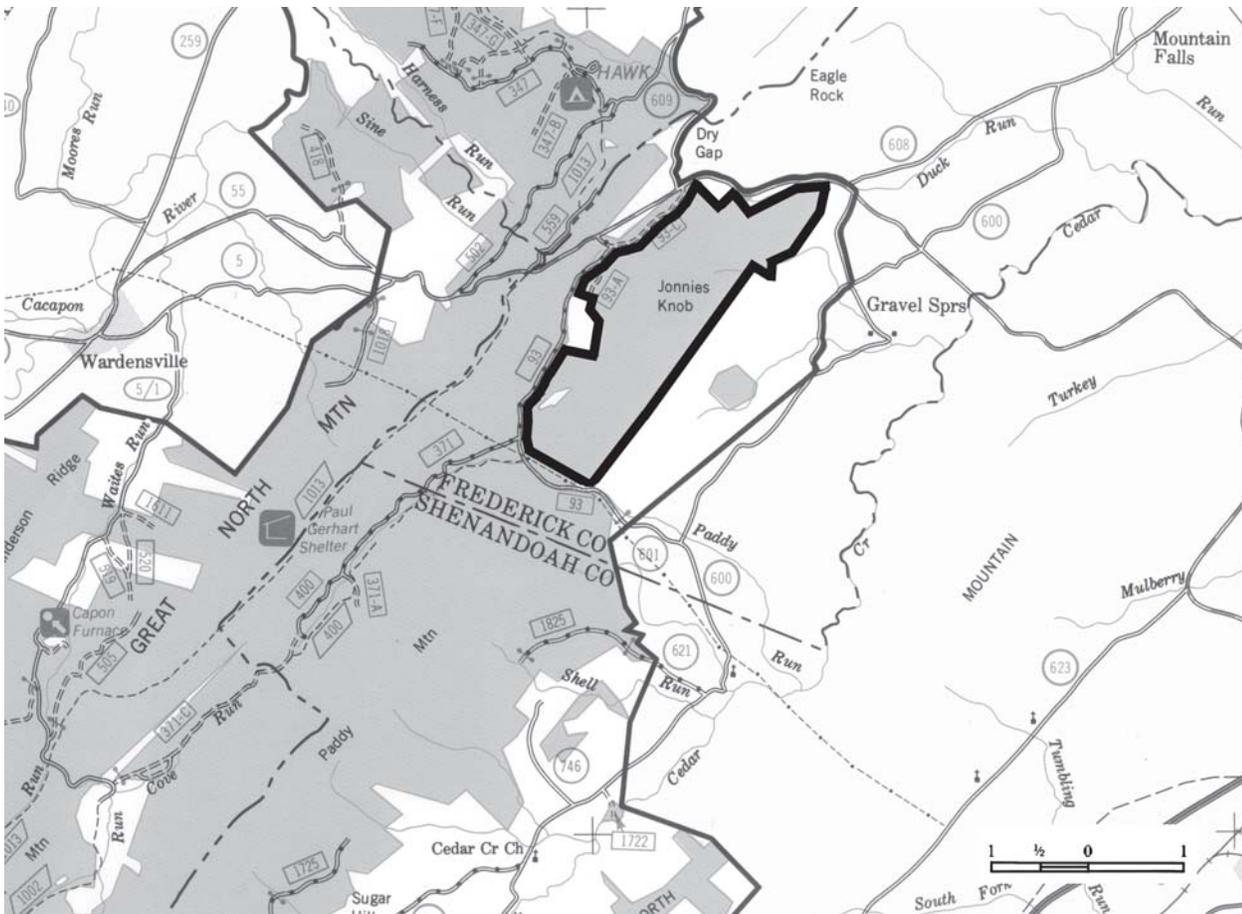
The terrain here features the narrow, linear mountains characteristic of the Ridge & Valley province. More than in other areas of the George Washington National Forest, rocky slopes, outcrops, and crags here are common. Perhaps the best known of these occurrences is found at the summit of Big Schloss (German for “Castle”). At approximately 31,000 acres, Big Schloss is also one of the largest roadless tracts to be found in the eastern National

### **Big Schloss Long Mountain Church Mountain**

Forests. Elevations range from 1500 to 3300 feet above sea level.

These Mountain Treasures embrace the headwaters for the Potomac and the North Fork of the Shenandoah River. Hiking trails traversing these Treasures are numerous, as are the opportunities to escape from the sights and sounds of industrialization.

Much of the Big Schloss cluster is within a two hour drive from Washington, D.C. There are no Wilderness Areas designated here at present. Unfortunately, logging in these Mountain Treasures, particularly their lower slopes, is common.



## Jonnies Knob

Jonnies Knob is the terminus of Paddy Mountain north of the Paddy Run gap. This area features the spectacular cliffs and rock outcroppings at its southern end high over Paddy Run. Elevations range from 1600 to 3000 feet high. The primary topographic features include Dog Cliff and Cove Run.

The area's steep ridges create numerous small intermittent streams on the high side slopes. Only near the bottom of the steep slopes is it possible to see year round flow.

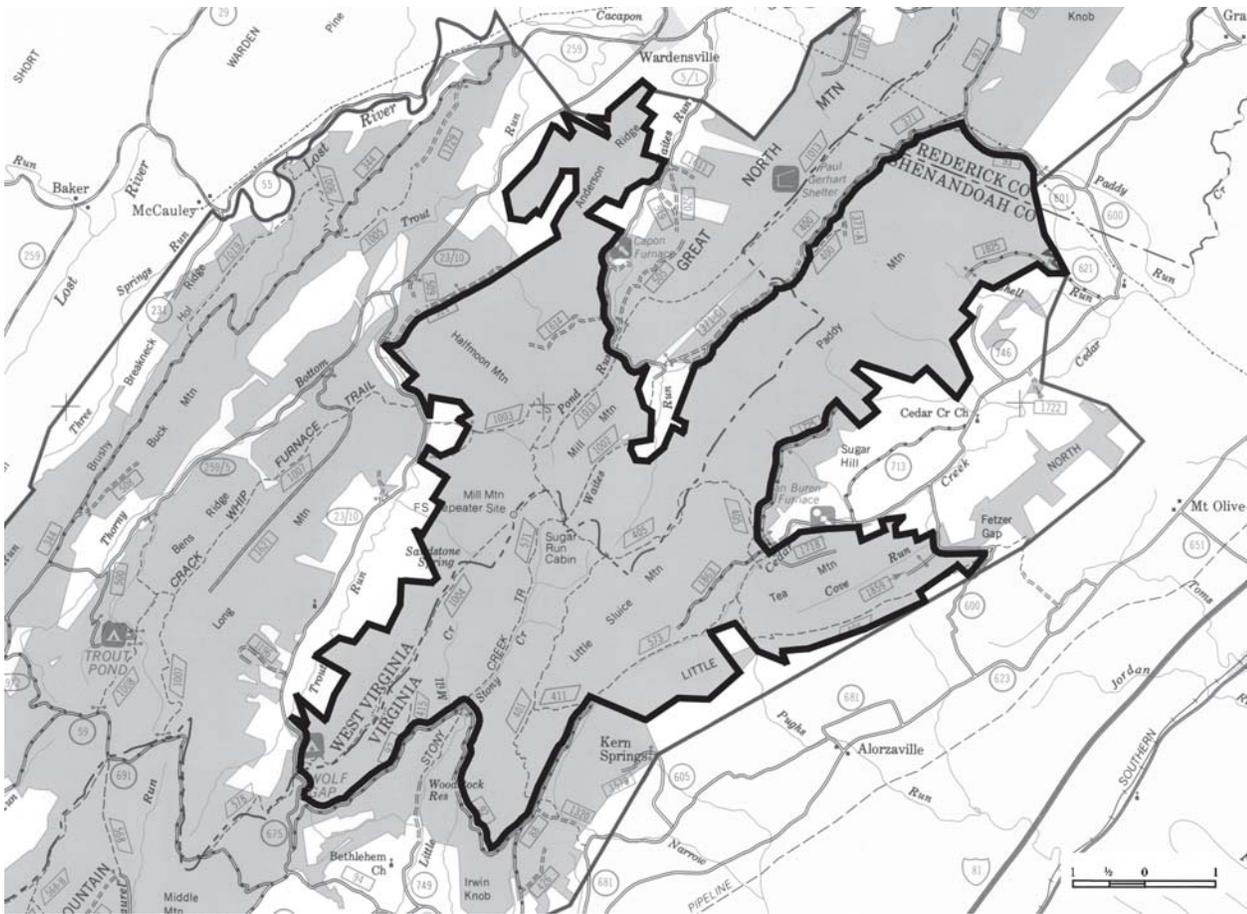
Jonnies Knob includes a significantly sized tract of "Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized" lands, a remote type of recreational experience offered by the Forest. Without maintained trails or interior roads, this area provides solitude and seclusion from the sights and sounds of human activities.

Rare species are known to inhabit the area, and it provides refuge for 417 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 2499 acres

**Location:** Frederick County, Virginia in the Lee Ranger District.

**Topos:** Conicville, Lost City, Orkney Springs, Wolf Gap



## Big Schloss

Big Schloss is one of the largest inventoried roadless areas not only on the George Washington National Forest, but in all of the eastern National Forest. The elevations of this area range from 1600 feet to almost 3300 at the top of Mill Mountain. The ridgetops are capped with sandstone which creates the many rock outcrops the area is noted for. Some of these include Big Schloss, Little Schloss, Halfmoon, and Three High Heads. These rocky knobs are “hacking sites” where endangered Peregrine Falcons were reintroduced to the wild.

The upper reaches of Stony Creek, Paddy Run, and Cove Run have their beginnings in the Big Schloss. These are all tributaries of Cedar Creek and

the North Fork of the Shenandoah River.

Approximately 7500 acres of this roadless area lie within the Big Schloss Special Management Area. It is considered unsuitable for timber harvesting and is managed to maintain a natural appearance.

Recreational activities are the highlight of the area. Hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, and mountain biking are the primary recreational activities. In the late fall hunters take to the wood in large numbers, and fishing opportunities are well known in Little Stony Creek, a native trout stream.

There is an 866 acre Forest Plan Special Biological Area as well as 4825 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 31,204 acres

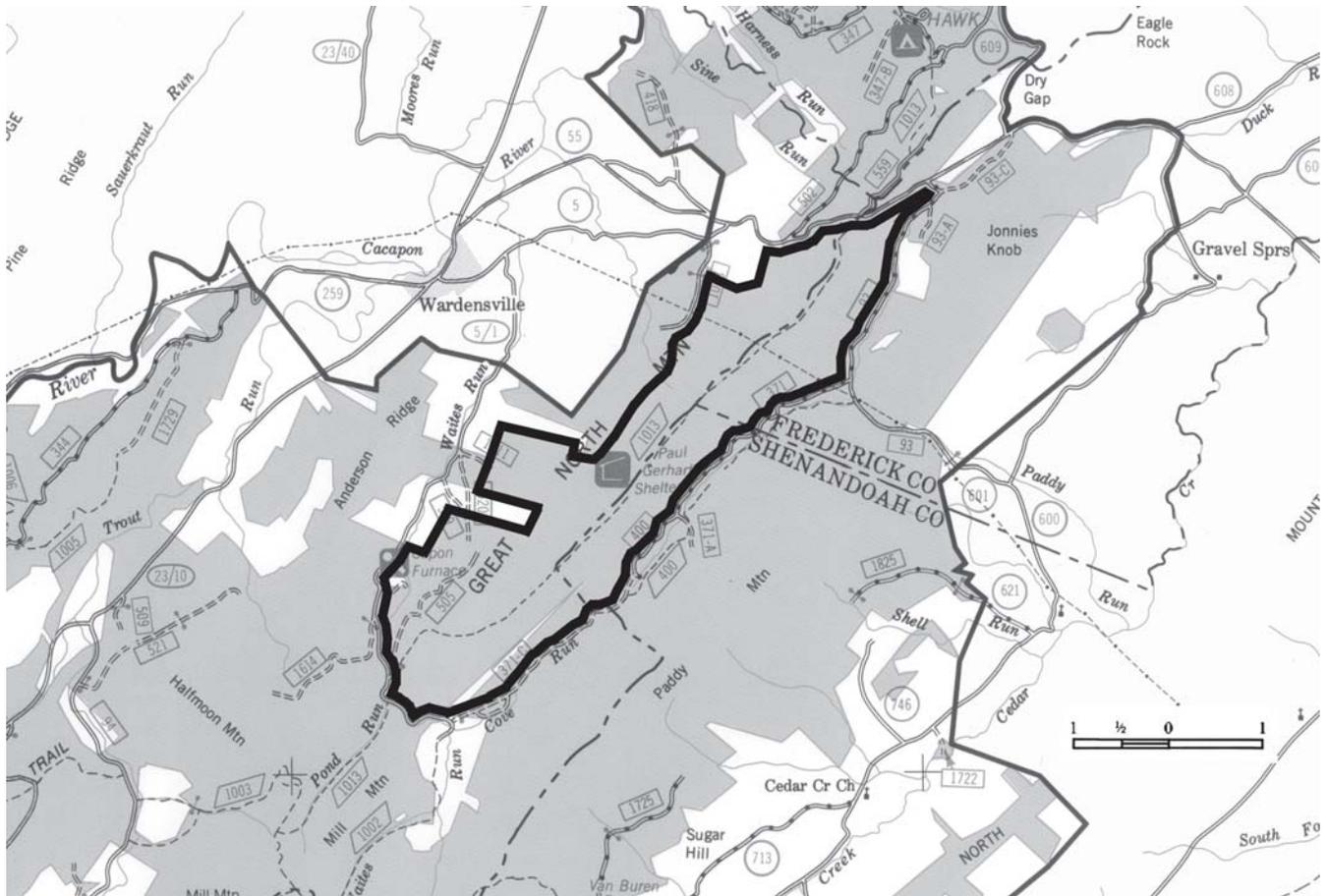
**Location:** Frederick and Shenandoah County, Virginia and Hardy County, West Virginia in the Lee District

**Topos:** Baker, Mountain Falls, Wardensville, Wolf Gap, Woodstock

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**Photo of hunting**

**Text**



## Great North Mountain

This large section of Great North Mountain lies astride the state line northeast of Capon Furnace. This roadless tract is adjacent to and contiguous with the “inventoried” Big Schloss Roadless Area. The area meets the requirements for being officially designated a roadless area, but it was not.

The steep slopes of Great North Mountain support the tributaries of Paddy Run, Cove Run, and Slate Rock Run. Elevations here range from 1800 feet to 2700 feet above sea level with mixed oak woodlands predominant. Remote habitat and solitude can be found in the interior of the Great North Mountain area.

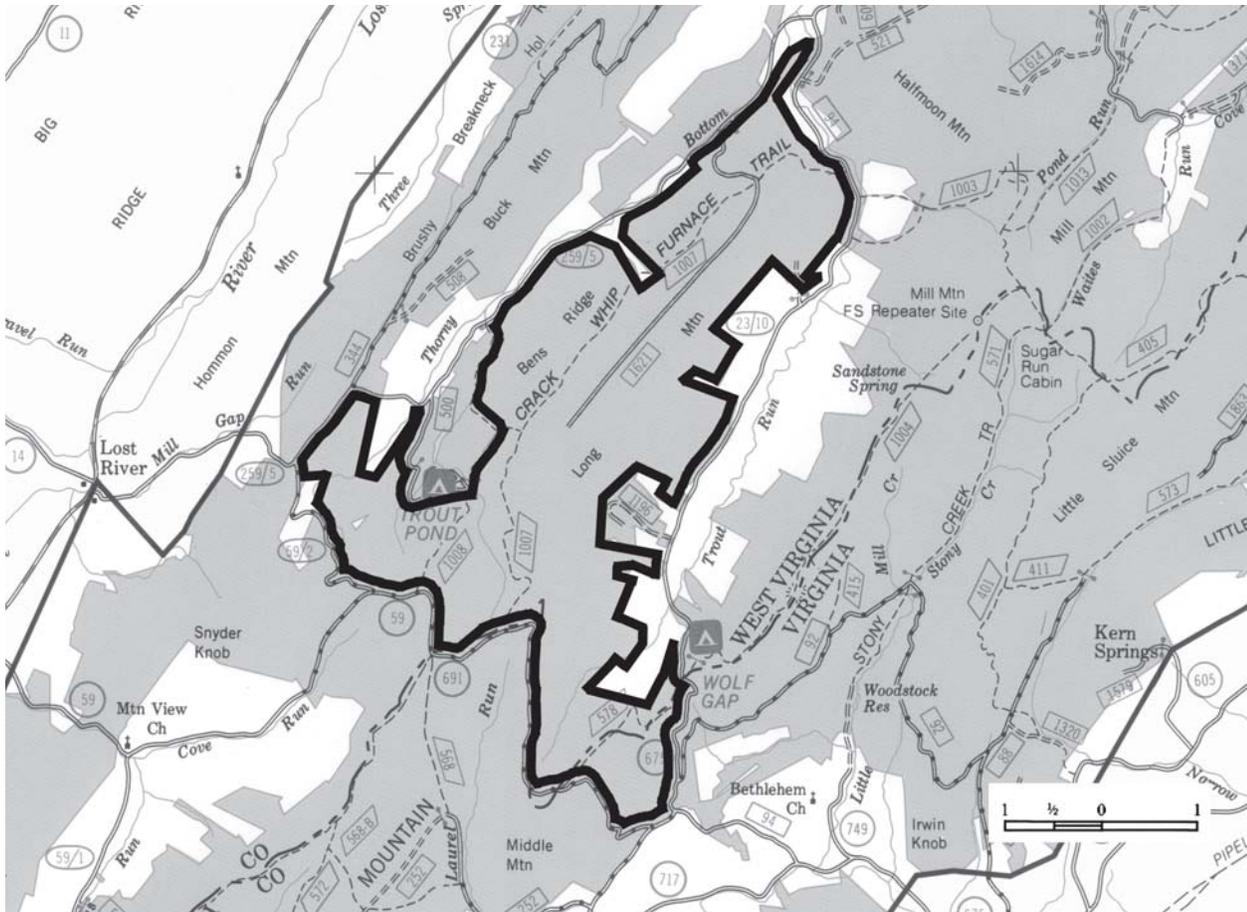
The Tuscarora Trail, running from the Shenandoah National Park to Harpers Ferry traverses the stateline/ridgecrest for seven miles, connecting US 55 to FDR 371. The Paul Gerhart Shelter is midway on this trail. Gerhart Shelter Trail connects the Tuscarora to Paddy Run to the east.

Great North Mountain area contains 756 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 6681 acres

**Location:** Frederick and Shenandoah Counties, Virginia and Hardy County, West Virginia in the Lee District

**Topos:** Wardensville



## Long Mountain

Long Mountain is found northeast of the adjacent Trout Pond campground and northwest of the Wolf Gap campground. Long Mountain itself reaches elevations of 3000 feet. Along the upper slopes of its five-mile length, remote habitat and experiences of solitude are available for bears and bushwhackers.

This ridge provides the feeder streams for Trout Pond Run a tributary of the Cacapon River in the Potomac River watershed.

Long Mountain, another unprotected roadless area of the George Washington National Forest, offers

some great hiking trails. Many trails from both campgrounds lead into the area. These include 8.7 miles of the Long Mountain Trail and numerous shorter trails near the Trout Pond Recreation Area. The most unusual is the Chimney Trail which leads to a natural chimney-like rock formation.

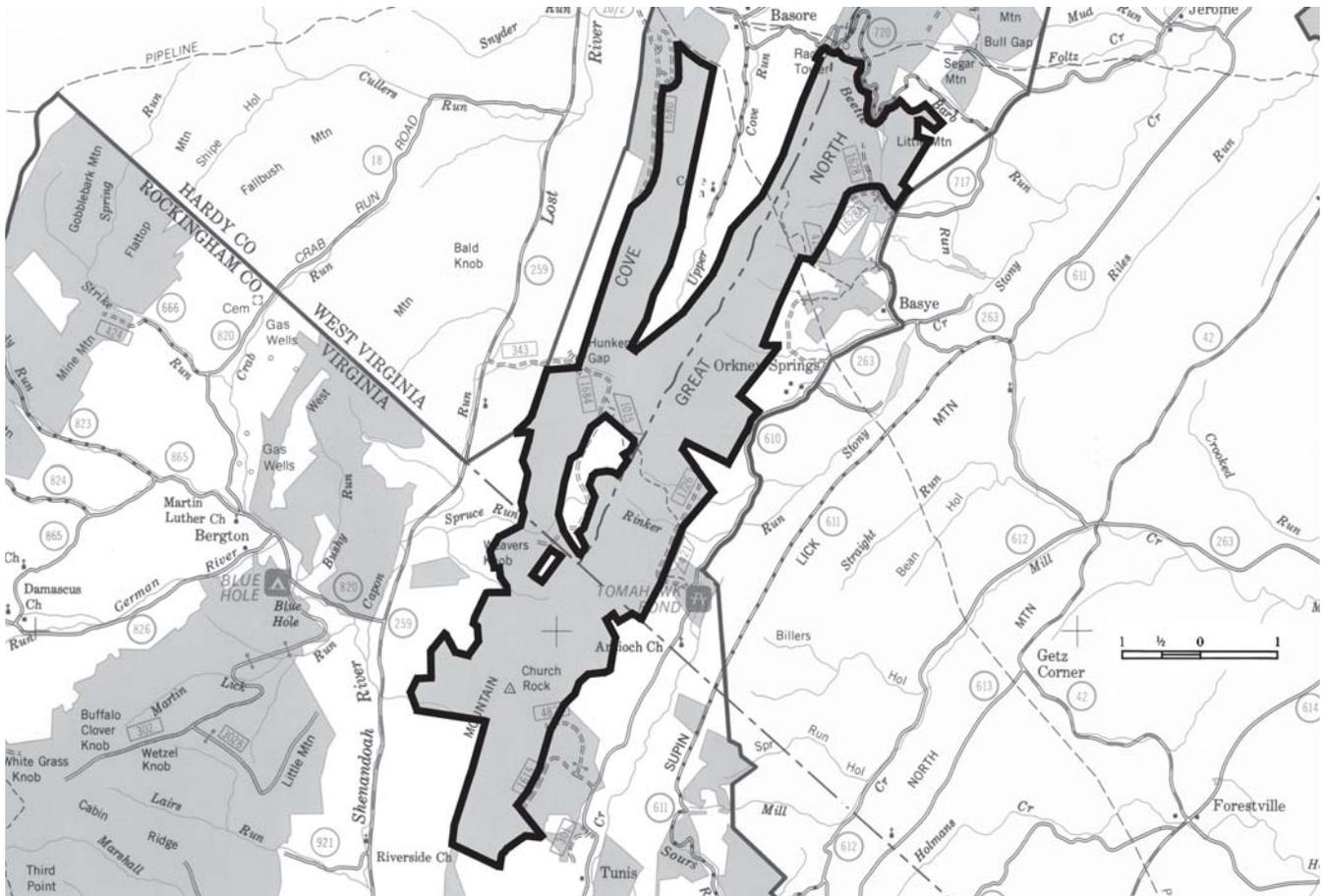
Much of the area is considered suitable for timber harvesting. Some stands of old growth occur in the west central part of the area. These stands contain 2184 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 10,508 acres

**Location:** Shenandoah County, Virginia and Hardy County, West Virginia in the Lee Ranger District

**Topos:** Wardensville





# Church Mountain

Situated astride the West Virginia/Virginia state line, Church Mountain is one of the largest uninventoried roadless areas on the Forest. Stretching west of the community of Orkney Springs and north of Fulks Run, this southern portion of Great North Mountain provides the striking eastern backdrop for those traveling on State Route 259. Scree slopes and large rocky crags are scattered across its steep western slopes.

This is a lengthy and generally narrow area. The main ridge crest stretches along at 2800 feet to – 3000 feet in elevation for approximately twelve miles. This lengthy ridge comprises the headwaters of numerous

watersheds. Church Rock, Weavers Knob, Rinker Run, Hunkerson Gap, Cove Mountain, and Beetle Run are some of its prominent topographical features.

Church Mountain provides remote habitat for species such as the Black Bear and the Coopers Hawk, as well as opportunities for solitude and serenity. Orkney Springs Trail traverses the northern portion from Bird Haven on the east to Upper Cove Run in West Virginia, while Hunkerson Gap Trail and Snyder Trail connect FDR 1726 at Tomahawk Pond recreation site on the east to FDR 1684 at Hunkerson Gap in Hardy County on the west.

This area contains 2012 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 12,506 acres

**Location:** Shenandoah and Rockingham Counties, Virginia and Hardy County, West Virginia in the Lee Ranger District

**Topos:** Wolf Gap, Conicville, Orkney Springs, Lost City



## Shenandoah Mountain Complex

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The Shenandoah Mountain is one of the most significant concentrations of wildlands in the Southern Appalachians. In addition to Ramseys Draft, an existing Wilderness area, it holds eight inventoried roadless areas, including Little River roadless area, which is the largest unprotected roadless area in the Southern Appalachians. In addition to these designated roadless areas, there are an additional ten uninventoried areas that meet or exceed roadless rule requirements.

The concentration of unroaded and undeveloped lands on approximately 400,000 acres of the George Washington National Forest constitutes a core of native forestland with resources for native species habitat, recreation, hunting, fishing, and clean water.

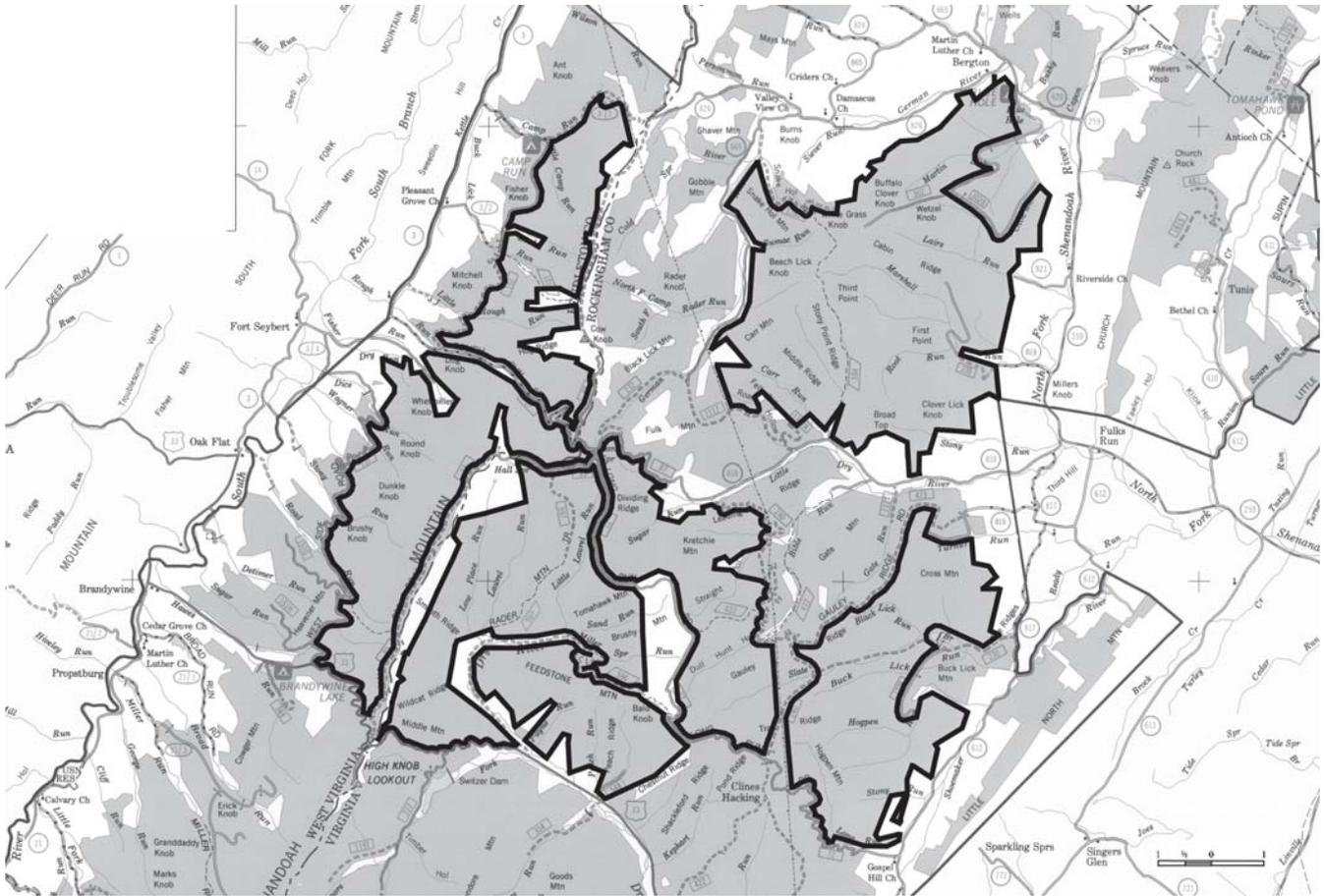
The most prominent feature of the area is the mountain massif known as Shenandoah Mountain. This mountain runs sixty miles from the southwest to the northeast with the Northern Ridge and Valley Ecoregion.

The area contains some of the highest elevations in the state. Shenandoah Mountain is over 4000 feet for much of its length. Reddish Knob at 4,397 feet gives a spectacular view of the Shenandoah Valley to the east and the Allegheny Mountains to the west.

This high concentration of roadless areas and high elevations contribute to the region's significant biodiversity. The area is important for neotropical migratory song birds, black bear and other species that need unfragmented habitat. Numerous rare and sensitive species depend on the Shenandoah Mountain area for critical habitat essential for their survival and their viability.

The relatively undisturbed landscape also provides spectacular scenery, over 170 miles of trails, and excellent hunting and fishing.

Finally, there is probably more concentration of old growth on Shenandoah Mountain than on any other portion of the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest.



# Northern Shenandoah Mountain Cluster

**Beech Lick Knob  
Hogpen Mountain  
Feedstone Mountain  
Dunkle Knob**

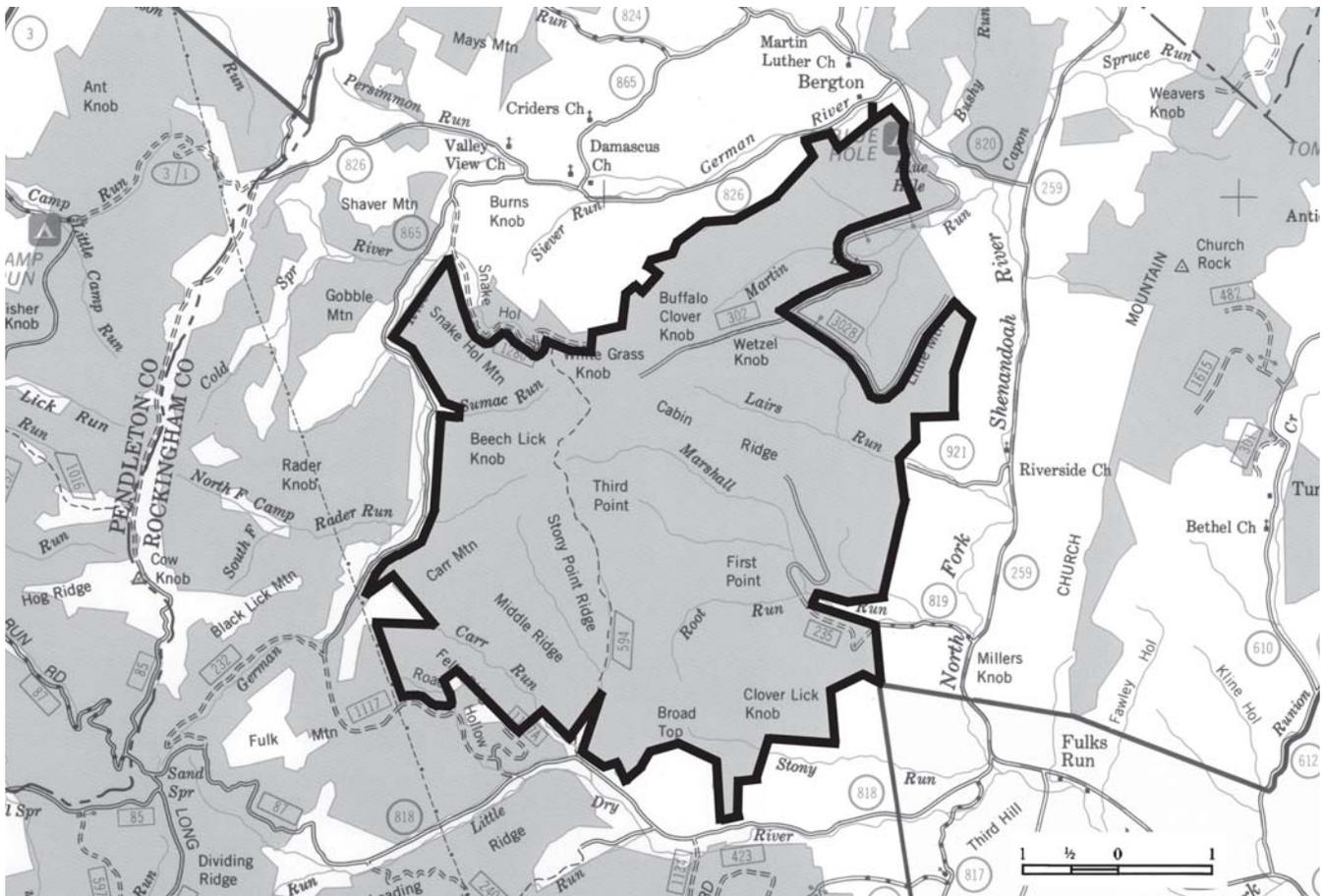
With seven areas of over 58,000 acres the North Shenandoah Mountain Cluster of Mountain Treasures offers some of the most remote settings on the Forest. Far from pavement the interior of this steep rugged terrain presents beautiful scenic vistas along with the solitude. This section of the North River Ranger District north of US Route 33 occupies both Virginia and West Virginia.

These headwaters of the North Fork of Shenandoah and South Fork South Branch of Potomac Rivers are all part of the Ridge & Valley physiographic province. Elevations here range from 1300 to over 3700 feet high. Great biological richness

**Little Cow Knob  
Kretchie Mountain  
Wildcat Ridge**

is present. These Treasures serve as strongholds for rare species and communities, including one of the few occurrences of Red Spruce forest on the GWNF.

The Beech Lick Knob area is one of the largest roadless tracts on the GWNF that the Forest Service failed to include in its official inventory of roadless areas. There are no designated Wilderness Areas in this section of the GWNF. A significant proportion of these lands are considered to be “suitable for timber” by the Forest Service. Logging has occurred in the recent past in some of these Treasures and they are threatened with more in the future.



## Beech Lick Knob

This is one of the largest roadless tracts on the GWNF that the Forest Service failed to include in its official inventory of roadless areas. Elevations here range from 1650 to 3150 feet, with a great diversity of topography. Drainages include Sumac, Liars, Root, Stony, Martin Lick, Marshall, and Carr Runs. Ridges and peaks include Clover Lick, Beech Lick, White Grass, and Wetzel Knobs; Carr, Little, and Snake Hollow Mountains; and First, Middle, and Third Points.

A very large area of “semi-primitive” acreage occurs here where visitors can experience solitude and serenity. Clay Lick Trail runs north/south through the

area for around six miles, connecting County Route 818 at the southern boundary with FDR 1280 at the north.

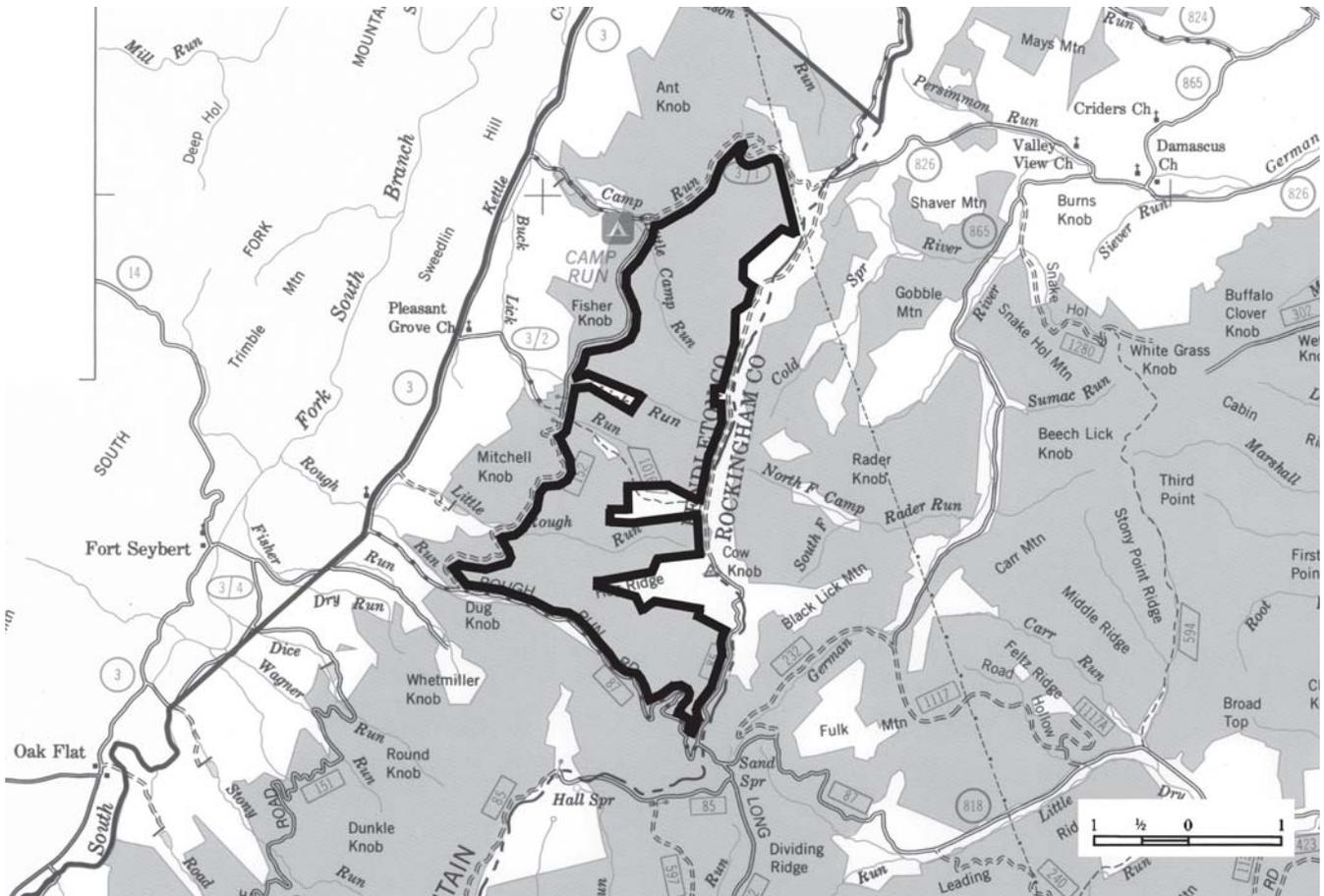
FDR 235A along Root Run is a closed, low-maintenance, grassed-over, little used road that goes into the interior of the area for about 1.5 miles. Blue Hole campground is at the northeastern boundary of the area.

Much of the area is considered suitable for timber harvesting. However, there are 4241 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 17,152 acres

**Location:** Rockingham County, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Fulks Run, Cow Knob.



## Little Cow Knob

Little Cow Knob is located on the western flank of Shenandoah Mountain. This high ridge of Shenandoah Mountain provides the backdrop for the numerous outliers on the west flank.

Little Cow Knob and a portion of Middle Ridge are the only tops that lie within the boundary of this roadless area. Mitchell Knob and Fisher Knob are just outside the boundary. Elevations range from almost 4000 feet near the summit of Shenandoah Mountain to 2000 feet along Camp Run.

These knobs are drained by many small streams. Some include Little Rough Run, Buck Lick Run, Lick

Run, and Camp Run. All these streams are tributaries of South Fork of the South Branch of the Potomac River.

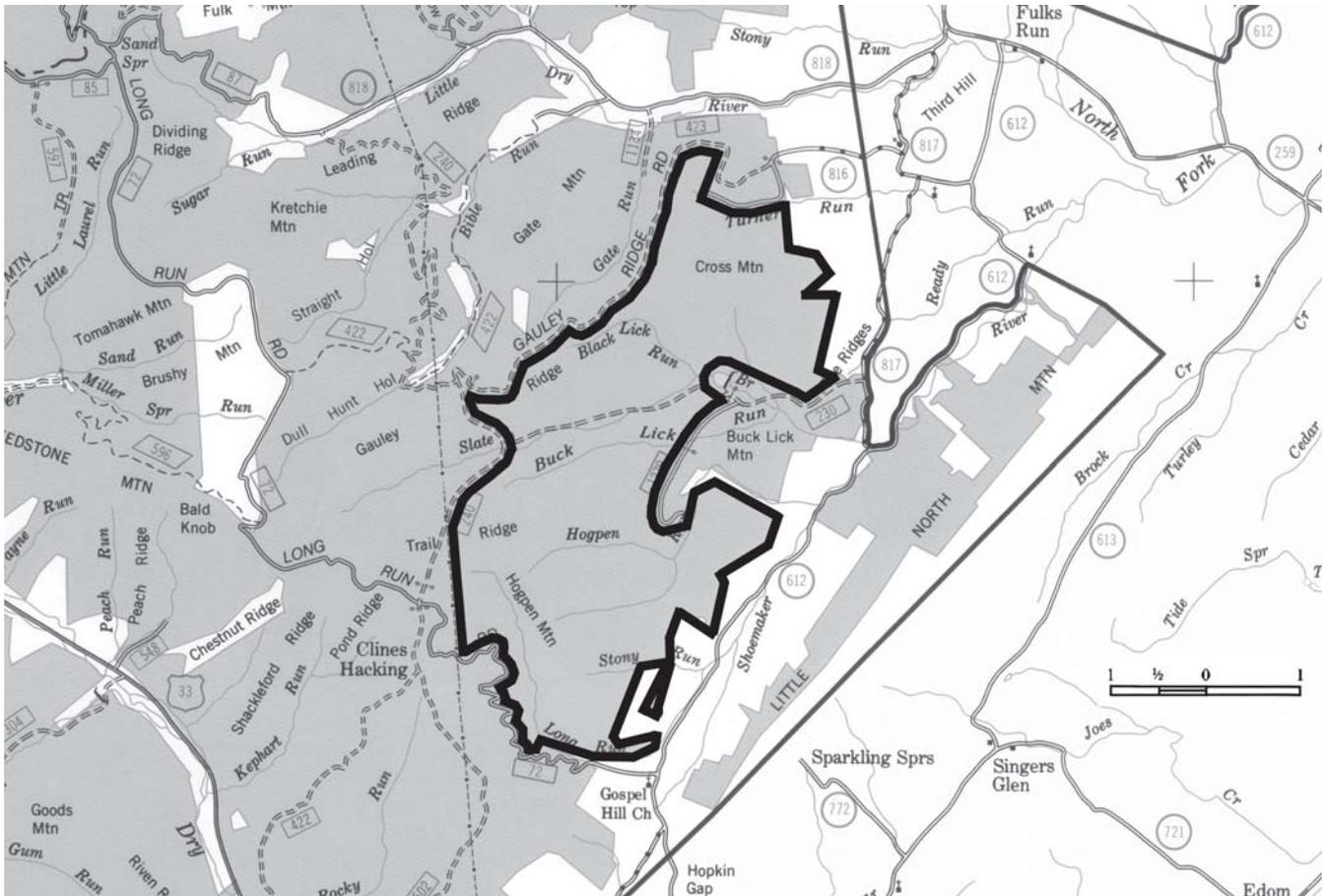
Recreational activities for this area usually begin at the Camp Run Camp Ground. Fishing is popular along Camp Run and Little Camp Run. The camp ground is popular with hunters in the fall and early winter.

The area has a 1584 acre Forest Plan Special Biological Area and contain 2270 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate size:** 5335 acres

**Location:** Pendleton County, West Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Cow Knob, Fort Seybert



## Hogpen Mountain

Hogpen Mountain is located on the flanks of Shenandoah Mountain south of the Beech Lick Knob Mountain Treasure. It is relatively low-lying, with elevations from 1650 to 2700 feet.

A complexity of drainages characterizes the area, including Long, Stony, Buck Lick, Slate Lick, and Hogpen Runs. Long Run is a beautiful stream that provides native trout angling opportunities.

Wildlife that can be observed here include Black Bears and Box Turtles. There is also a designated

“Watchable Wildlife” site around Slate Lick Pond at the northeast boundary of the area.

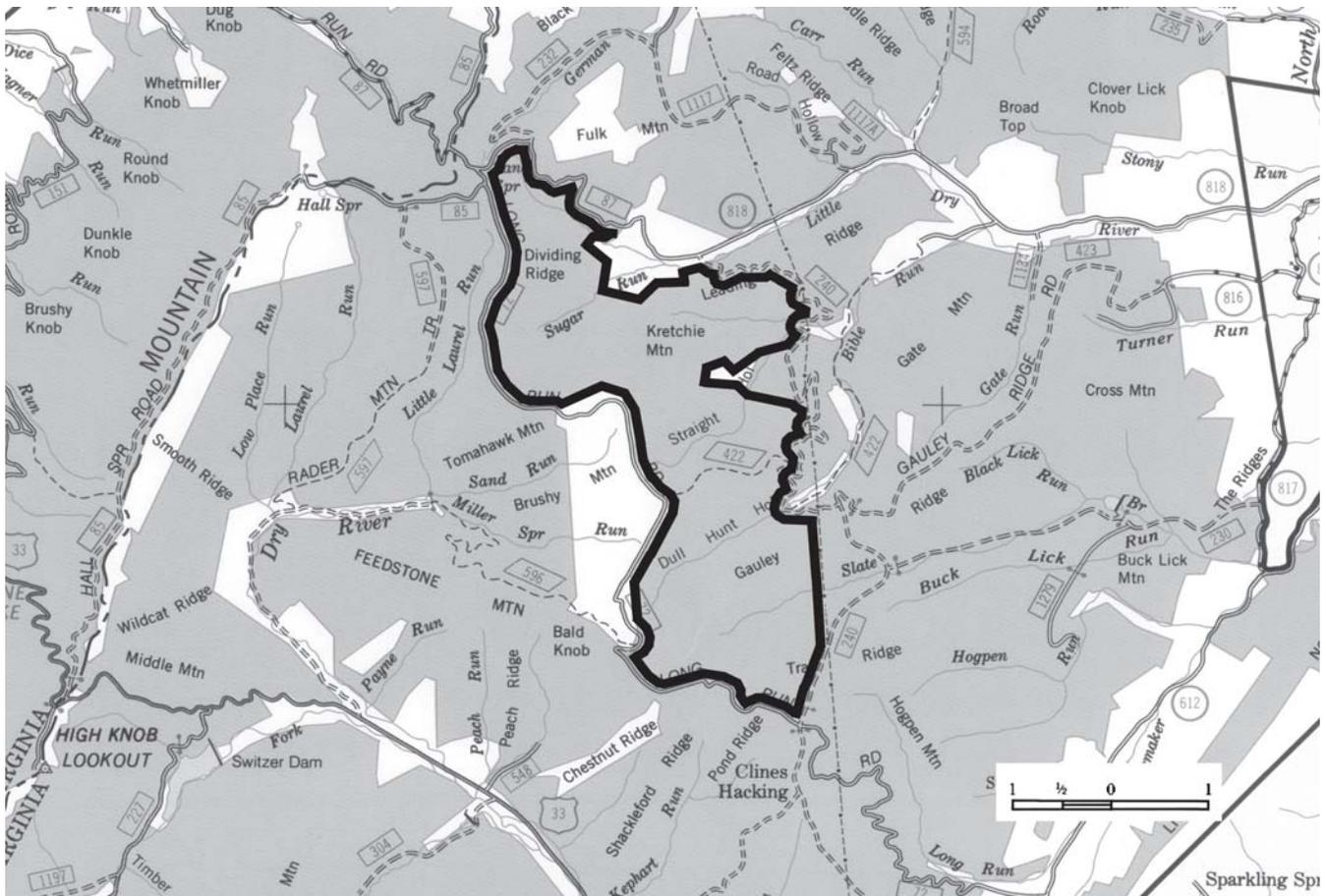
There is a significant amount of “semi-primitive” acreage that provides isolation from the sights of human activities. There are close to eight miles of designated trails in the areas with Ant Hill Trail having a most unusual name.

The area contains 1137 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 9229 acres

**Location:** Rockingham County, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Singers Glen



## Kretchie Mountain

Kretchie Mountain is an outlyer on the eastern flank of Shenandoah Mountain. Cow Ridge lies near the western boundary. This ridge reaches elevation of over 3400 feet.

Kretchie Mountain, with an elevation of just over 3000 feet, is located in the northern part of this area. The land slopes to the east and north to an elevation of about 1800 feet in Straight Hollow. Gauley Ridge and Middle Mountain are other outstanding features of Kretchie Mountain.

Many small streams dissect the long ridges

of this area. Spruce Lick Run, Straight Hollow, and Sugar Run are the major creeks. These creeks are all tributaries of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River.

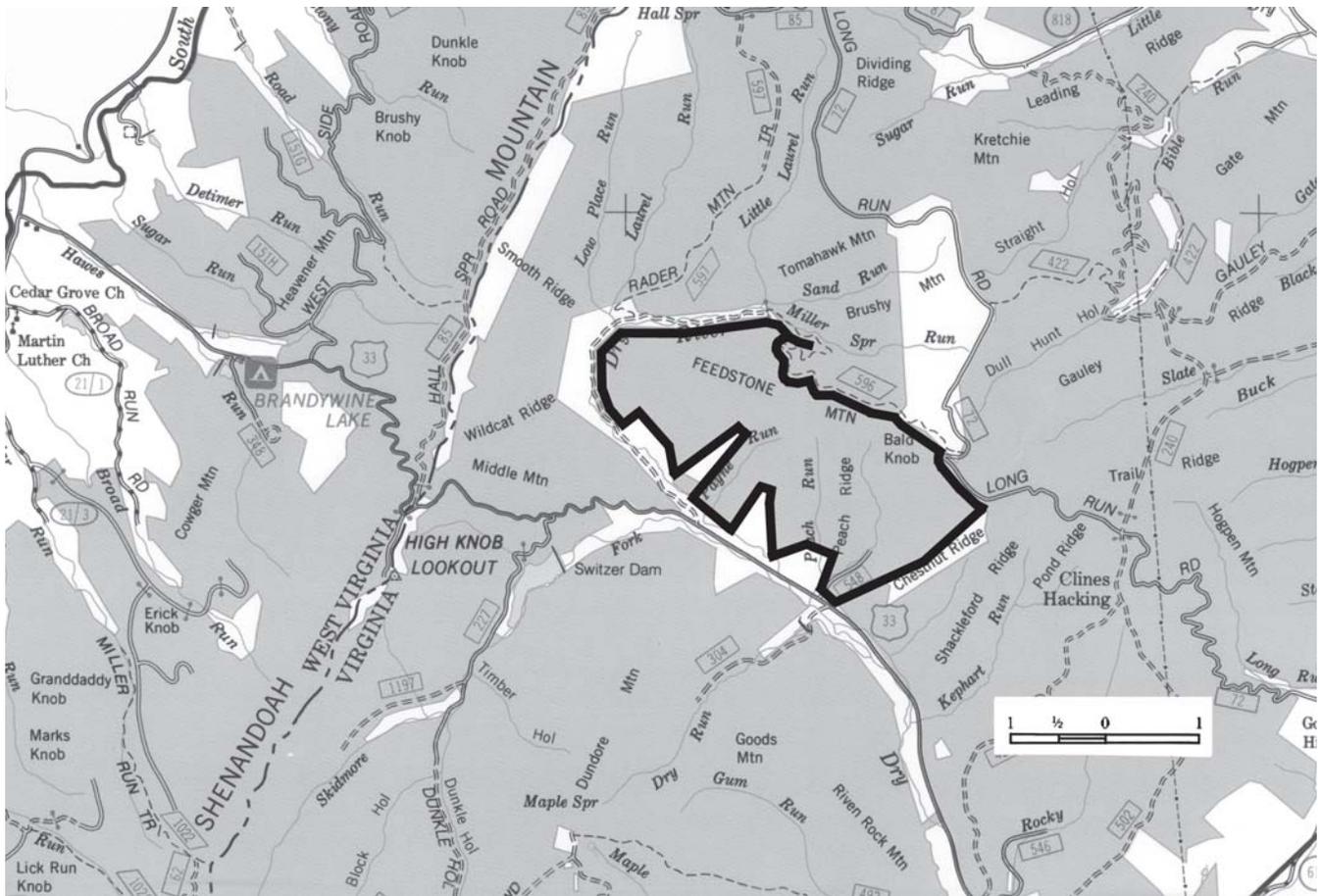
The primary recreational activity of Kretchie Mountain is hunting. The steep ridges and sheltered hollows create idea game habitat.

Cow Ridge has been identified as a Special Biological Area. The area has also been identified as a Virginia Natural Heritage site. Small pockets of old growth exist along the ridge crest and in some of the more inaccessible hollows.

**Approximate size:** 6677 acres

**Location:** Rockingham County, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Cow Knob, Rawley Springs



## Feedstone Mountain

Feedstone Mountain is located on the eastern flank of Shenandoah Mountain. The dominant physical feature of this area is Feedstone Mountain itself. This mountain climbs to an elevation of 3860 feet. Peach Ridge drops off Feedstone to the south, and Chestnut Ridge forms the eastern boundary.

The Dry River serves as the western boundary. Other small drainages such as Peach Run tumble rapidly down the ridges to join Dry River.

Small stands of old growth are located throughout

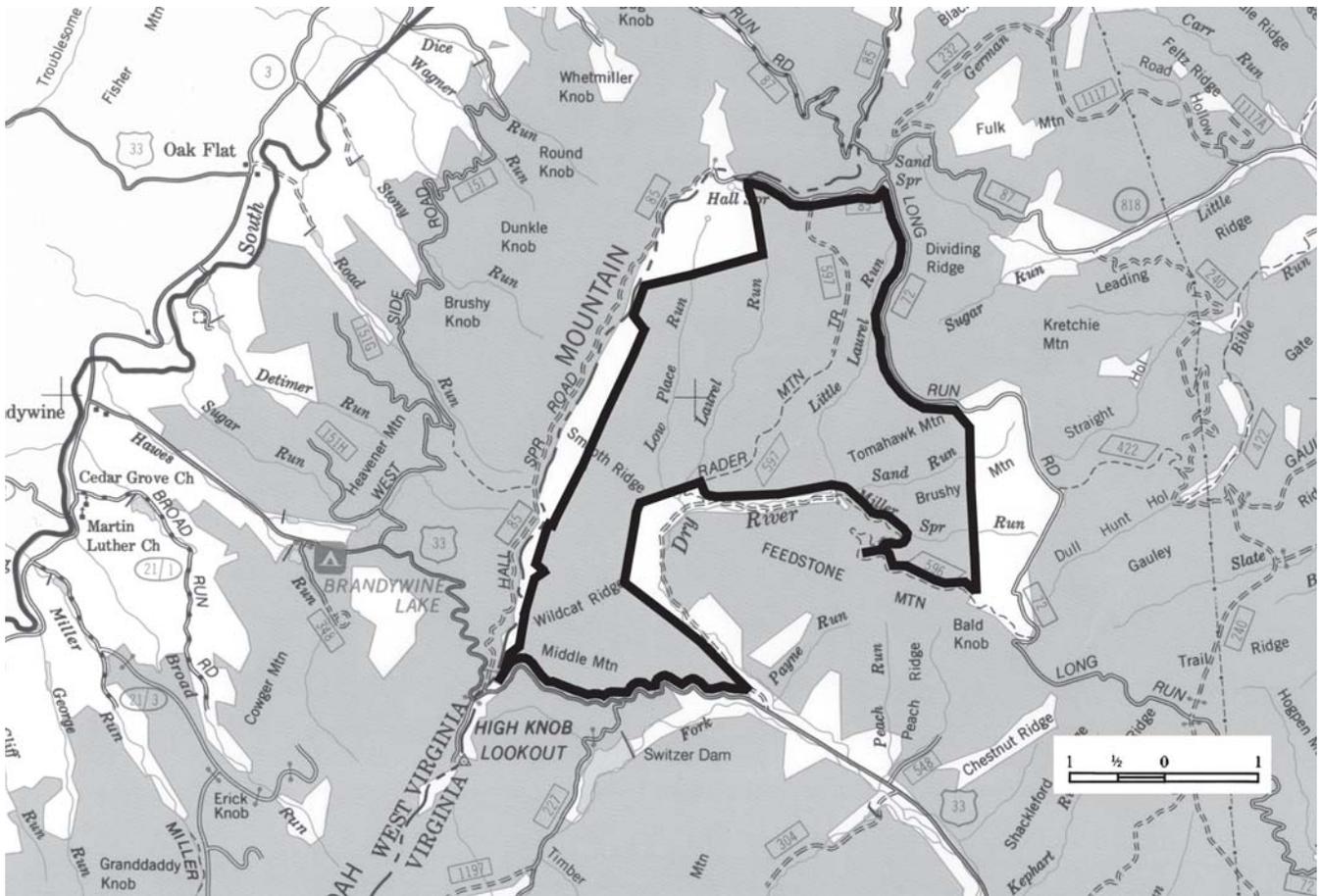
the area. These stands are located in the deep hollows of the many tributaries of Dry River. The crest of Feedstone Mountain is designated as a Special Biological Area.

Recreational opportunities are limited within the boundaries of Feedstone Mountain, as there are no designated trails. However, there are easy access hunting opportunities along Forest Development Road 72C. This road serves as the northeastern boundary.

**Approximate Size:** 4057 acres

**Location:** Rockingham County, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Brandywine, Rawley Springs



## Wildcat Ridge

Wildcat Ridge is an uninventoried roadless areas that encompasses Wildcat Ridge and Tomahawk Mountain. Wildcat Ridge is found on the east slopes of Shenandoah Mountain north of US 33. This is rugged terrain, with steep side slopes with elevations ranging from 1900 feet to 3700 feet.

Major geographical features include Smooth Ridge, Wildcat Ridge, and Tomahawk Mountain. These ridges are dissected by the numerous headwaters of Dry River. These small tributaries are excellent wild trout streams, and there is good quality habitat for Black Bears.

In addition, Wildcat includes the 2000 acre Little Laurel Run Research Natural Area, established in

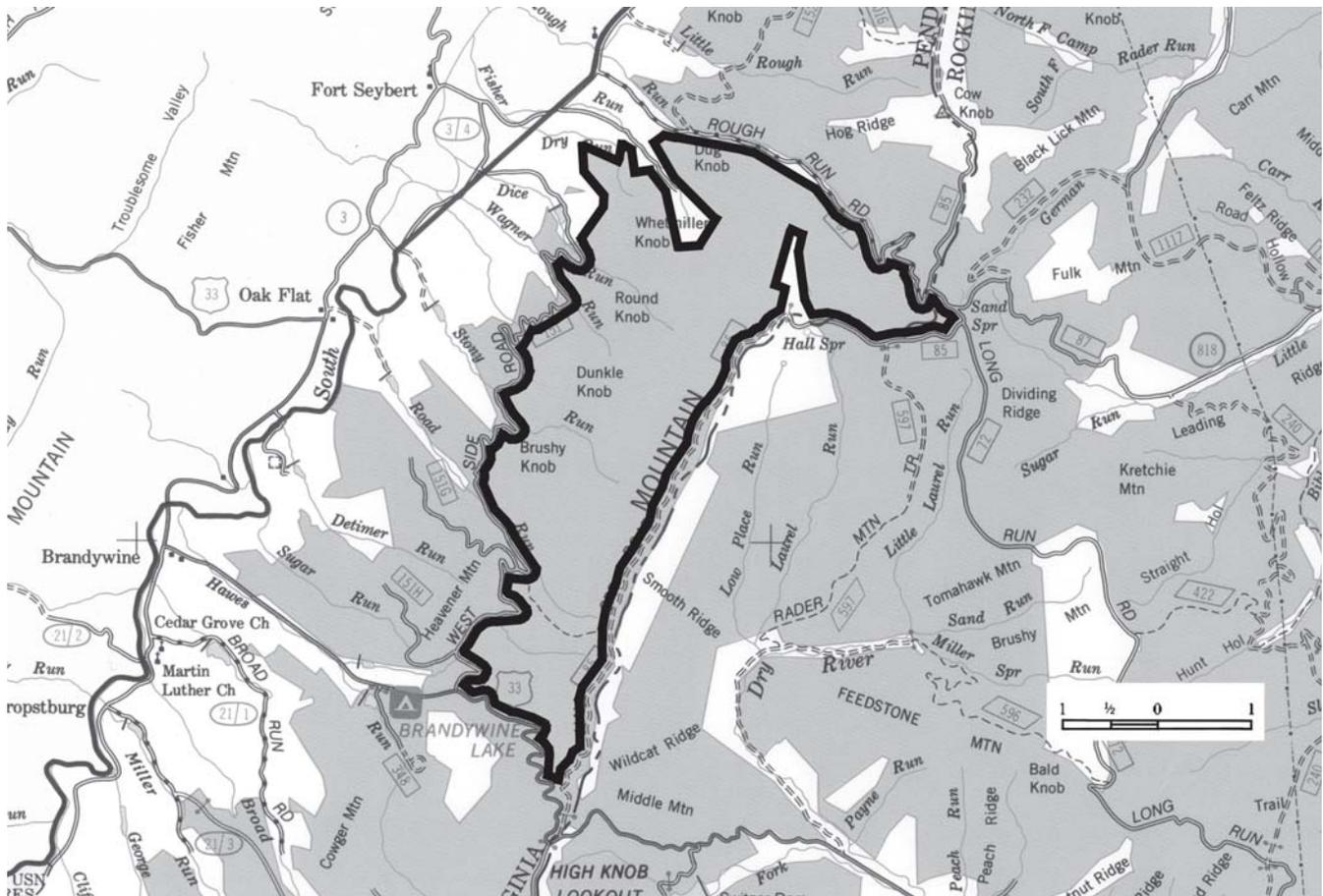
1938. RNAs are designated by the Chief of the Forest Service. Such sites are part of a national network designated for research, education, and maintenance of biological diversity on National Forests. RNAs are protected against activities that directly or indirectly modify natural ecological processes. In addition to this there is a 6692 acre Forest Plan Special Biological Area

Wildcat Ridge is extremely rich biologically. The area contains 4561 acres of possible old growth forest. State rare birds, Red Spruce, Cow Knob Salamander, Shenandoah Mountain Millipede, Variable Sedge, and Paper Birch are found here.

**Approximate Size:** 8522 acres

**Location:** Rockingham County, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Rawley Springs, Brandywine, Cow Knob.



## Dunkle Knob

Dunkle encompasses a series of knobs on the western flank of Shenandoah Mountain north of US Route 33. This area includes Dug, Whetmiller, Round, Dunkle, and Brushy Knobs; as well as Dice, Wagner, Stony, and Hawes Runs.

Elevations range from 1900 feet on the western boundary in West Virginia to 3500 feet on the crest of Shenandoah Mountain. Beautiful waterfalls and 2160 acres of possible old growth can be found. The area is characterized by a diversity of vegetation with a variety of forest types.

The Forest Service decided to implement the Dice Run timber sale here in 2003. Logging is scheduled to cut some of the few stands of certain forest types in the area, and includes cutting units in the rich riparian flats associated with Dice Run. Dice Run itself is sparkling and clear with small but gorgeous waterfalls.

The Shenandoah Crest Special Biological Area is 1983 acres and is located on the upper slopes of Dunkle Knob. There is excellent remote habitat for bears, as well as habitat for the rare Cow Knob Salamanders.

**Approximate Size:** 8398 acres

**Location:** Pendleton County, West Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Fort Seybert, Cow Knob, Brandywine

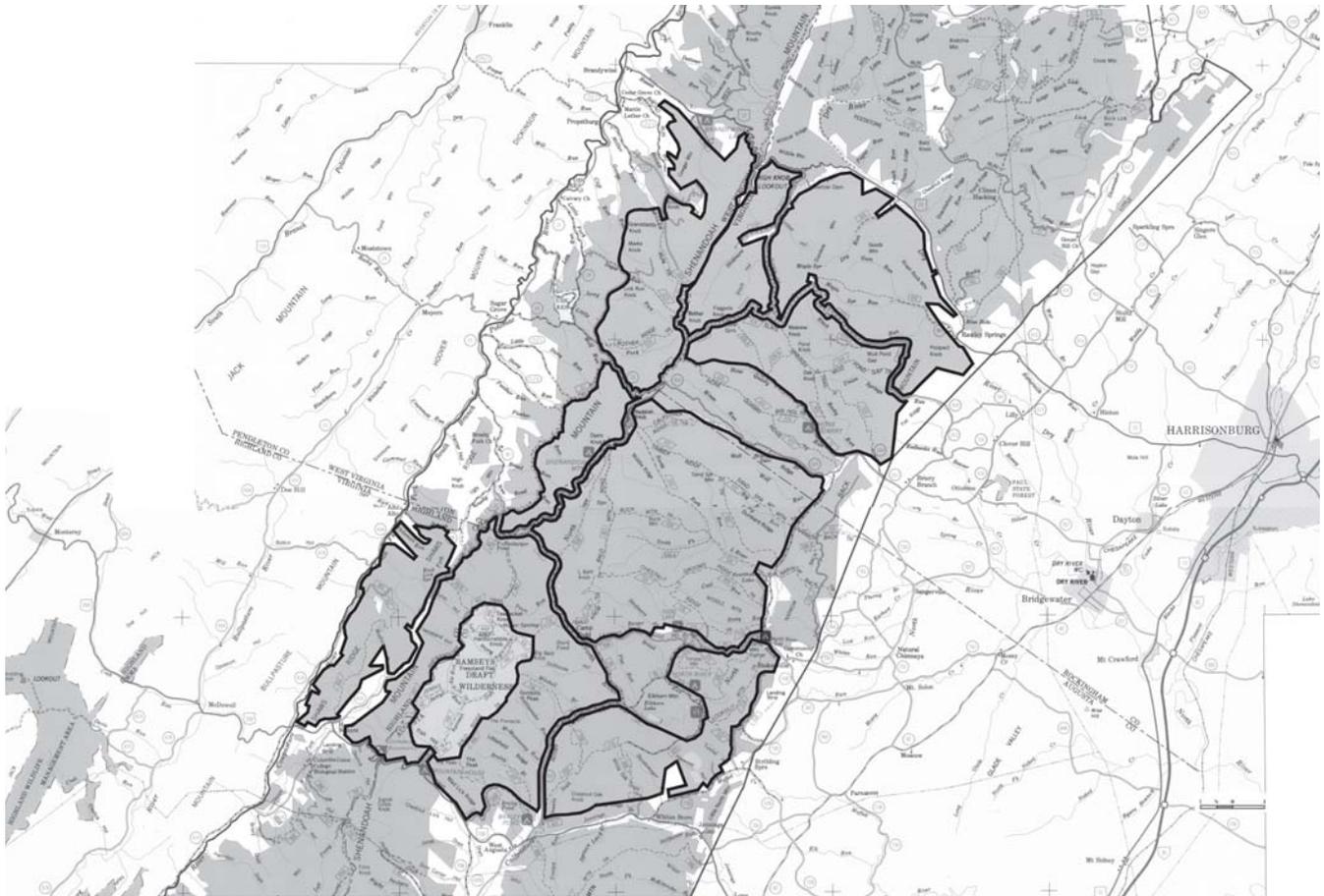


Two trees

Steve Kirchbaum

*“The earth is the Lord’s for he made it”. Wild places are not only sources of joy or places to meet God, but they are important as controls in the great experiment humankind is engaged in, as we seek to turn every part of the planet to human use. Wild places retain the fingerprints of God; Creation as it was intended .*

Anne Nielsen,  
Harrisonburg Mennonite Church Creation Care Group



# Central Shenandoah Mountain Cluster

**Gum Run Roadless Area**  
**Skidmore Fork Roadless Area**  
**Little River Roadless Area**  
**Hankey Mountain**  
**Shaws Ridge**

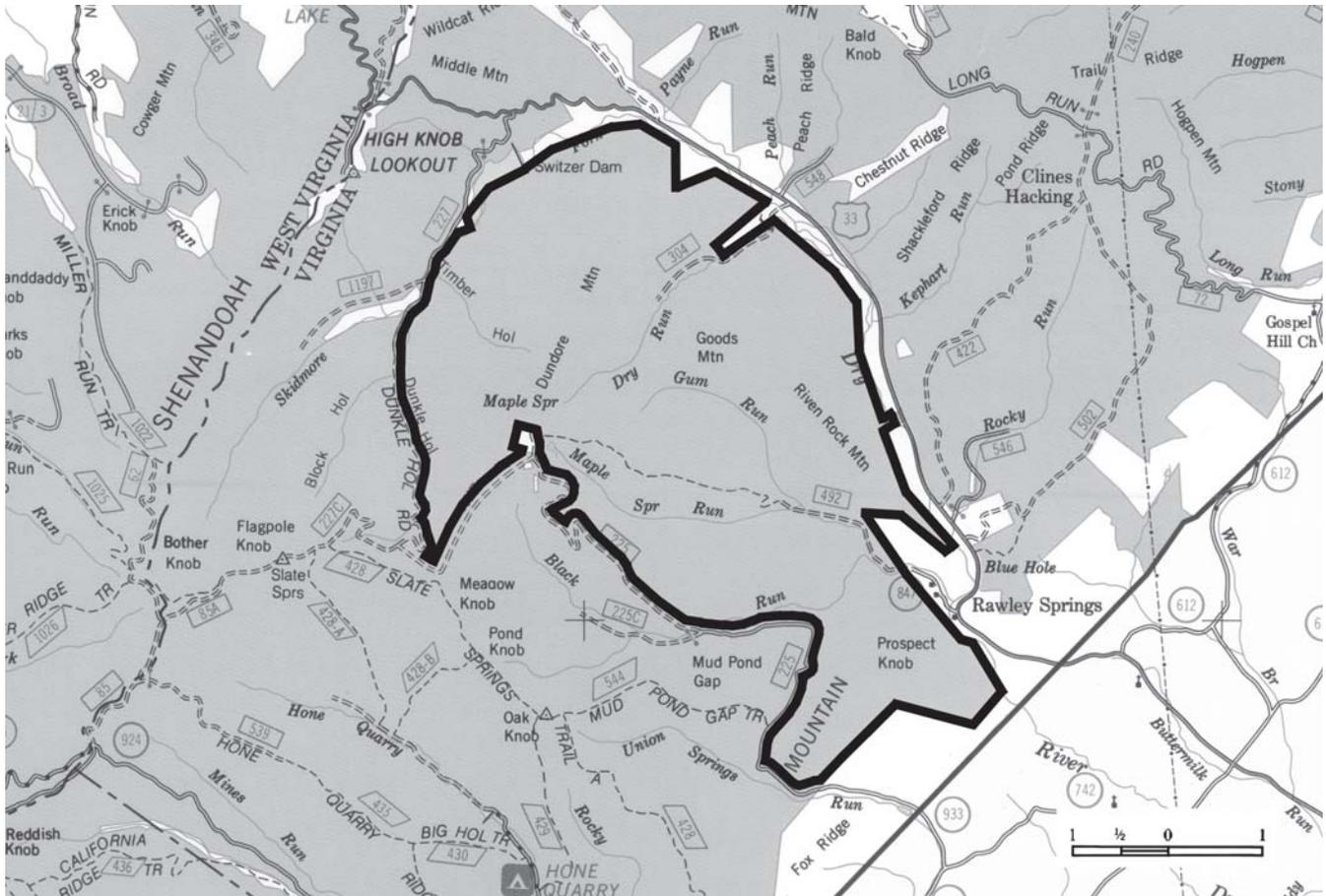
The Central Shenandoah Mountain Cluster represents the largest concentration of roadless wildlands on the George Washington National Forest. Here in the middle of Shenandoah Mountain are nine Mountain Treasures totaling around 100,000 acres. These areas are located in both Virginia and West Virginia between US Route 250 and US Route 33.

These lands are located in the North River Ranger District. Headwater drainages flow into the Shenandoah, James, and Potomac Rivers. These watersheds supplying drinking water for the communities of Staunton and Harrisonburg.

**Oak Knob Roadless Area**  
**Dry River Roadless Area**  
**Broad Run**  
**Ramseys Draft Wilderness Addition**

Ramseys Draft Wilderness, is the only designated Wilderness on the entire Shenandoah Mountain. Here too is the 43,000 acre Shenandoah Crest Special Interest Area, a Forest Plan designated Special Biological Area. These treasures are sanctuaries for creatures great and small, from Black Bears to Cow Knob Salamanders.

Some of the highest elevations on the Forest are here, with lengthy stretches of ridge-crest rising to over 4000 feet. Popular recreational sites such as Reddish Knob, North River, and Todd Lake are in the vicinity. The Wild Oak National Recreation Trail is located here.



## Gum Run

Gum Run is a large roadless area that has been inventoried by the Forest Service. Bordered by US 33, Gum Run marks the north end of a complex of nearly contiguous roadless areas that stretch all the way to US 250.

Elevations range from approximately 1800 feet near Rawley Springs to over 4000 at the summit of Dundore Mountain. The major ridges include Dundore Mountain, Goods Mountain, and Riven Rocks Mountain.

These high ridges are drained by numerous small runs. The major streams include Dry Run, Gum Run, and Maple Springs Run. The western flank of

Dundore Mountain provides ground water protection for Switzer Lake. This reservoir provides water to the City of Harrisonburg.

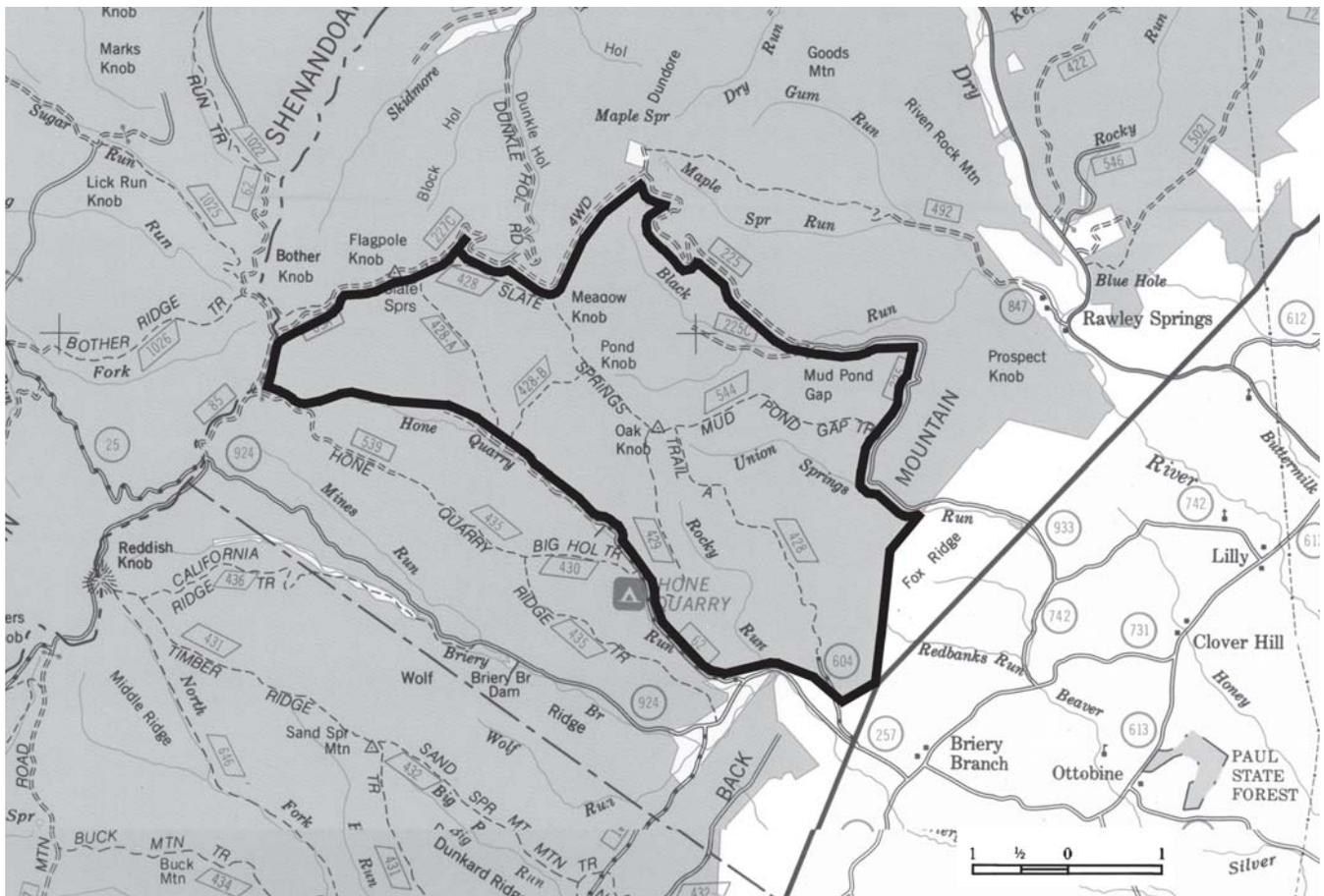
The remote and rugged nature of the area provides critical habitat for the Black Bear. The Cow Knob Salamander, endemic to the higher elevations in the vicinity of Shenandoah Mountain, is known to reside on the high ridges of Dundore Mountain where it prefers the late successional and old growth mixed hardwoods forests of this high ridge.

This area may contain 5428 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 14,655 acres

**Location:** Rockingham County, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Brandywine, Va and West Va, Rawley Springs



## Oak Knob

Oak Knob is a popular area for many types of outdoor recreation. It is adjacent to the Hone Quarry Recreation Area which provides good access. Over 12.5 miles of trails are found in the roadless area. There are an additional 11.5 miles of trails adjacent to the roadless area.

Recreational activities include hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, and backpacking. Hunting, for deer, bear, and turkey, is another major recreational draw. Several streams have sufficient water year round to support a native trout fishery.

There are numerous high knobs including Pond Knob, Oak Knob, Meadow Knob, and Flagpole Knob, with an elevation of 4302 feet. These high ridges are drained by Rocky Run and Union Springs Run.

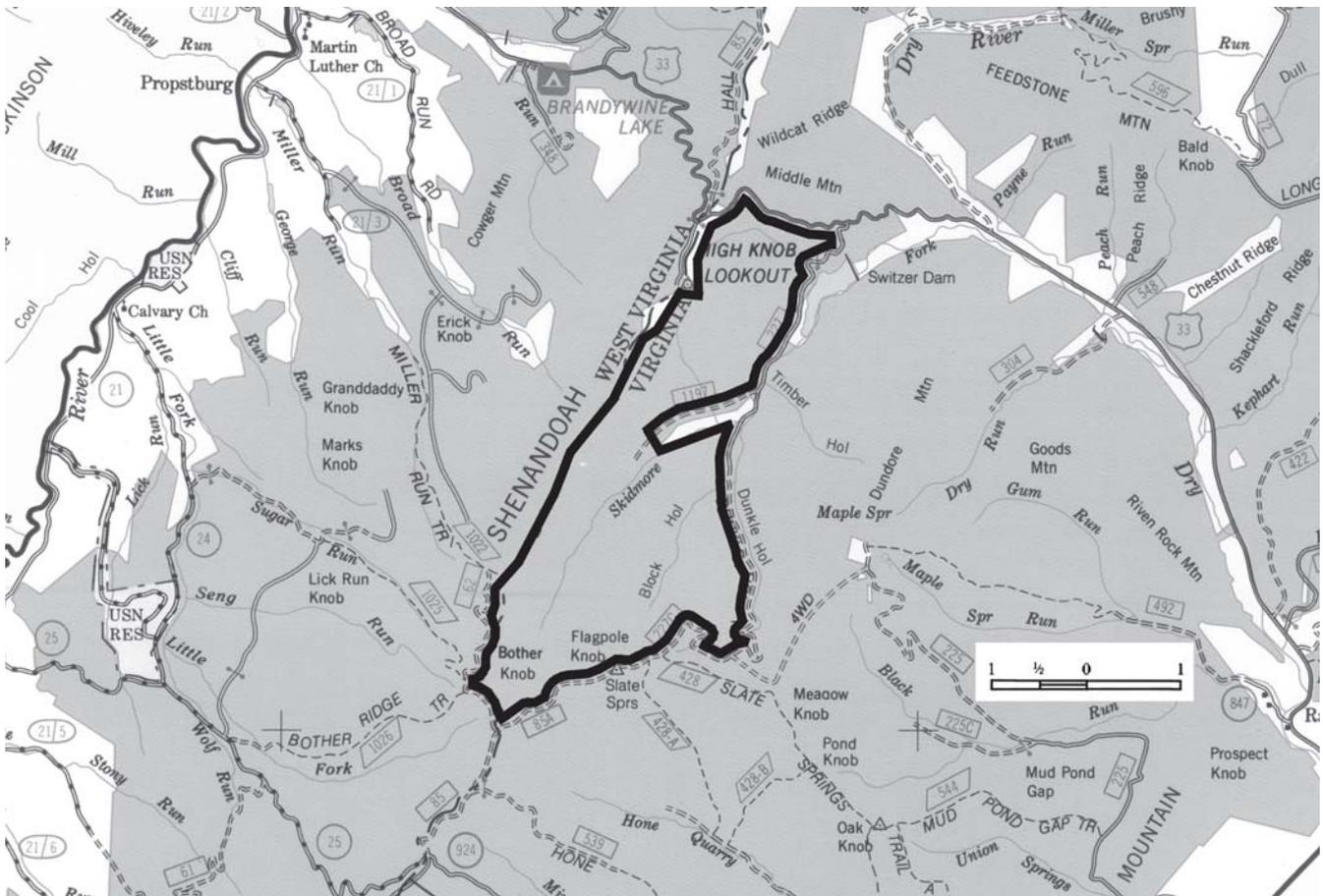
The area is forested with mixed eastern hardwoods. Significant stands of cove hardwoods occur in the deep moist cool drainages. The area is inhabited by the Cow Knob Salamander.

The area may contain 1952 acres of possible old growth forest.

**Approximate Size:** 10,866 acres

**Location:** Rockingham County, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Briery Branch, Reddish Knob



## Skidmore Fork

Located just south of US Route 33 on the eastern flank of Shenandoah Mountain in Rockingham County, the 5700-acre Skidmore Fork is home to ten rare, threatened, or endangered species, with five being given the “extremely rare” designation by the state. The area contains a significant 1200 acre tract of old growth which the Natural Heritage program has described as “an exemplary natural community.” A 3691 acre Forest Plan Special Biological Area is another gem of this special place.

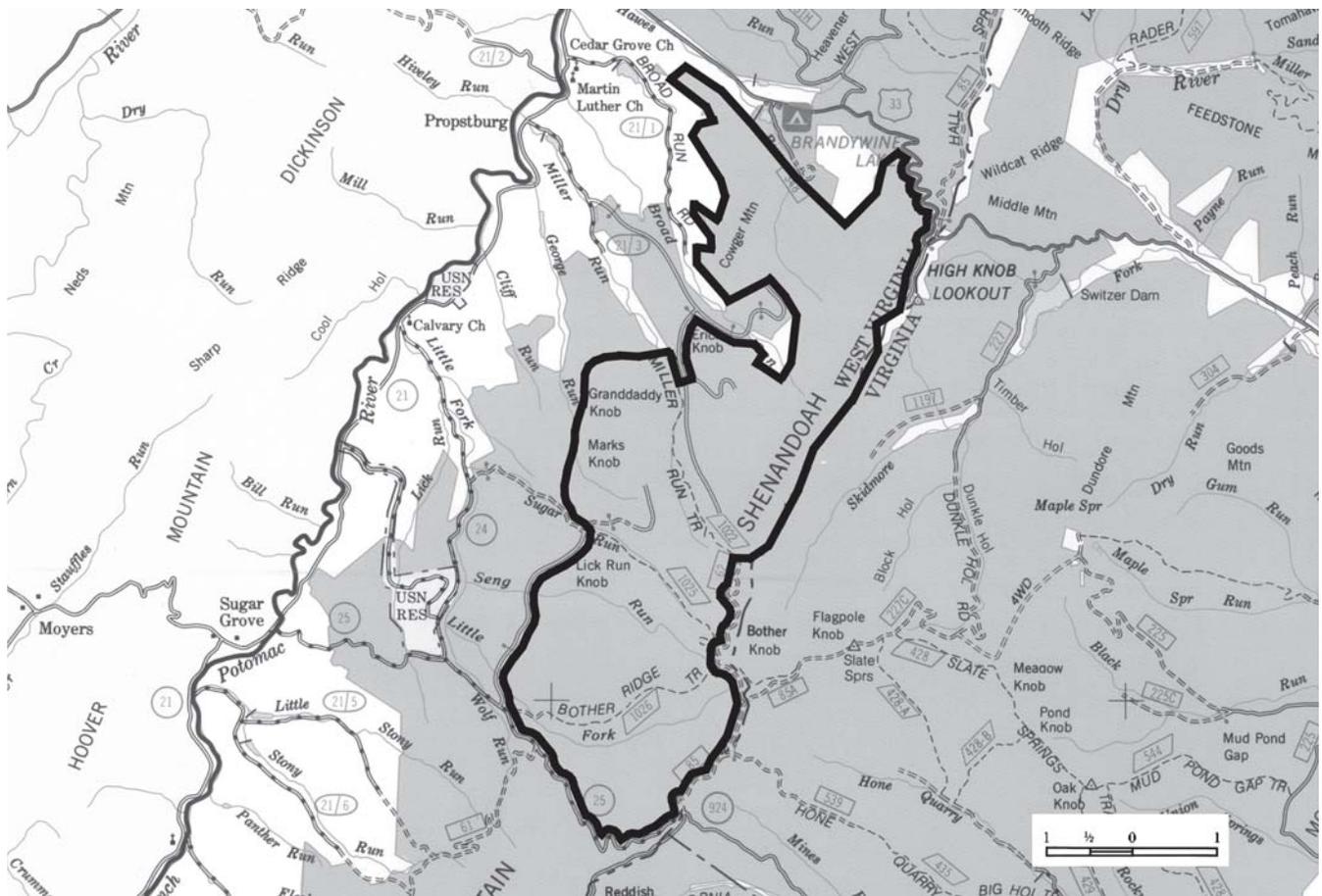
Ranging from flat river bottoms to steep mountainsides, this area is bounded by ridges that exceed 4000 feet on Bother Knob, High Knob, and Flagpole Knob. Challenging primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities can be found.

Skidmore Fork, which flows into Switzer Lake, serves as the principle water source for the City of Harrisonburg and needs protection as a critical watershed.

**Approximate Size:** 5703 acres

**Location:** Rockingham County, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Brandywine



## Dry River

This area occupies the steep western slopes of Shenandoah Mountain in West Virginia adjacent to the stateline. It is contiguous with the 5703 acre Skidmore Roadless Area in Rockingham County, Virginia.

Elevations range from 2000 feet on Sugar Run at the western edge to 4300 feet at Bother Knob on the southeast boundary of the area. The steep slopes are dissected by numerous small streams that flow into the Potomac River basin.

The roadless area is criss-crossed with a significant trail network. With a total of almost eighteen miles, the area is a popular recreation

destination. Most trails climb the steep ridge to the summit of Shenandoah Mountain. The Shenandoah Mountain Trail on the crest of the ridge serves to connect these side trails.

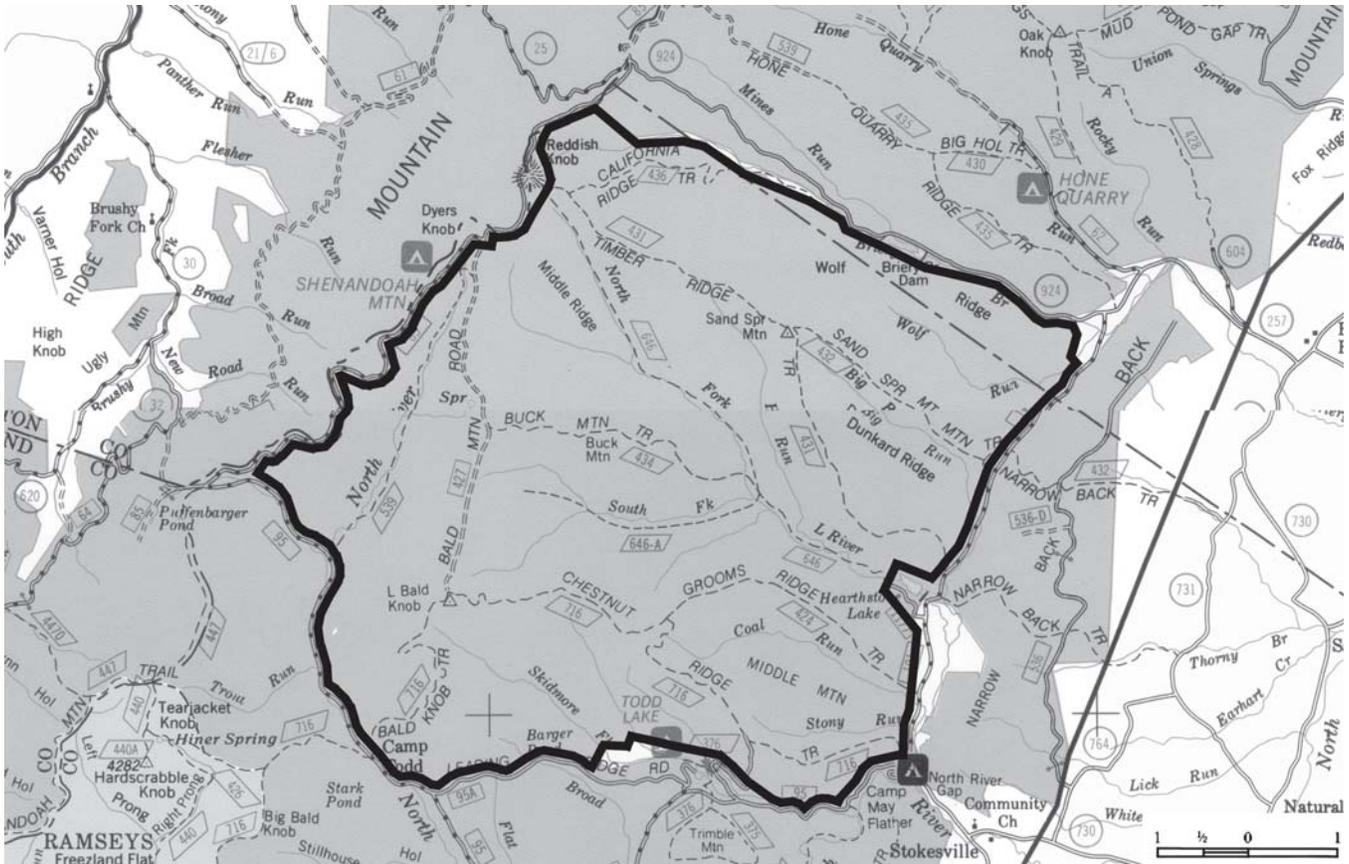
In addition to the trail network, the Brandywine Lake Recreation Area is located near the northwest corner of the roadless area.

Dry River contains a 3333 acre Special Biological Area and may support 5860 acres of possible old growth forest. A rare amphibian specie occur here, the Cow Knob Salamanders. Black Bears also find remote habitat here.

**Approximate Size:** 12,939 acres

**Location:** Pendleton County, West Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Brandywine, Reddish Knob



## Little River

The Little River Roadless Area is the largest roadless area in Virginia. Little River served as a breathtaking backdrop in full autumn glory as President Clinton announced his Roadless Area Initiative from the top of Reddish Knob in October, 1999.

Elevations range from 4440 feet near the summit of Reddish Knob to roughly 1600 feet near Little River. The North and South Fork gather together in the interior of the drainage to form the Little River. Other streams of significance include the upper drainage of North River as well as Coal Run and Stony Run, both tributaries of Little River.

An eastern deciduous forest covers the entire

area. Timber Ridge has deep soils that support stands of very large Red Oaks. There are pine stands on the southwest facing slopes.

Wildflowers are abundant. They include Wood Lilly, Painted Trillium, and Yellow Fringed Orchid.

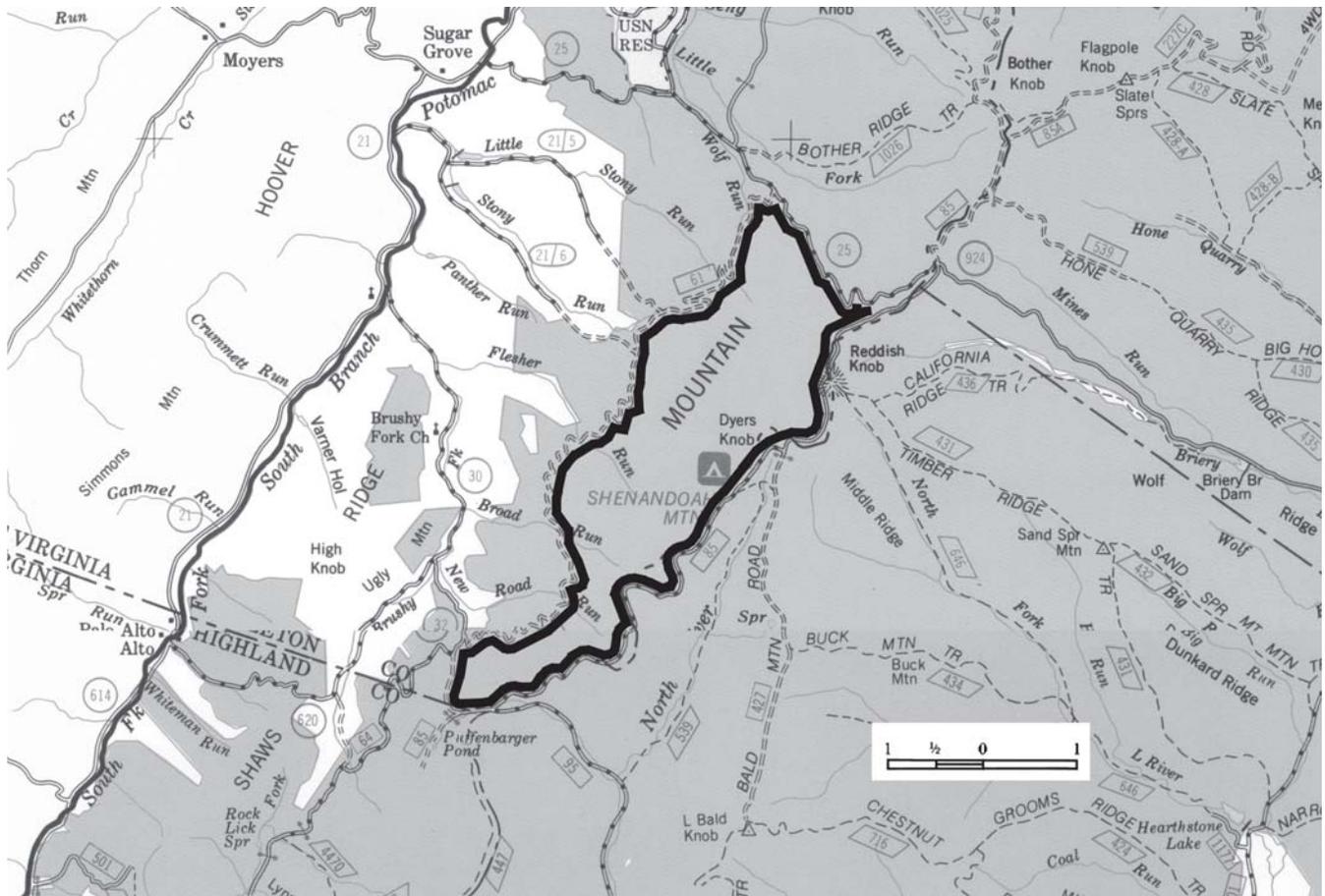
The remoteness of Little River encourages and supports a healthy Black Bear population. The area also provides refuge to a significant number of threatened species. There is an 11,259 Special Biological Area as well as 5857 acres of possible old growth.

An extensive trail network provides opportunities for many types of recreational activities.

**Approximate Size:** 29,342 acres

**Location:** Augusta County and Rockingham Counties, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Palo Alto, Stokesville, Reddish Knob, West Augusta



## Broad Run

Broad Run is located on Shenandoah Mountain west of Reddish Knob. Elevations range from 2300 feet on the west side to over 4100 feet on the crest of Shenandoah Mountain.

Access is provided by FDR 85 at the upper side and FDR 61 below on the west. The area's topography includes the summit of Dyers Knob as well as Flesher and Broad Runs.

Dyers Knob also provides habitat for such rare species as the Cow Knob Salamander, Shenandoah Mountain Millipede, Virginia Least Trillium, Red Crossbill, White Alumroot, and American Harebell. The area includes a 2366 acre Forest Plan Special Biological Area known as the Shenandoah Crest

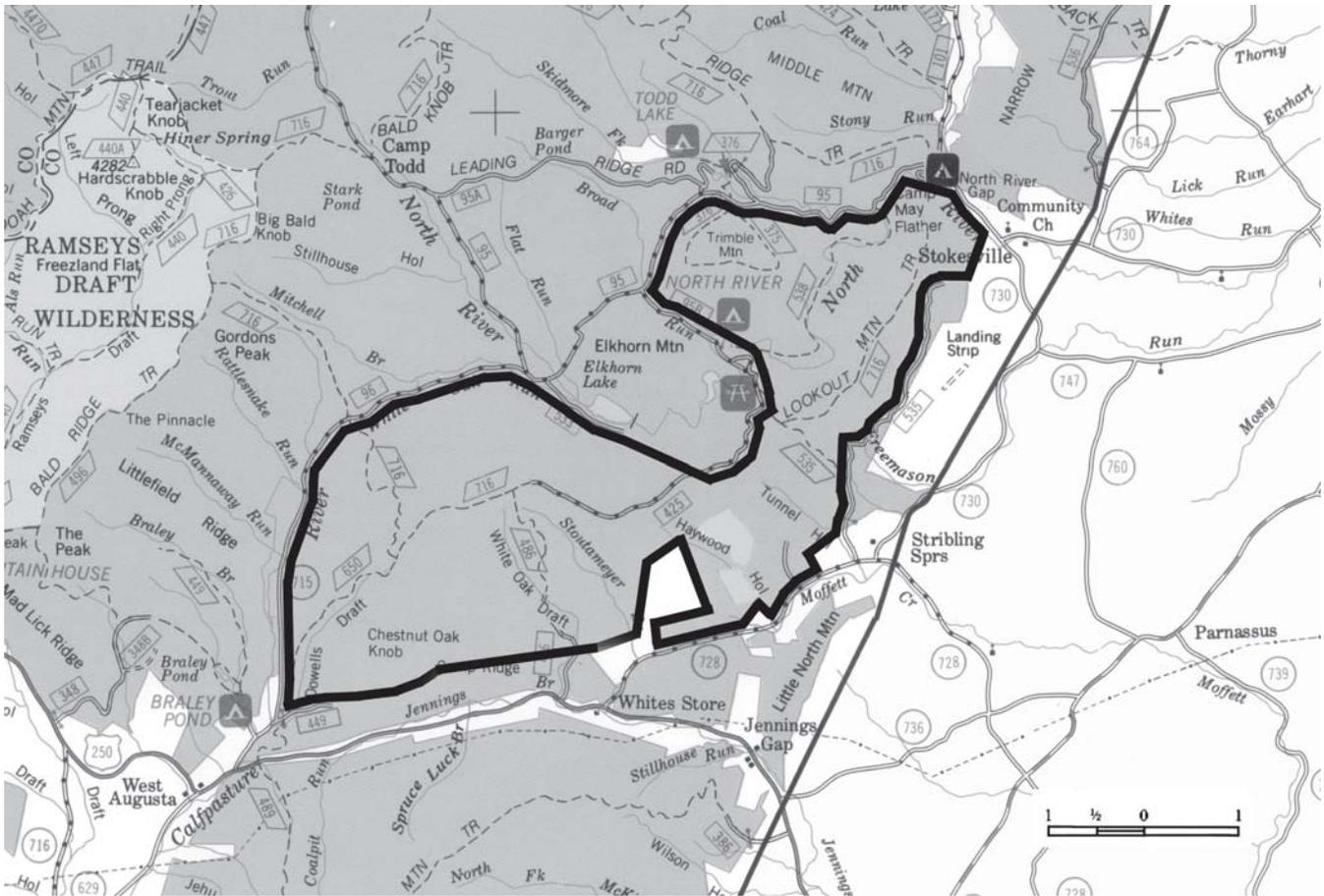
Special Biological Area. Broad Run also has significant tracts of possible old growth, almost 2040 acres.

The extremely steep slopes and lack of maintained trails provide opportunity for a remote and primitive backcountry experience. The only trail in Broad Run is the Little Stony Trail. This trail parallels the Little Stony Run from its meek beginnings near the crest of Shenandoah Mountain to West Virginia County Road 21/6.

**Approximate Size:** 5047 acres

**Location:** Augusta County, Virginia and Pendleton County, West Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Palo Alto, Reddish Knob



# Hankey Mountain

Hankey Mountain lies just south of the popular Elkhorn Lake and North River Recreational Areas. This popular area is easily accessible from US 250.

There are several high ridges in this beautiful woodland. They include Hankey Mountain, Chestnut Oak Knob, Trimble Mountain, and Camp Knob. These ridges provide headwater streams for both the Shenandoah and James Rivers

The Coal Skink, a tiny lizard of the forest floor that is considered “very rare and imperiled” in Virginia, is known to occur here, and 1432 acres of possible old growth oak forest are scattered on upper slopes.

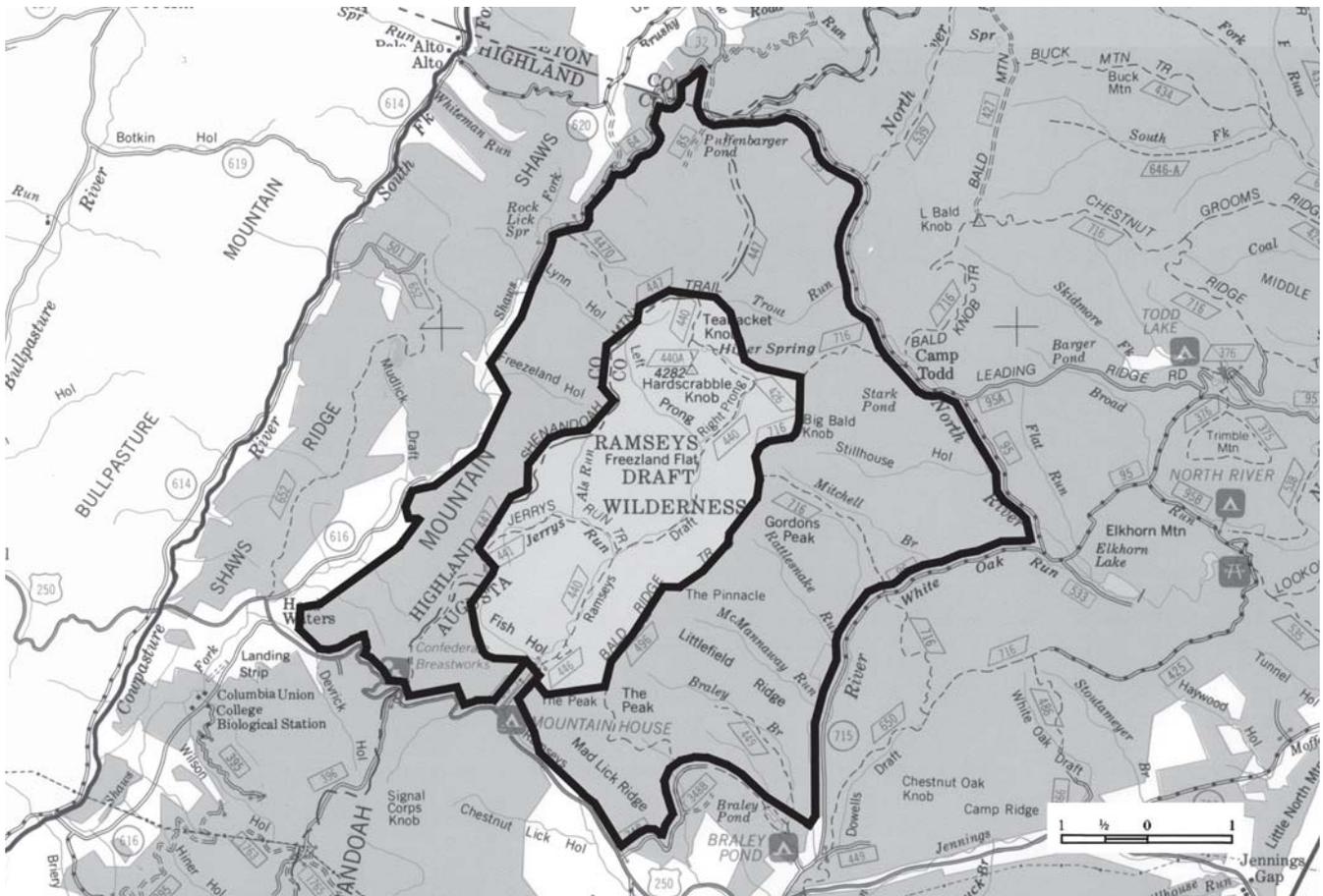
Much of this area is considered suitable for timber. Old growth was clearcut here in the late 1990s to manage habitat for Ruffed Grouse.

The Wild Oak National Recreation Trail passes through the northern part of the area on Hankey Mountain. This trail connects Ramseys Draft Wilderness, Little River Roadless Area, and the North River Campground. The Dowells Draft trail connects the Wild Oak Trail to FDR 449 at the southside of Chestnut Oak Knob.

**Approximate Size:** 12,557 acres

**Location:** Augusta County, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** West Augusta, Stokesville



# Ramseys Draft Wilderness Addition

Ramseys Draft Wilderness addition, when added to the existing Ramseys Draft Wilderness, would create a wilderness of nearly 20,000 acres. This would be by far the largest wilderness in Virginia.

The elevation range of this area stretches from approximately 2200 feet to 4200 feet on Hardscrabble Knob. The topography is steep with short, choppy drainages throughout the lower elevations. Slopes vary in steepness, some with grades exceeding eighty percent.

Dividing Ridge forms the boundary between two major watersheds. North of the ridge are the headwaters of the Potomac River Basin. South of the ridge

are the headwaters of the James River Basin.

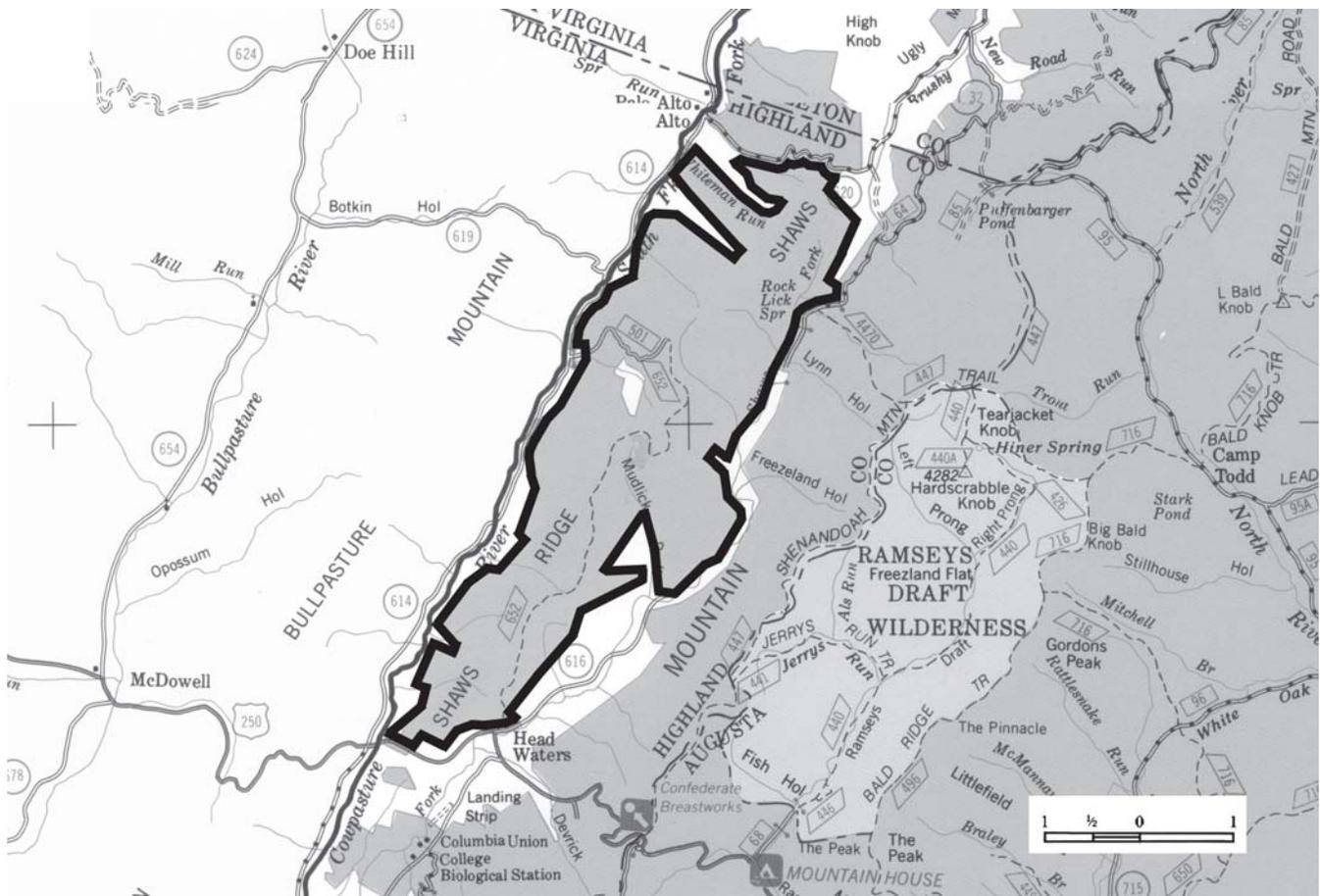
The most notable feature in both the existing Ramseys Draft Wilderness and the proposed addition are the large trees. The steep slopes, combined with the vegetation make the area very picturesque. This forest also provides excellent Black Bear habitat due to lack of human disturbance.

The Virginia Natural Heritage Division has recommended Big Bald Knob as a Special Interest Area and have identified four species of concern, including Paper Birch and the Cow Knob Salamander. There is also a 2256 Special Biological Area as well as 6211 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 17,933 acres

**Location:** Augusta County and Highland County, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** West Augusta, PaloAtlo, McDowell



## Shaws Ridge

Shaws Ridge lies on the western flank of Shenandoah Mountain, immediately west of the Ramseys Draft Wilderness Addition. Streams on Shaws Ridge are headwaters for both the James and Potomac River basins.

Headwaters Shale Barren, a George Washington Forest Management Plan designated Special Biological Area, is at the southeast end of this Mountain Treasure area. The rare fishes Potomac Sculpin and Roughhead Shiner are known to occur downstream.

Shaws Ridge Trail runs 6.3 miles along the ridge line from FDR 501, dropping down to the Forest boundary along County Route 616 at the town of Headwaters.

Access to the interior of the area is provided on the west side by FDR 501 and on the northeast by FDR 64. Shaws Ridge provides beautiful scenery for travelers on US 250.

Shaws Ridge may contain 2619 acres of potential old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 7263 acres

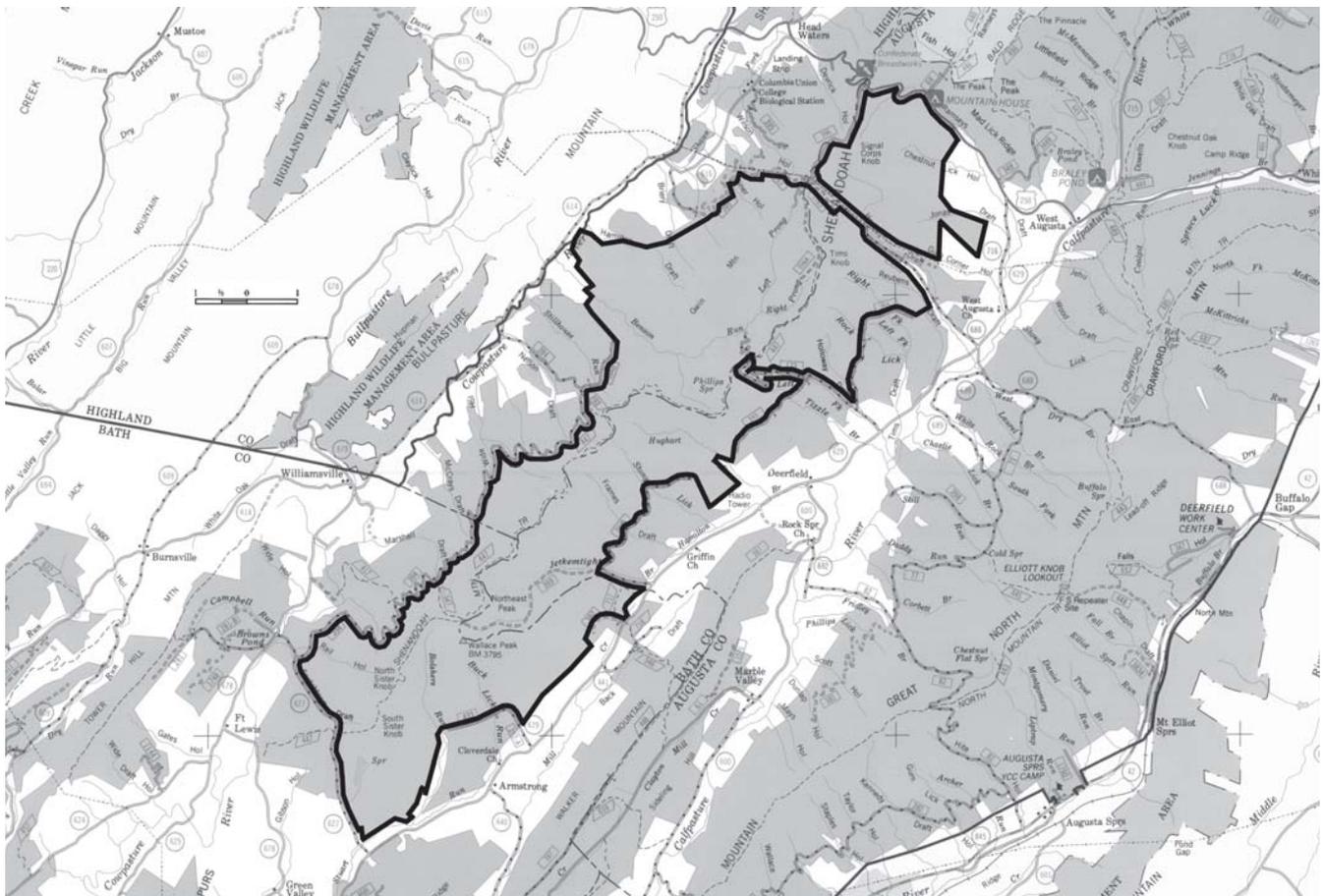
**Location:** Highland County, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Palo Alto, West Augusta, Mcdowell

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# Picture of Mountain biking

Some Sort of Text



# Southern Shenandoah Mountain Cluster

## Signal Corp Knob

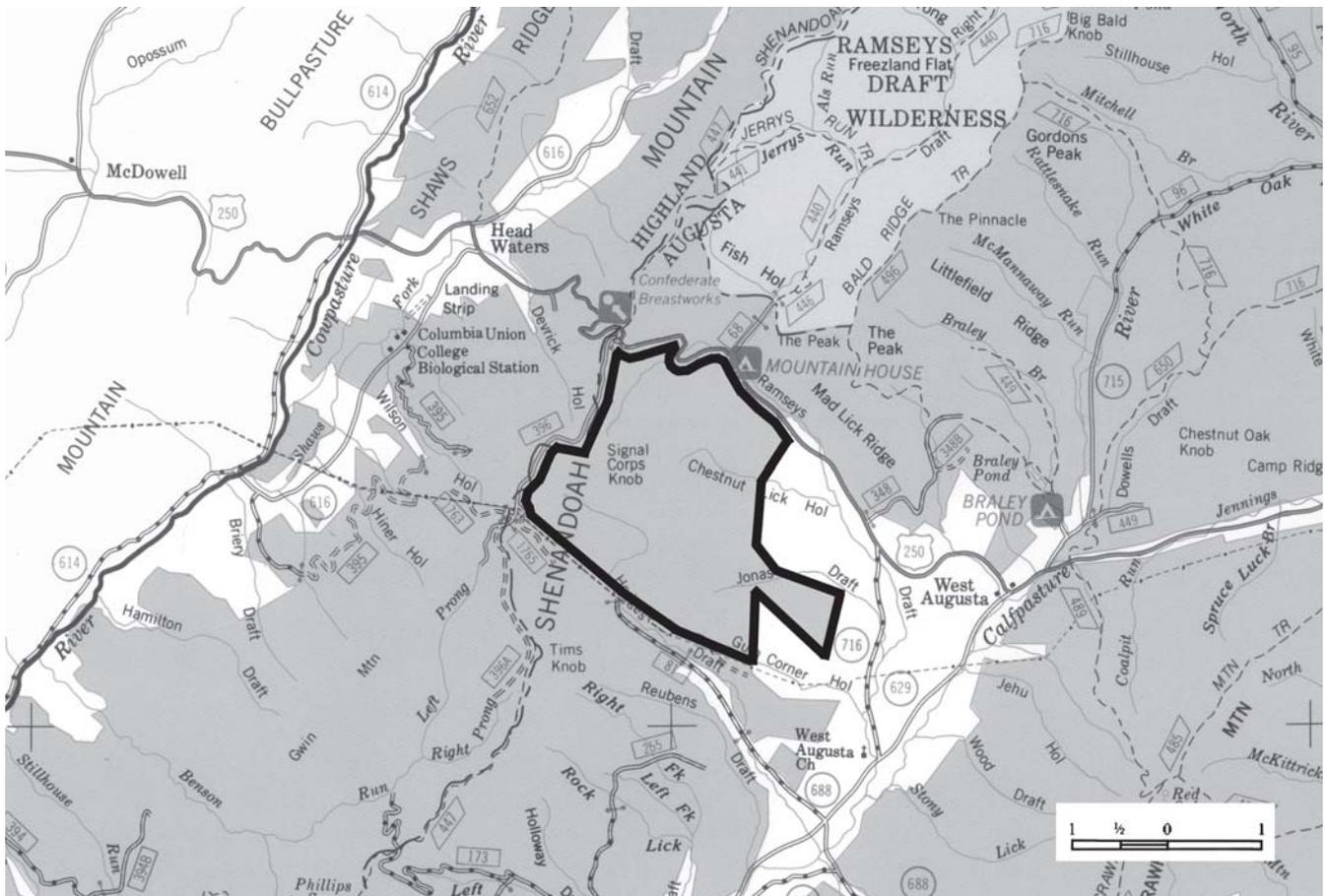
The Southern Shenandoah Mountain Cluster on the North River Ranger District contains only two areas, but they total around 35,000 acres. In fact, the contiguous Jerkemtight and Benson Run areas together constitute a wildland of 30,000 acres. This combined area is second in size only to the Big Schloss Mountain Treasure and is one of the largest roadless tracts found on the eastern National Forests.

This section of forest constitutes the southern end of the sixty-mile long Shenandoah Mountain, and lies on both eastern and western slopes of the

## Jerkemtight/Benson Run

mountain. The southern Shenandoah Mountain cluster drains into the Calfpasture and Cowpasture Rivers, tributaries of the James. Here can be found wild trout streams, equestrian trails, and Civil War sites.

The Shenandoah Mountain Trail follows the crest of Shenandoah Mountain and passes through the entire area. Although backcountry and remote habitat are wonderfully represented here, there are no designated Wilderness Areas in this section of Forest.



# Signal Corps Knob

Signal Corps Knob is an outlier located on the eastern flank of Shenandoah Mountain. The Knob itself dominates the landscape of this area, with an elevation of over 3900 feet.

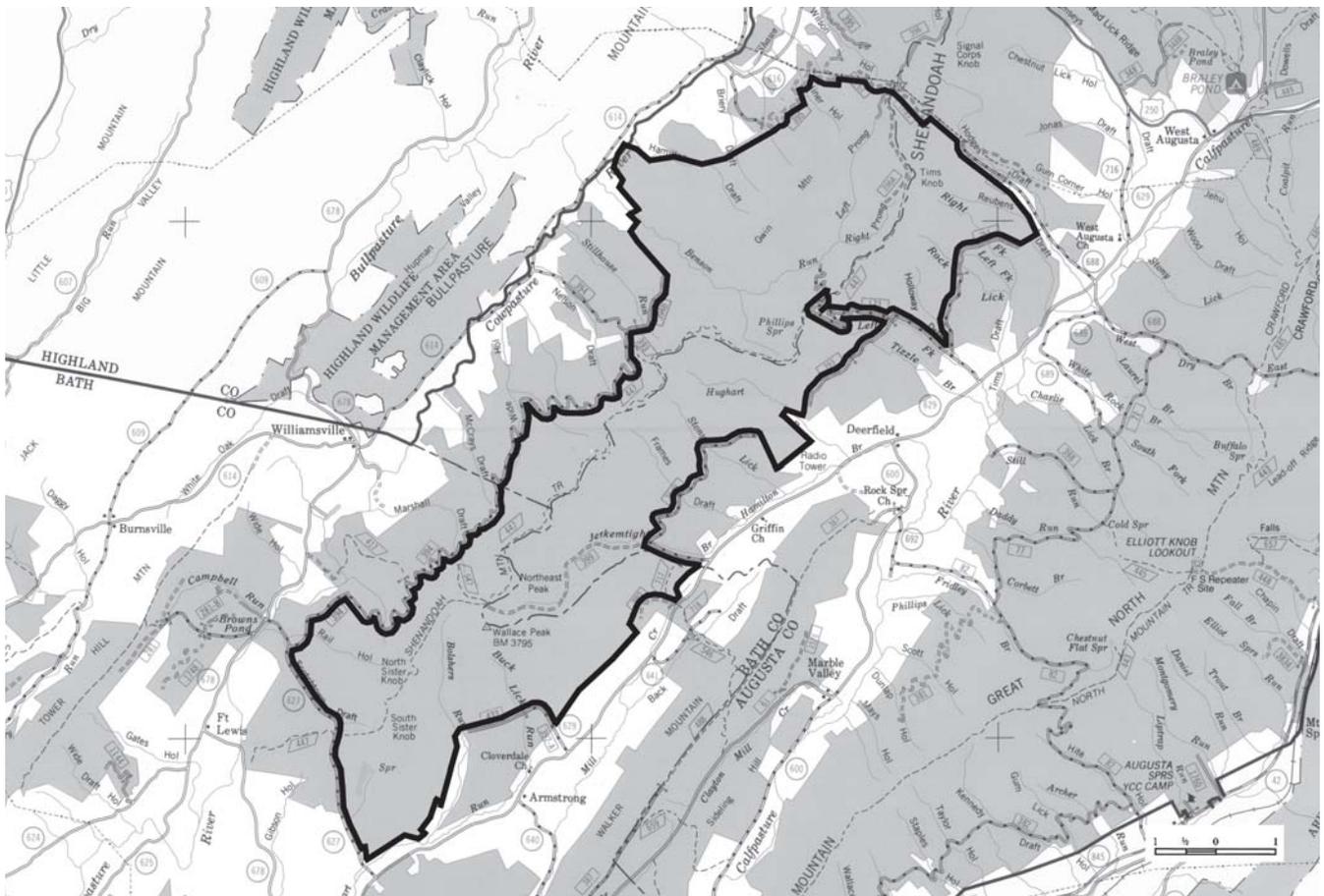
The significant geological features include Signal Corps Knob itself and the many small intermittent and perennial streams including the upper reaches of Hodges Draft, Stamping Ground Hollow, Georgia Camp Hollow, and Leslie Lick Hollow.

The Forest Service considers much of the area to be suitable for timber harvesting.

The Georgia Camp Equestrian Trail is the only established trail in the Signal Corps Knob area. This trail climbs from US 250 to the crest of Shenandoah Mountain and connects to the Shenandoah Mountain Trail.

This area may contain 450 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 4044 acres  
**Location:** Augusta County, Virginia in the North River District  
**Topos:** McDowell, West Augusta



## Jerkemtight/Benson Run

This Mountain Treasure area expands the current Jerkemtight Roadless Area to include contiguous lands on the eastern slope of Shenandoah Mountain southeast of Wallace Peak and the uninventoried lands around Bensons Run. This expansion includes relatively low elevation lands (2000-2500 feet in altitude) with moderate slopes.

Elevations range from 1700 feet in Rail Hollow to 3800 feet on the summit of Northeast Peak. Other notable names in this area include The Bump, South Sister Knob, and Wallace Peak

The watersheds are very steep V-shaped drainages with an intermittent water flow. They include Bolshers Run, Hughart Run, and Benson Run.

Jerkemtight Roadless Area is a favorite destination for outdoor recreational enthusiasts. The most important trail is the Shenandoah Mountain Trail. Twenty-two miles of the mountain's crest are within the boundaries of Jerkemtight and Benson Run.

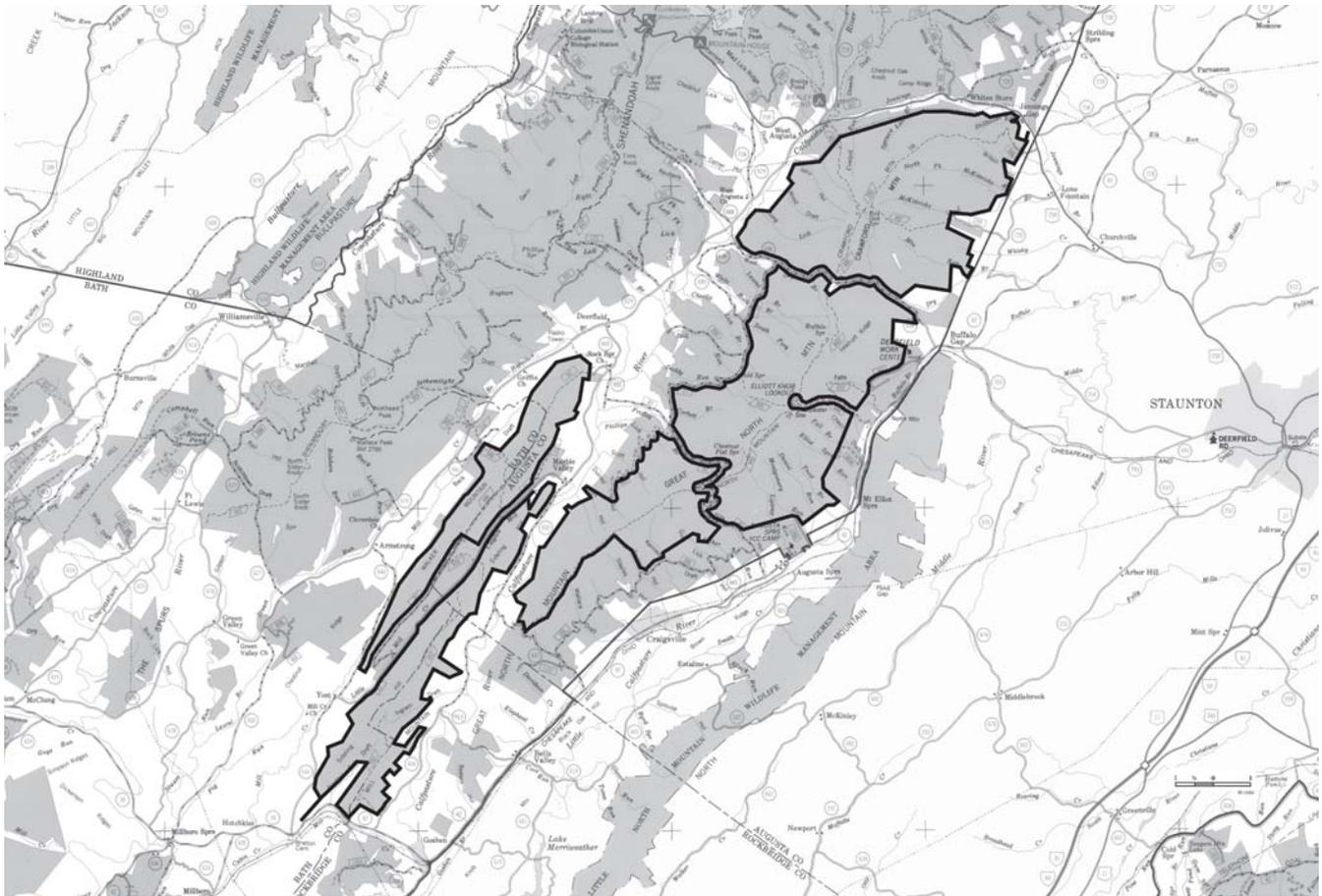
The shale barrens near South Sister Knob have been designated as a Special Management Area. This area protects rare plants associated with the barrens. The Roughhead Shiner and endangered Indiana Bat are also known to occur nearby.

There is a Plan-designated 1280 acres Special Biological Area, and Jerkemtight/Benson Run may contain 6500 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 31,988 acres

**Location:** Augusta, Highland and Bath Counties, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Deerfield, Williamsville, McDowell



## Great North Mountain Cluster

### **Crawford Mountain Archer Knob Walker Mountain**

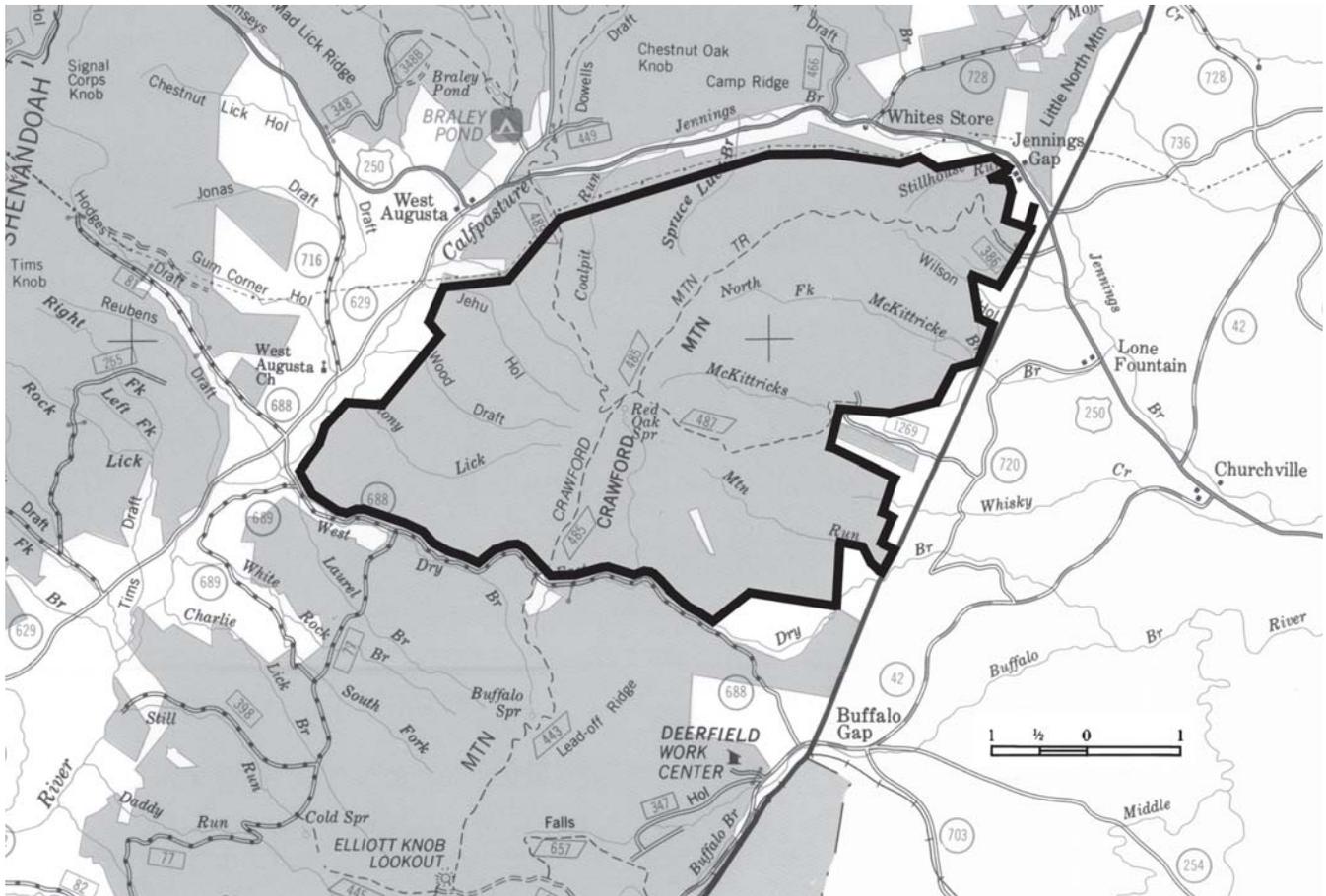
Separated from its sister to the west by the Calpasture River and its Deerfield Valley, the long ridge known as Great North Mountain in Virginia's Augusta County constitutes the southeastern "leg" of greater Shenandoah Mountain. Here are found five Mountain Treasures totaling around 54,000 acres.

Ridges and slopes found here serve as divisions for the Shenandoah and James River watersheds. One of the highest prominences in the Forest, the 4463 feet high Elliot Knob, is situated in the middle of this complex of Treasures.

### **Elliott Knob Sideling Hill**

The popular Great North Mountain Trail traverses the length of the Archer Knob, Elliott Knob, and Crawford Mountain. Numerous Special Biological Areas supporting rare species, such as the Virginia Least Trillium, are scattered about the ridges, crags, creeks, and coves. Crawford Mountain is renowned Black Bear habitat.

Unfortunately, ATV trespass and poaching are an ongoing problem within these areas and in their vicinity. Logging regularly occurs in these areas, particularly at their lower, richer elevations.



## Crawford Mountain

The Crawford Mountain Roadless Area occupies both sides of Crawford Mountain, which is oriented from northeast to southwest. The elevation ranges from approximately 1650 feet to 3728 feet at the summit of Crawford Mountain.

Numerous small hollows and streams create rugged side slopes with deep narrow drainages. One unique characteristic of Crawford Mountain is Red Oak Spring which has its origin near the summit of the mountain. Due to its high elevation, the stream has created many small rock ledges and waterfalls as it descends the mountain.

Public utilization of Crawford Mountain consists of dispersed recreational activities including hunting,

hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, and equestrian trail riding. This use occurs on a trail system that includes the Crawford Mountain Trail, Chimney Hollow Trail, and Crawford Knob Trail. In all, there are approximately 14.5 miles of trail.

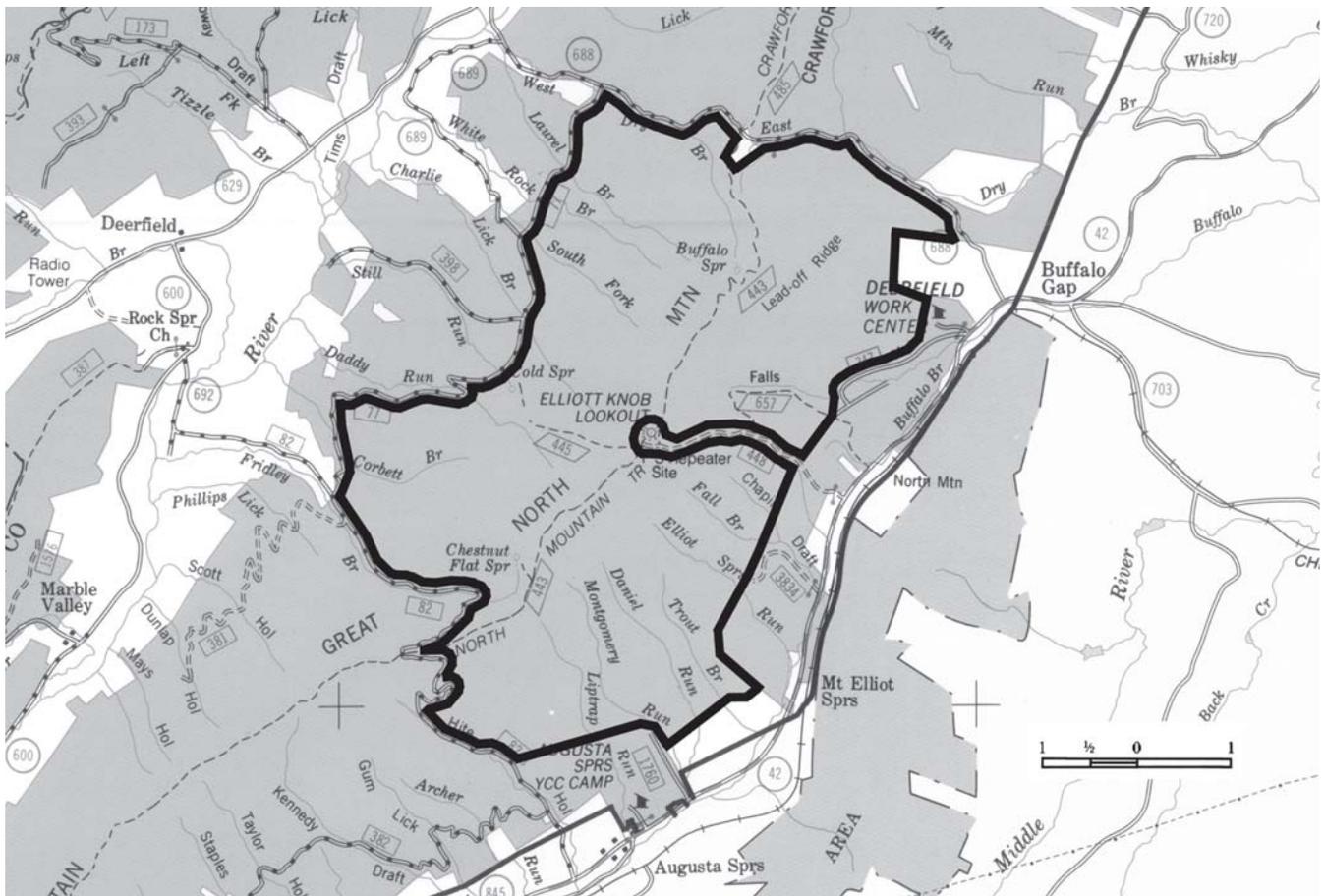
During the Civil War, this area played a brief role in the events leading up to the Battle of McDowell in 1862. Jedediah Hotchkiss rode out on Crawford Mountain to spy on Union forces camped along Jennings Branch.

Crawford Mountain may contain 4276 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 15,000 acres

**Location:** Augusta County, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** West Augusta, Stokesville, Churchville, Elliot Knob



## Elliott Knob

Elliott Knob is the summit of Great North Mountain, the southeastern leg of Shenandoah Mountain. With an elevation of 4463 feet this behemoth rises high above the surrounding countryside. Leadoff Ridge and Hogback are other high features along the crest of Great North Mountain. Slopes near the ridge line are very steep. In some areas the grade exceeds 80 percent.

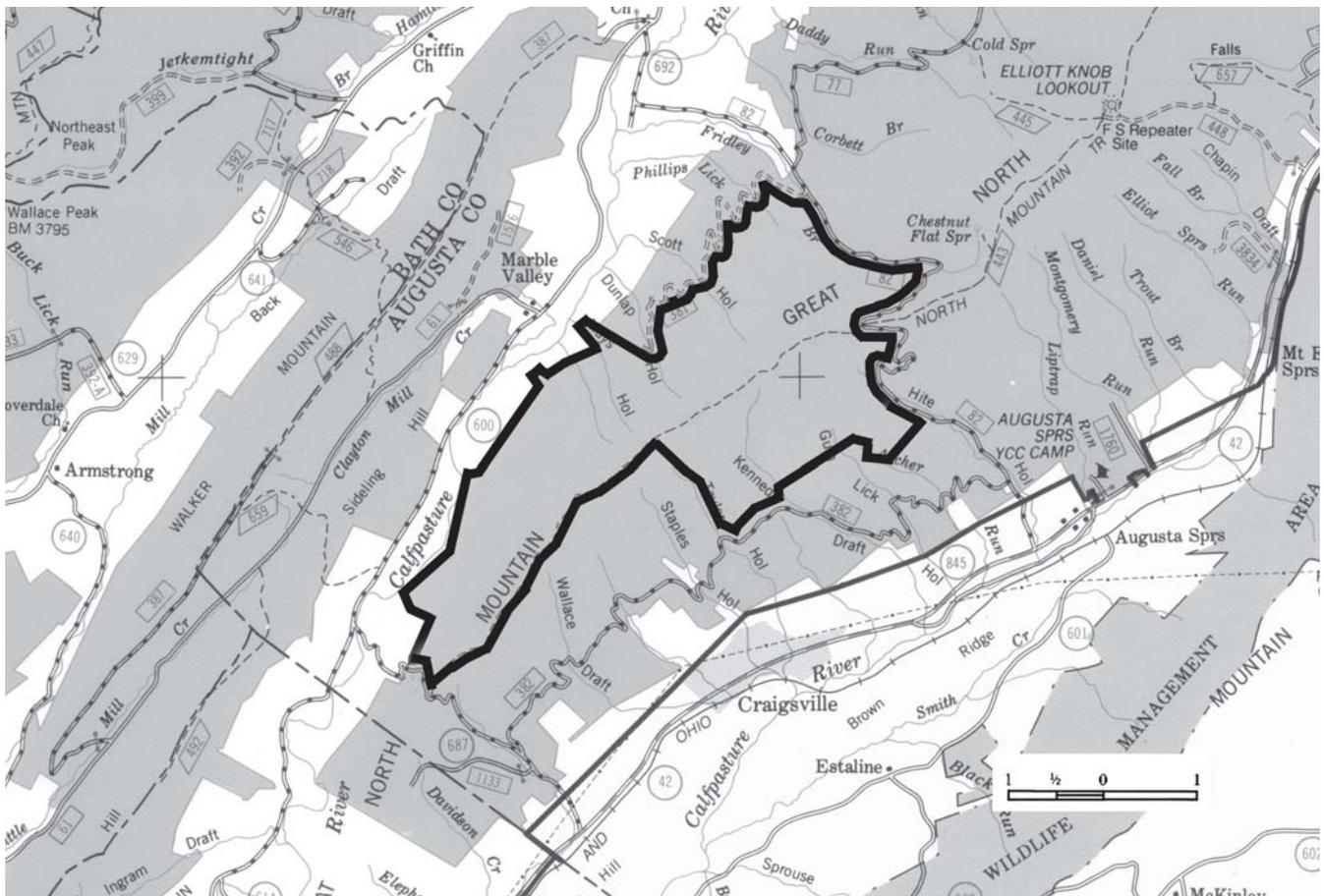
Buffalo Spring and Chestnut Flat Spring are two clear, cool springs that originate high up the ridge. Cold Spring bubbles out of the ground on the western flank of the mountain. These springs and others like them feed streams such as Montgomery Run, Fridley

Branch, and West Dry Branch.

The Virginia Division of Natural Heritage has identified several threatened and endangered plants along the ridgeline of Elliott Knob. Another attractive quality of the area is its Black Bear habitat. The dense understory vegetation and species composition makes it a desirable place for Black Bear.

Elliott Knob has a Forest Plan designated 962 acres Special Biological Area. This area may contain 4407 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 16,657 acres  
**Location:** Augusta County, Virginia in the North River District  
**Topos:** Elliott Knob, Augusta Springs



## Archer Knob

Archer Knob is the southern portion of Great North Mountain, just south of the Elliot Knob Roadless Area. Not as lofty as its neighbor to the north, elevations here range from 2000 to almost 3300 feet. Steep slopes dissected with numerous drainages characterize the eastern and western flanks.

The area includes Kennedy and Wallace Drafts; Phillips Lick; Archer Run; and Gum Lick, Taylor, Staples, Mays, Dunlap, and Scott Hollows. The Scott Hollow Barrens conservation site lies along the crest of the mountain in the northern part of the area. Several tracts of old growth can be found on the upper slopes of the northern part of the area.

Seven miles of the Great North Mountain Trail pass through the heart of Archer. This trail continues on and through the Elliott Knob and Crawford Mountain Treasures to the north, for a total length of about twenty miles.

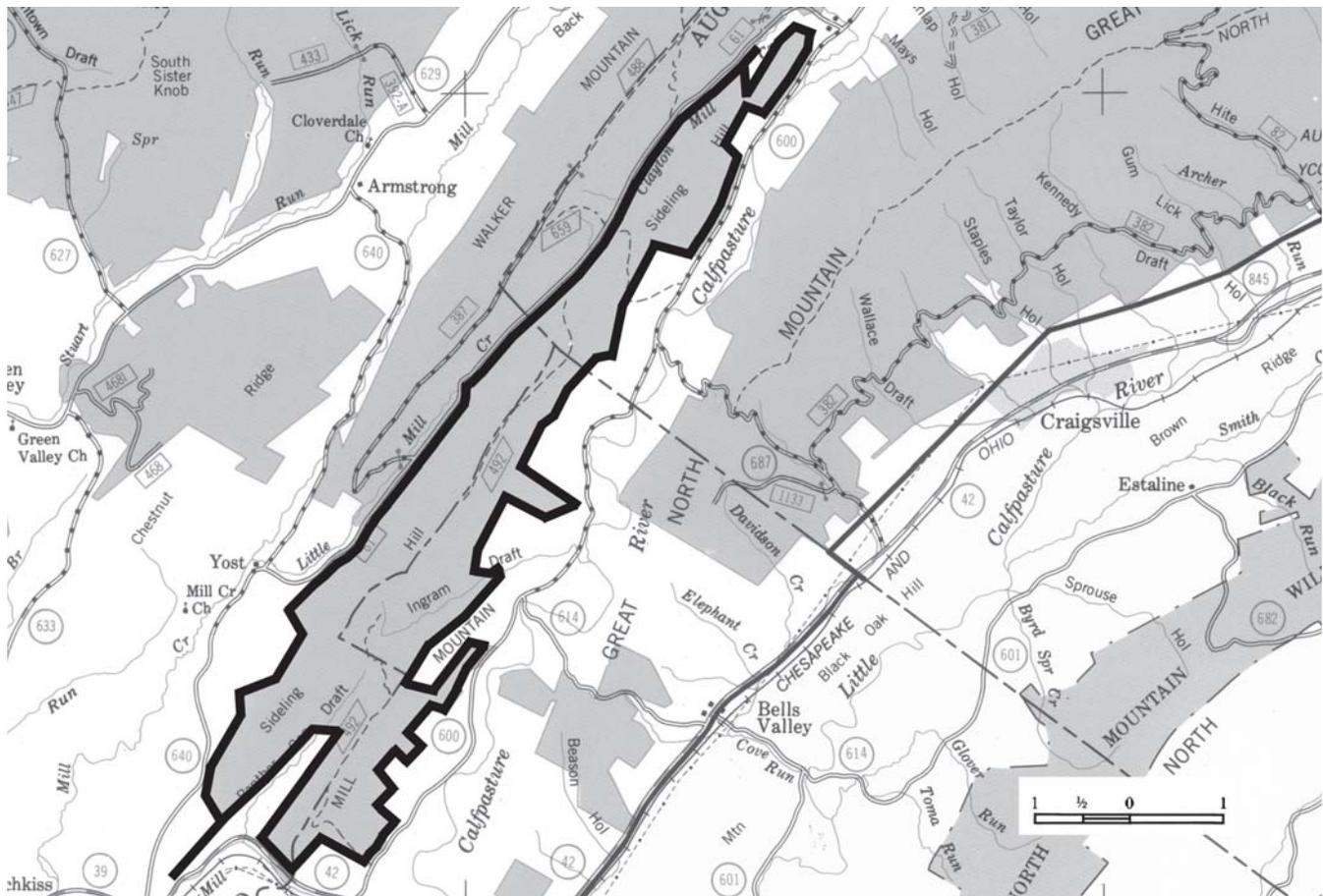
The Forest Service has identified a large area of “semi-primitive” lands here. Nonetheless, much of it is considered suitable for timber harvesting and road construction. The area is also threatened by the construction of ATV motorways.

Archer Knob may contain 1835 acres of potential old growth on Archer Knob.

**Approximate Size:** 7220 acres

**Location:** Augusta County, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Craigsville, Deerfield, Elliot Knob, Augusta Springs



## Sideling Hill

The eastern sister of Walker Mountain, Sideling Hill is a seven mile long ridge that helps bridge the Shenandoah Mountain and Great North Mountain complexes. The southern end forms the dramatic backdrop for US 39 as it wends its way through Panther Gap. This Treasure includes the parallel ridge of Mill Mountain on its southeast flank, as well as headwaters of Panther Gap Draft, Ingram Draft, and Clayton Mill Creek.

Striking cliffs figure prominently in the center portion of the area with perhaps a couple of hundred acres of old growth scattered throughout the area..

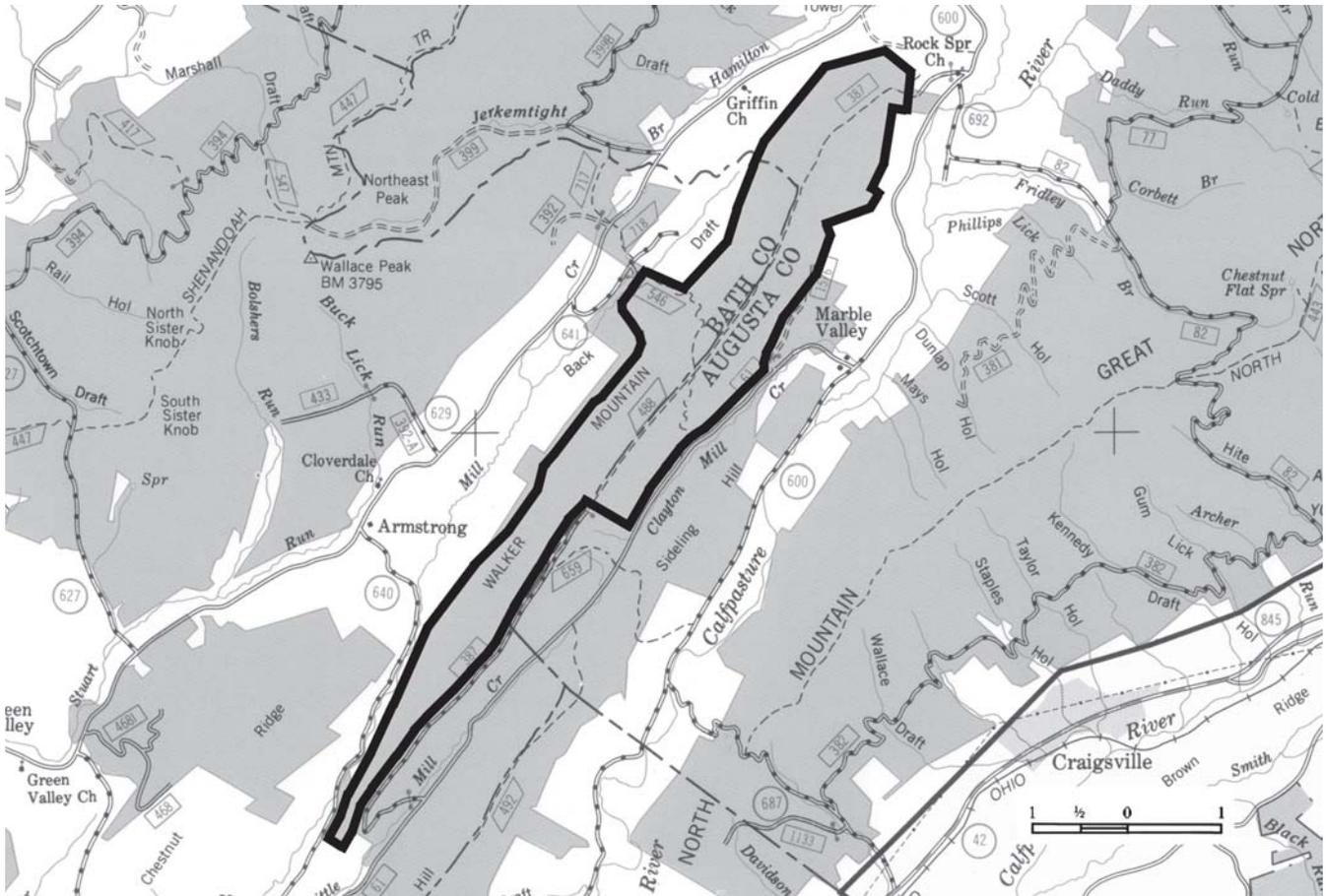
The Mill Mountain Trail travels eight miles up Mill Mountain to Ingram Draft before crossing over to run along the crest of Sideling Hill to FDR 61. Midway along this trail, large rock outcroppings offer visitors stunning views of Great and Little North Mountains, the Marble Valley of the Calfpasture River, the hamlet of Goshen, and the Maury River Gap through the mountains to the southeast. The Sam Judd Ramsey Trail traverses the northern part of Sideling Hill.

There are 853 acres of potential old growth located throughout Sideling Hill.

**Approximate Size:** 7155 acres

**Location:** Augusta, Bath, and Rockbridge Counties, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Craigs ville, Green Valley



## Walker Mountain

The long forested ridge of Walker Mountain serves as a connector between the Shenandoah Mountain and Great North Mountain to the east. Here can be found cliffs and crags, coves and creeks, Black Bears, and Timber Rattlers.

FDR 61, paralleling Clayton Mill Creek for much of the way, provides motorized access along the southern boundary of the area. The western slope of Walker Mountain is steep and rugged. Due to the rugged nature of this ridge, small pockets of old growth thrive.

Six miles of Trail #488 follow the main ridge crest. The Back Draft Trail crosses the center of the area for three miles, connecting FDRs 61 and 384. The Sam Judd Ramsey Trail in the southern portion connects FDR 387 to FDR 61 and Sideling Hill, the adjacent Mountain Treasure.

Walker Mountain may contain 459 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 5596 acres

**Location:** Augusta and Bath Counties, Virginia in the North River District

**Topos:** Deerfield, Craigsville, Green Valley, Williamsville.

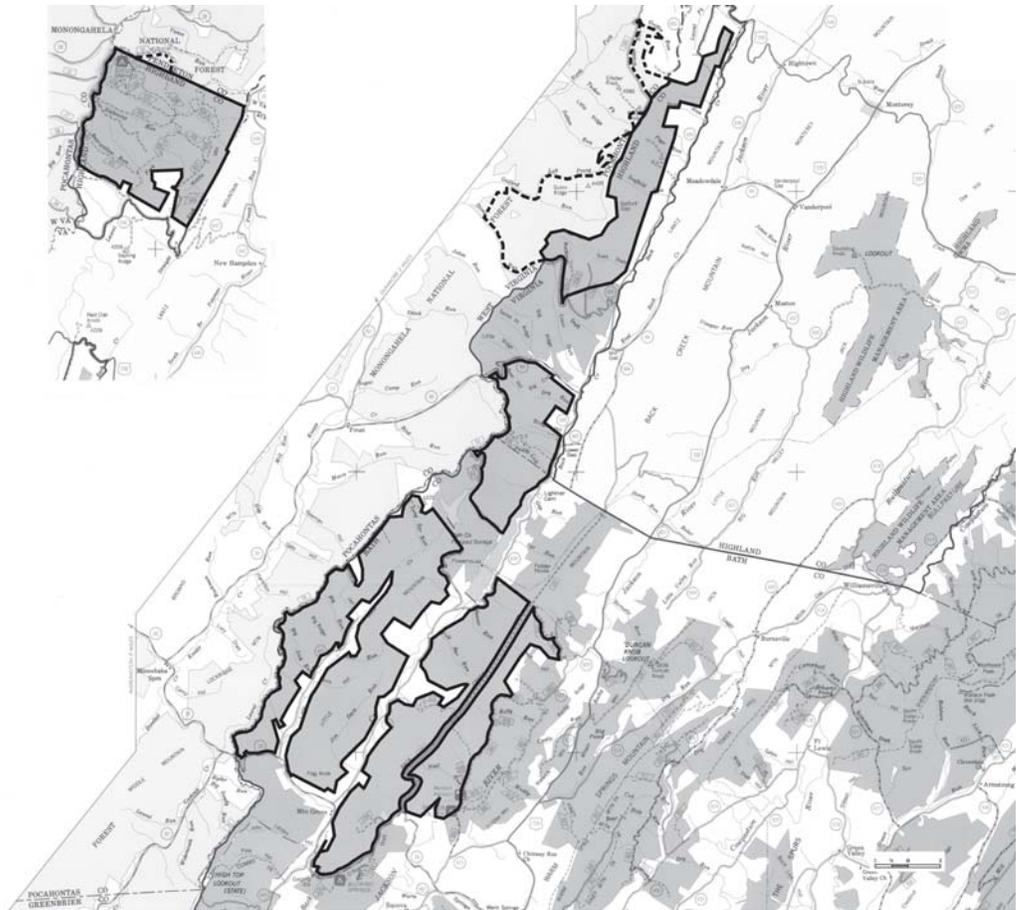


Fly fishing in the Dry River

Photo by Steve Wise

*“Part of the attraction of fly-fishing is getting away from the noise and rush of everyday life. Some of my favorite fishing spots lie in roadless areas, where I can peacefully enjoy nature without the intrusion of motorized vehicles.”*

Steve Wise--



## Allegheny Mountain Cluster

**Laurel Fork  
Big Ridge  
Back Creek Mountain  
Little Allegheny Mountain**

The Allegheny Mountain Cluster lies on the backbone of Virginia. Its components are located in the James River and Warm Springs Districts of the George Washington National Forest. Several areas extend onto the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia.

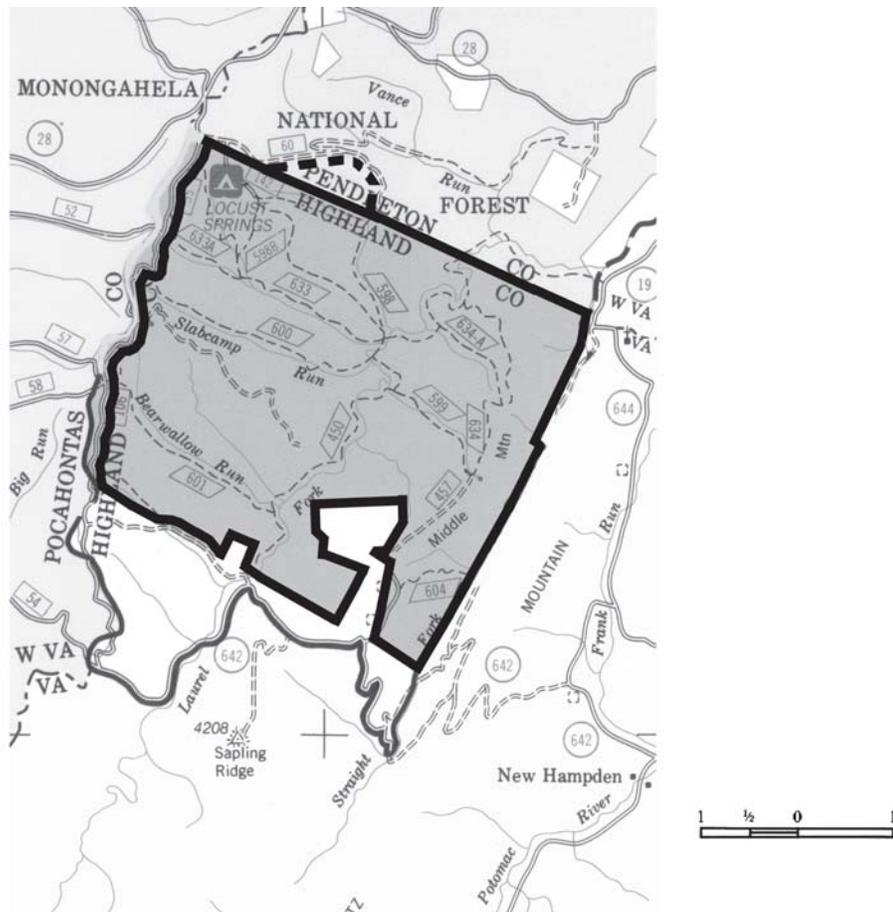
Many of the ridges in this cluster exceed 4000 feet and are deeply incised by numerous small streams. In Virginia these streams feed Back Creek and the Jackson River, in the watershed of the James River. On the western slope of Allegheny Mountain the tributaries descend to Knapp Creek, a tributary of the

**Scaffold Run  
Paddy Lick  
West Back Creek Mountain  
Oliver Mountain**

Greenbrier River. These waters eventually find their way to the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico.

The steep ridges harbor several Special Biological Areas. They also provide shelter to many small pockets of old growth stands. The forests here contain more northern hardwood and mixed mesophytic communities than are generally found elsewhere on the Forest.

Recreational opportunities are limited due to the rugged and steep terrain. The exception to this is provided by Laurel Fork. Hunting and fishing are the major recreational activities.



## Laurel Fork

Laurel Fork is unique in the state of Virginia, the result, in part, of its location on a high, stream-dissected plateau of the Allegheny Mountains and the Ridge and Valley. The elevations, ranging from 2700 feet to over 4000 feet, have given rise to a forest of northern hardwoods, montane red spruce, and white pine, quite unlike the Appalachian oak forest that dominates the George Washington National Forest.

Laurel Fork and Straight Fork are the main streams in the area. Laurel Fork and its tributaries support a native brook trout fishery highly prized by fly fisherman.

Beaver ponds and meadows in the headwaters of

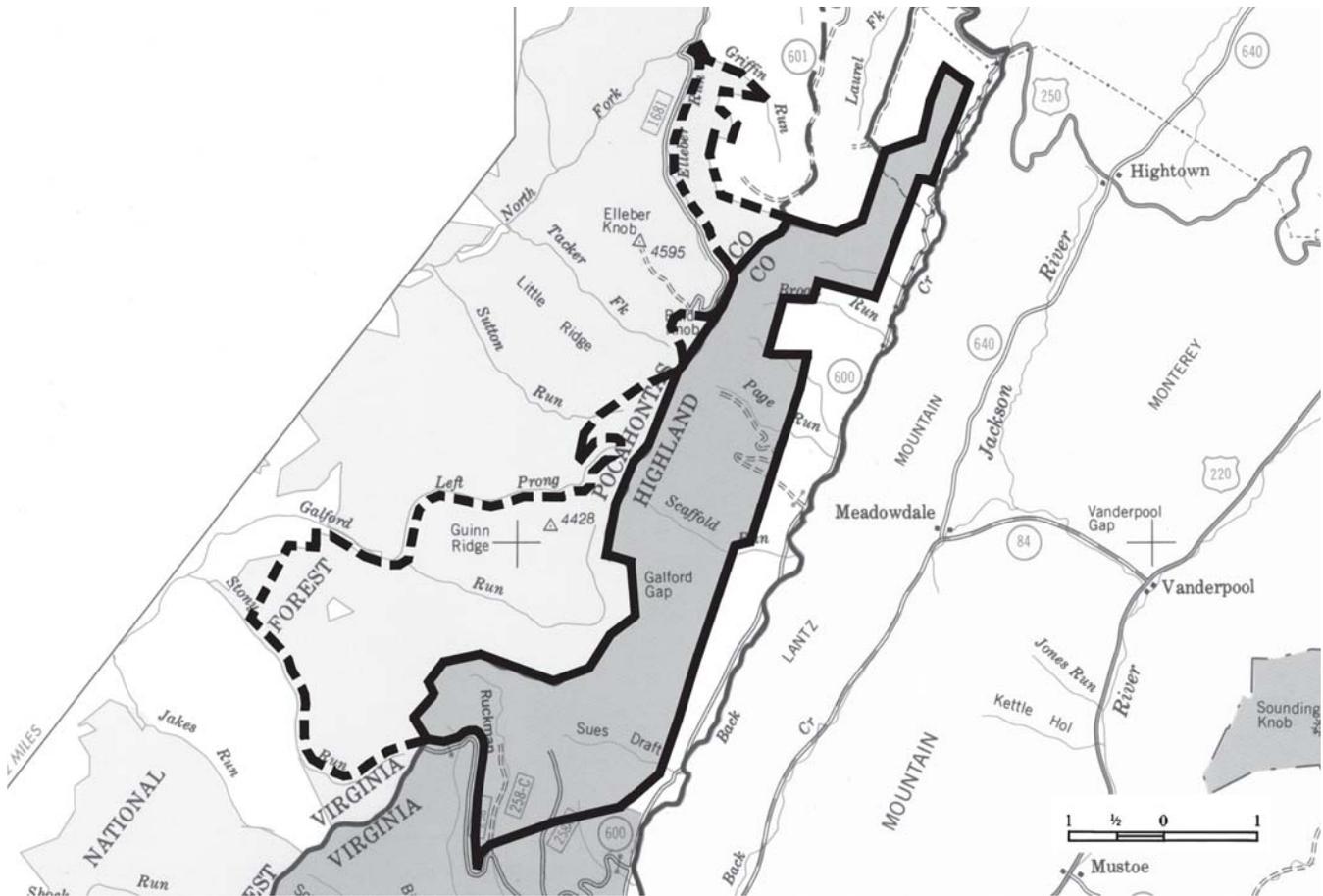
various runs west of Laurel Fork attract many visitors. There are at least 25 species of flora and fauna that are ranked by the Virginia Division of Natural Heritage as rare in Virginia, including the northern flying squirrel, a federally listed endangered species. Disjunct populations of snowshoe hare and fisher have been documented. Two-thirds of Laurel Fork is a Plan-designated Special Biological Area. The area may contain 701 acres of possible old growth.

The existing trail system provides good access into the area and offers excellent opportunities for hiking and backpacking. Due to its remote location this area offers a significant opportunity for solitude.

**Approximate Size:** 10,324 acres

**Location:** Highland County, Virginia in the Warm Springs District

**Topos:** Thornwood, Snowy Mountain



## Scaffold Run

Located along the spine of Allegheny Mountain, Scaffold Run straddles the border of Virginia and West Virginia. Allegheny Mountain is one of Virginia and West Virginia's high mountains with many knobs exceeding 4000 feet. Scaffold Run is no exception, with Guinn Ridge approaching exceeding 4500 feet and Chestnut Ridge exceeding 4250 feet. Indeed Scaffold Run contains the highest elevations on the George Washington National Forest.

The eastern slope of Scaffold Run is rugged and steep with numerous small drainages that feed Back Creek and the Jackson River. The western

slope is more gradual. Galford Run and Stony Run are tributaries of Greenbrier River. These waters ultimately flow to the Gulf of Mexico.

The area contains significant stands of high elevation old growth with Northern Red Oak, Sugar Maple, and Basswood. Scaffold Run may contain 1752 acres of potential old growth. It is also one of the few sites on the George Washington National Forest with Red Spruce

Due to the steep rugged terrain of Scaffold Run, remote recreational opportunities are plentiful. There is no existing trail system.

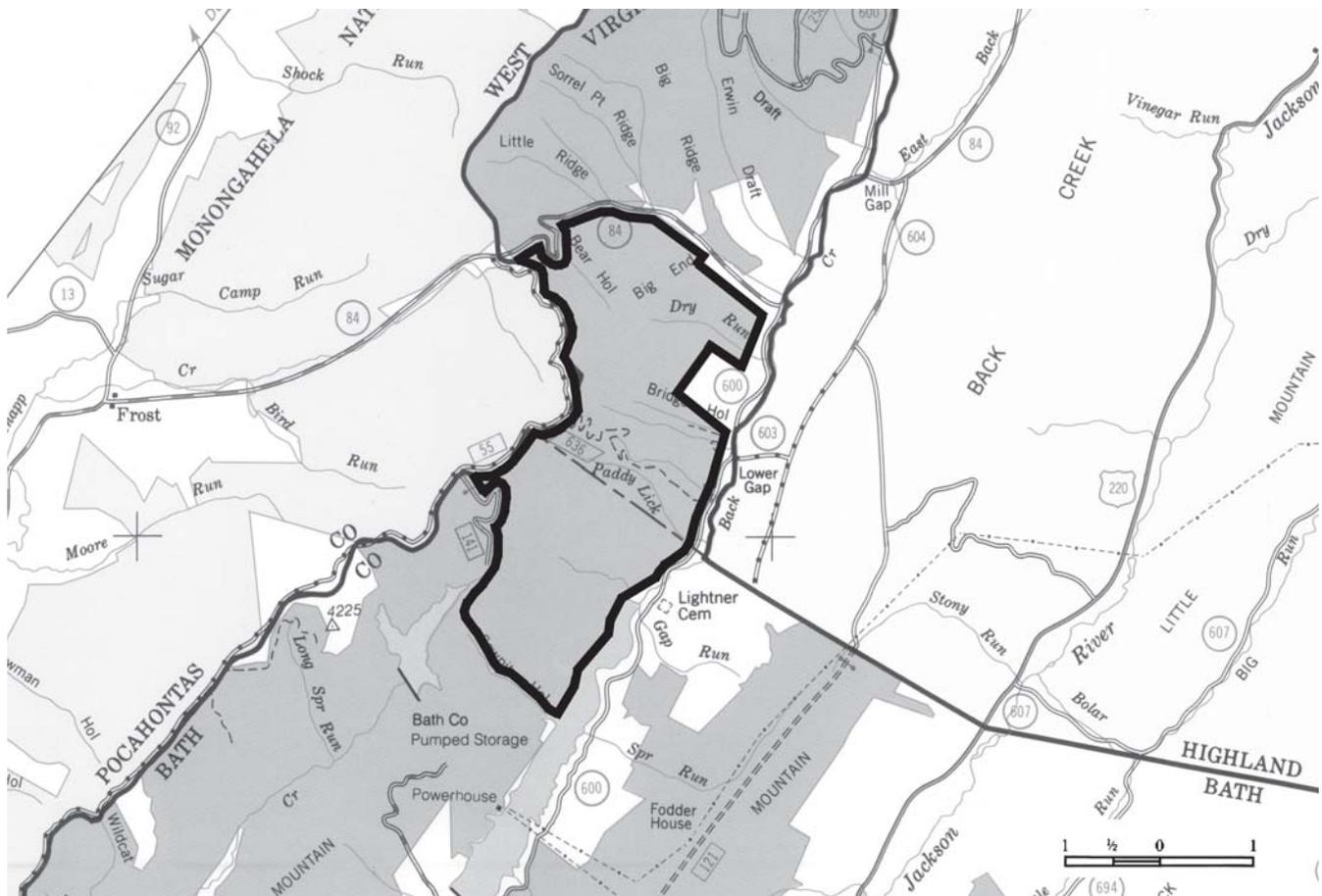
**Approximate Size:** 6,611 acres  
**Location:** Highland County, Virginia  
**Topos:** Green Bank, Paddy Knob, Mustoe, Hightown



A King Snake

Steve Kirchbaum

Some sort of text



## Paddy Lick

Located on the Virginia and West Virginia border, Paddy Lick lays claim to some of the highest elevations in the George Washington National Forest. Located on Allegheny Mountain, Paddy Knob has an elevation of over 4477 feet.

This steep ridge is dissected by many small intermittent and year round streams. Some of these include Paddy Lick, Mud Lick Run, and Dry Run, all of which feed into Back Creek. This small stream provides some of Virginia's finest whitewater paddling, but only after significant rain events.

A 728 acre portion of this area is listed as the Paddy Knob Special Biological Area and is home to species such as Bald Eagle, Mourning Warbler, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Roughhead Shiner, Southern Rock Vole, and Southern Water Shrew.

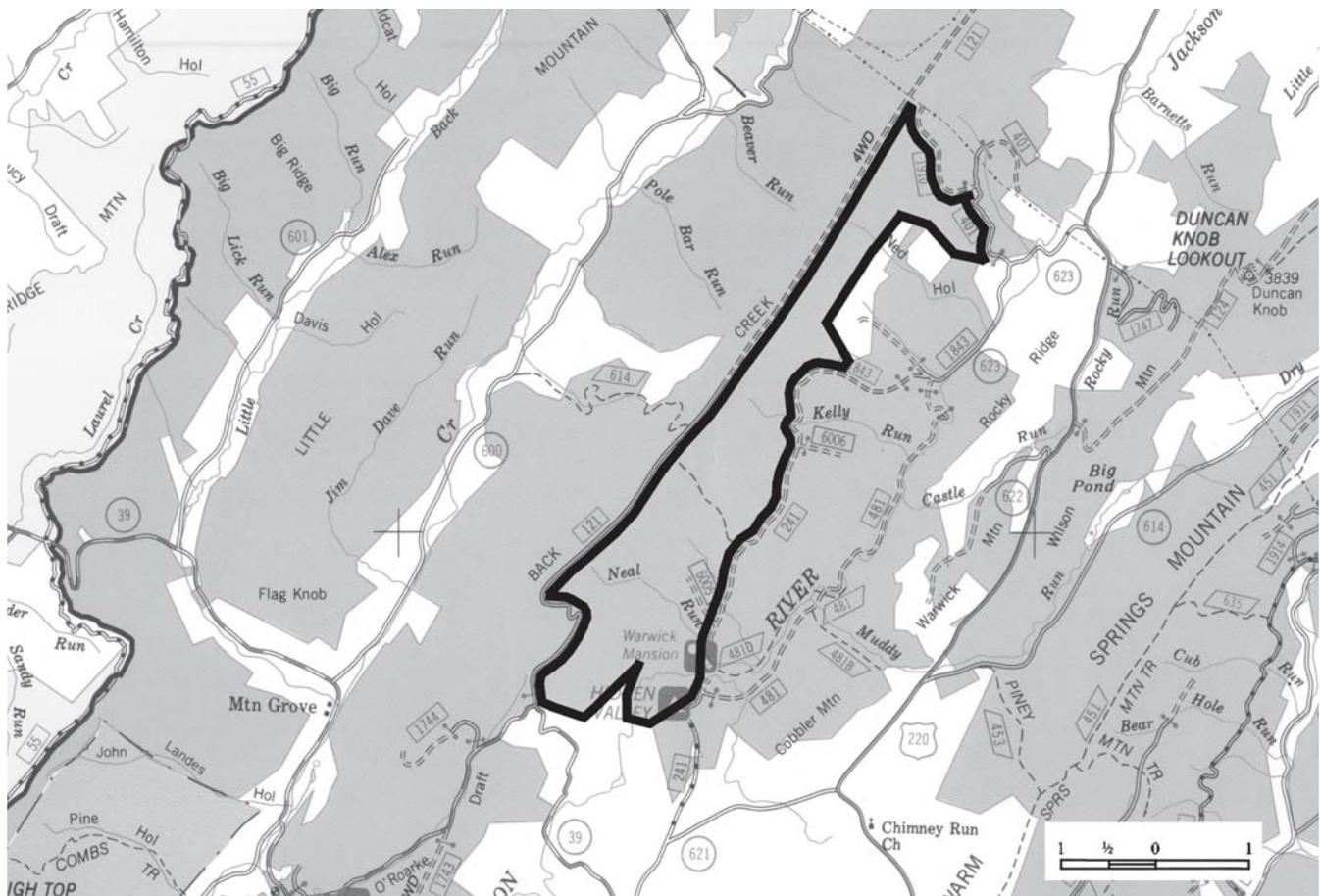
Due to the nature of the terrain of Paddy Lick much of the area is undeveloped. The only existing trail is the Paddy Knob Trail which climbs over 2300 feet from Back Creek to the summit.

Significant stands of old growth have been identified. Paddy Lick may contain 2649 acres of possible old growth..

**Approximate Size:** 5444 acres

**Location:** Bath and Highland Counties, Virginia in the Warm Springs District

**Topos:** Paddy Knob, Sunrise



## Back Creek Mountain

This area lies on the east face of Back Creek Mountain. The ridge is narrow, steep, and rugged. The elevation ranges from approximately 2000 feet near Warwick Mansion in Hidden Valley to over 3700 feet on the crest of the ridge.

The ridge is deeply incised by many small feeder streams, the most notable being Limekiln Run and Neal Run. These two creeks are both tributaries of the Jackson River.

The area is adjacent to and partially includes the 351 acre Star Chapel Special Biological Area and an

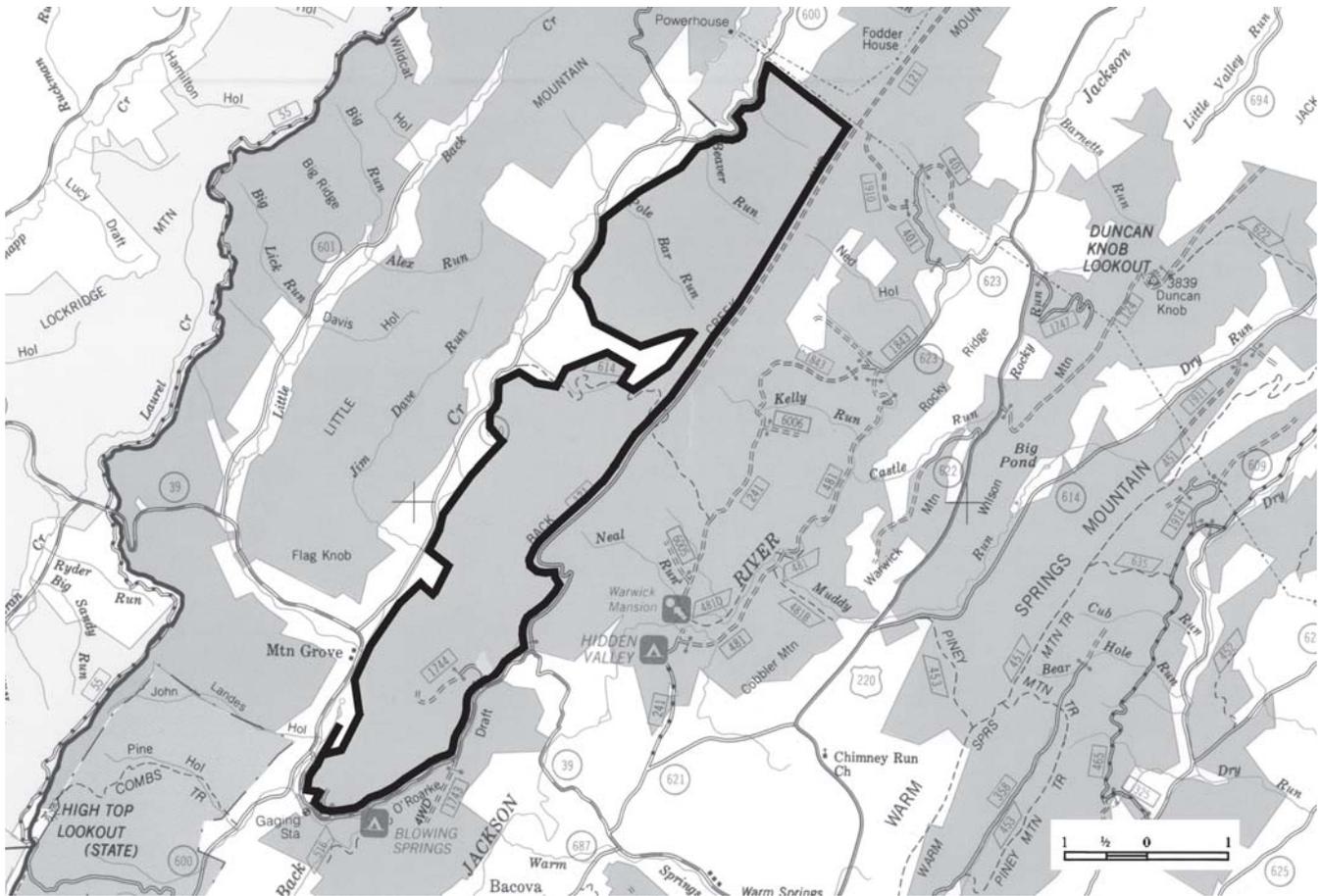
Indiana Bat hibernaculum. The Special Biological Area is located in the northern portion of the roadless area. There is one significant stand of old growth covering over 550 acres.

Back Creek Mountain is adjacent to the Hidden Valley Recreation Area. The Neal Run Trail climbs Back Creek Mountain near the recreation area. The Bogans Run Trail climbs the ridge to the crest and then descends down the west slope of Back Creek Mountain.

**Approximate Size:** 5713 acres

**Location:** Bath County, Virginia in the Warm Spring District

**Topos:** Warm Springs, Sunrise



## West Back Creek Mountain

This area is located on the west slope of Back Creek Mountain, a long narrow ridge that dominates the landscape between Back Creek and the Jackson River. It is separated from the Back Creek Mountain Treasure by FDR 121 along the crest of the ridge.

The elevations of West Back Creek Mountain range from just less than 2000 feet near the lower reservoir of the Back Creek pumped storage facility to almost 3700 feet on the crest of Back Creek Mountain.

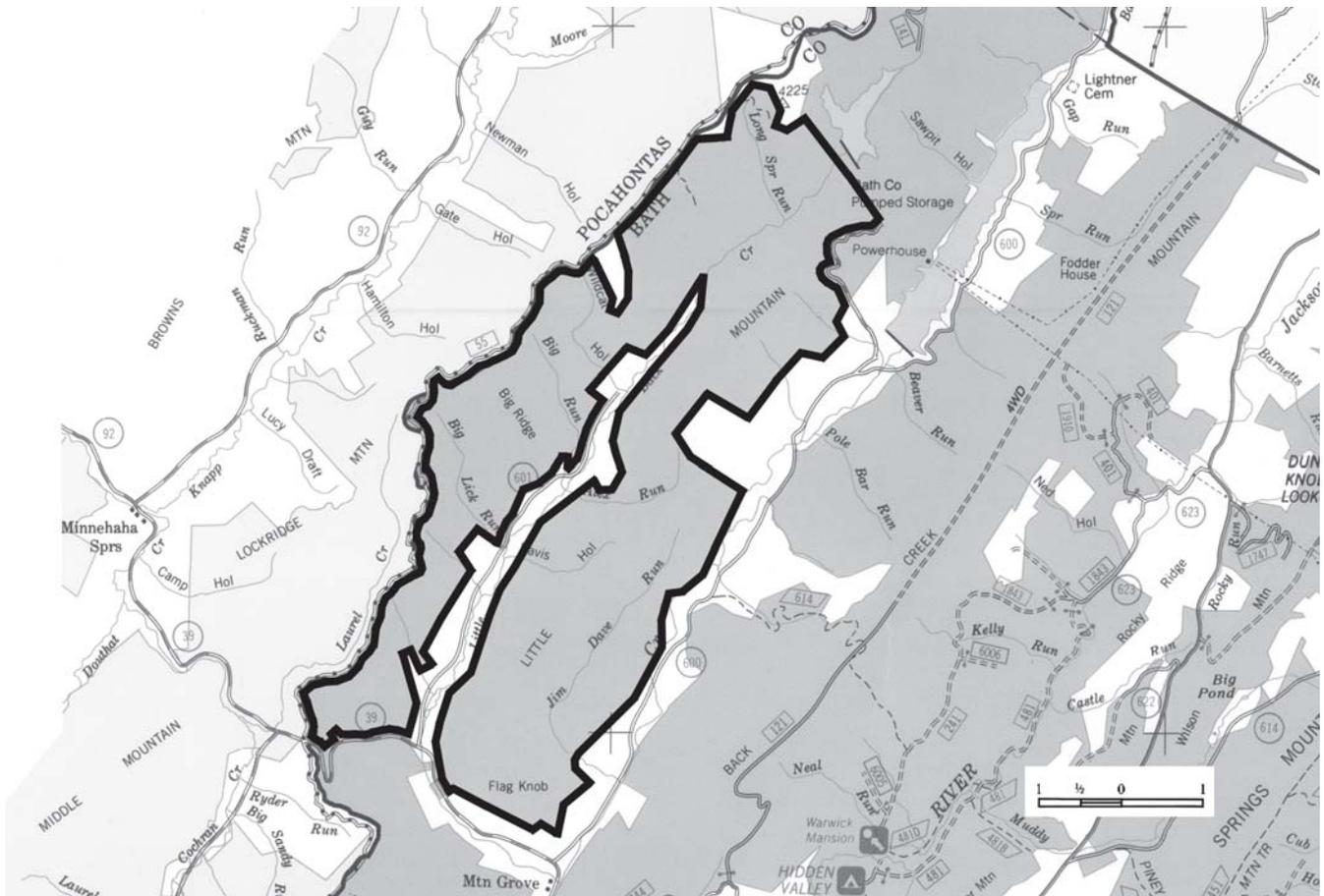
Numerous small streams dissect the steep slopes of this area. Pole Bar Run, Ford Run, and Beaver Run all flow into Back Creek, a major stream in the Jackson River watershed.

There is potential for significant old growth on West Back Creek Mountain. The area may contain 2167 acres of possible old growth..

**Approximate Size:** 7959 acres

**Location:** Bath County, Virginia in the Warm Springs District

**Topos:** Warm Springs, Sunrise



## Little Allegheny Mountain

This large roadless area includes portions of Wildcat Ridge that were excluded from the Forest Service roadless inventory. The slopes of Little Allegheny Mountain contain rock rubble and ledges with bands of solid rock walls running parallel to the slope. On Little Mountain, shaly surface is common, and rock and ledge barriers are rare. In general, the area is steep, rugged, and relatively isolated.

The elevation ranges from 1850 feet near Sapling Woods Hollow to over 4200 feet on Mad Sheep Ridge. Mad Tom Ridge also climbs to over 4000 feet. Both of these ridges are on Big Allegheny Mountain. Elevations on Little Mountain do not rise over 3400 feet.

Jim Dave Run is a small creek that lies in a long valley almost totally within the the confines of the roadless area. Many smaller streams and hollows, including Rattlesnake Hollow and Gill Gum Hollow, drain the steep ridge slopes.

Due to the rugged terrain and topography, an abundance of primitive recreational opportunities occur. There are no maintained trails within the roadless area. Several informal campsites exist along the crest of Big Allegheny Mountain and are utilized during hunting season.

Little Allegheny Mountain may contain 4161 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 15,991 acres

**Location:** Bath County, Virginia in the Warm Springs District

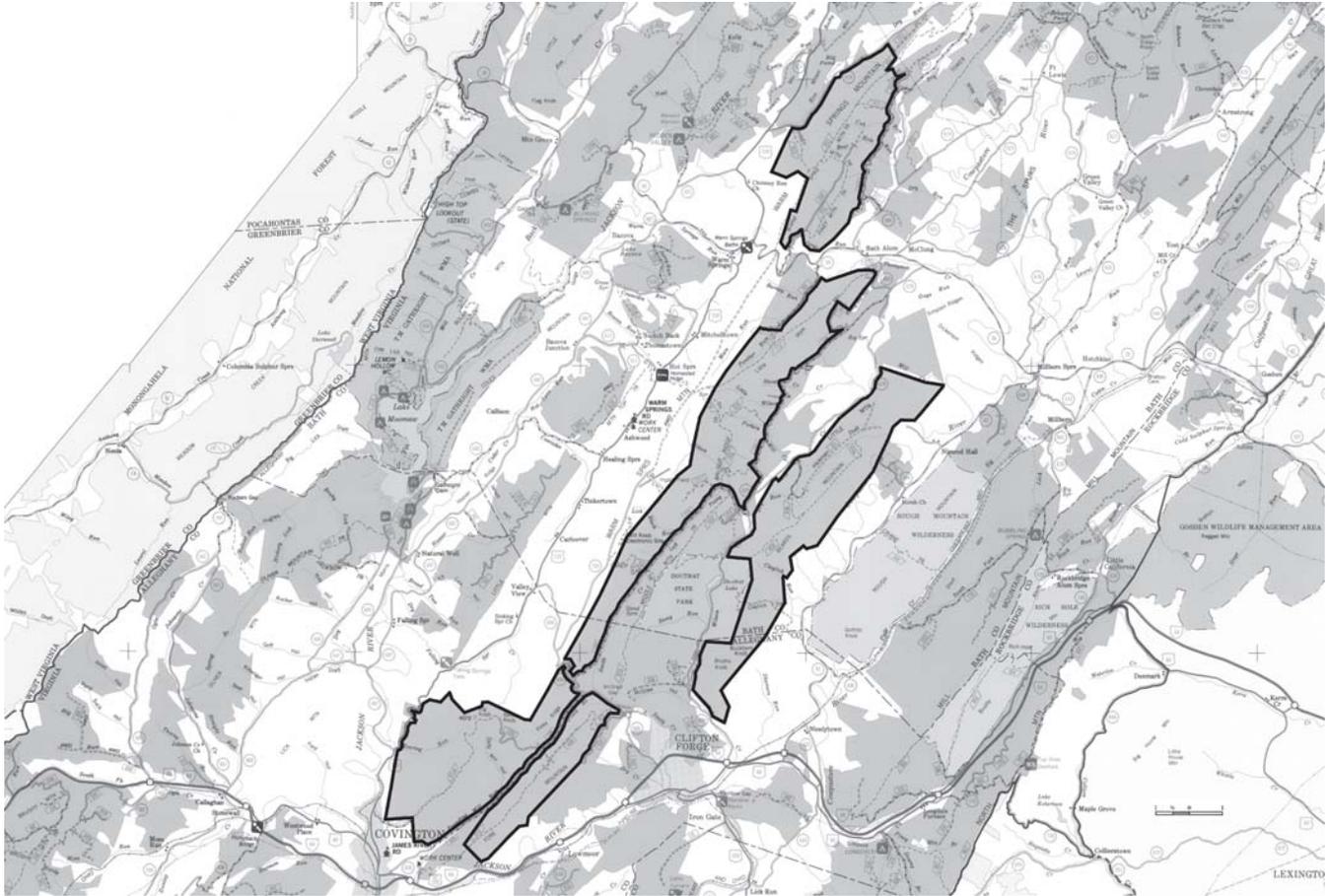
**Topos:** Minnehaha Springs, Mountain Grove, Sunrise



A Wood Turtle in Paddys Knob

Steve Kirchbaum

Some type of text



# Warm Springs Mountain Cluster

## Warm Springs Mountain Beards Mountain Dolly Ann

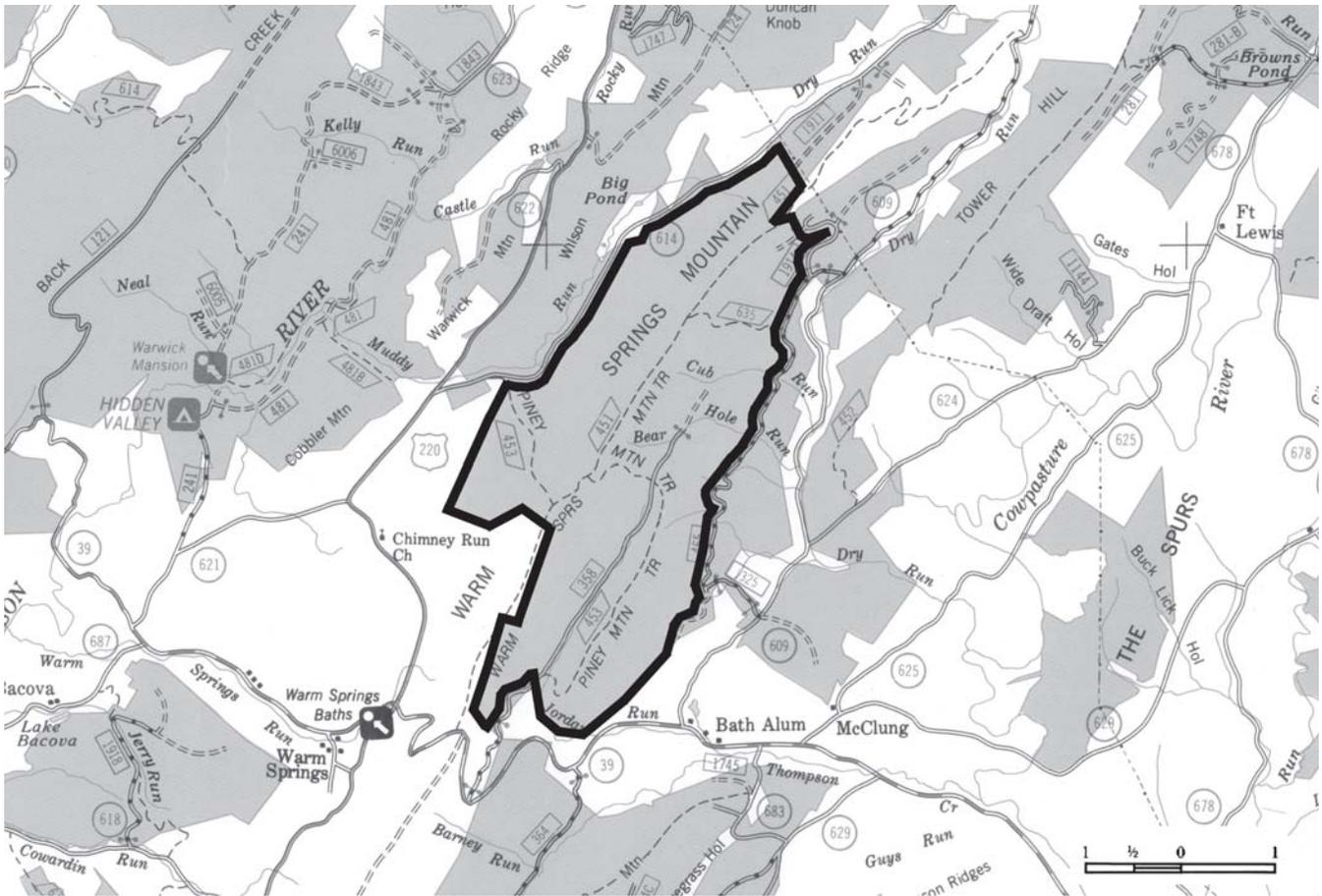
The Warm Springs Mountain Cluster is located in Alleghany and Bath Counties, on Warm Springs Mountain and other ridges in these two counties. These areas are within the Warm Springs and James River Districts

The many small streams that descend from these ridges flow into the Jackson and Cowpasture Rivers. These two merge to form the James River. The James is one of the principle rivers flowing into Chesapeake Bay and provides drinking water for many localities in Virginia.

## Little Mare Mountain Fore Mountain

These areas provide many recreational opportunities. Douthat State Park is nestled between Beards Mountain and Little Mare Mountain. The park serves as the starting point for many recreational trails located throughout this cluster of roadless areas.

The Dolly Ann Roadless Area has a Plan-designated Special Biological Area. The steep ridges provide shelter to many small stands of old growth. However, only Dolly Ann and a portion of Beards Mountain are inventoried roadless areas.



# Warm Springs Mountain

The Warm Springs Mountain Treasure encompasses much of both the eastern and western slopes of Warm Spring Mountain. It is located at the northern terminus of the mountain.

The elevations range from 1800 feet near County Road 609 to almost 3800 feet at the crest of Warm Springs Mountain. Geological features include White Rocks, Bear Rocks, House Rock, and Black Rock.

On the east slope of the mountain, the area protects the upper drainages of both Jordan Run and Bear Hole Run. Both feed into the Cowpasture River. The drier western slope has no major stream. However, Muddy Run Spring is located within the boundary. This spring empties into Muddy Run, a tributary

of the Jackson River.

A significant recreational draw to the area is its trail system. There are over fifteen miles of trails utilized by hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians.

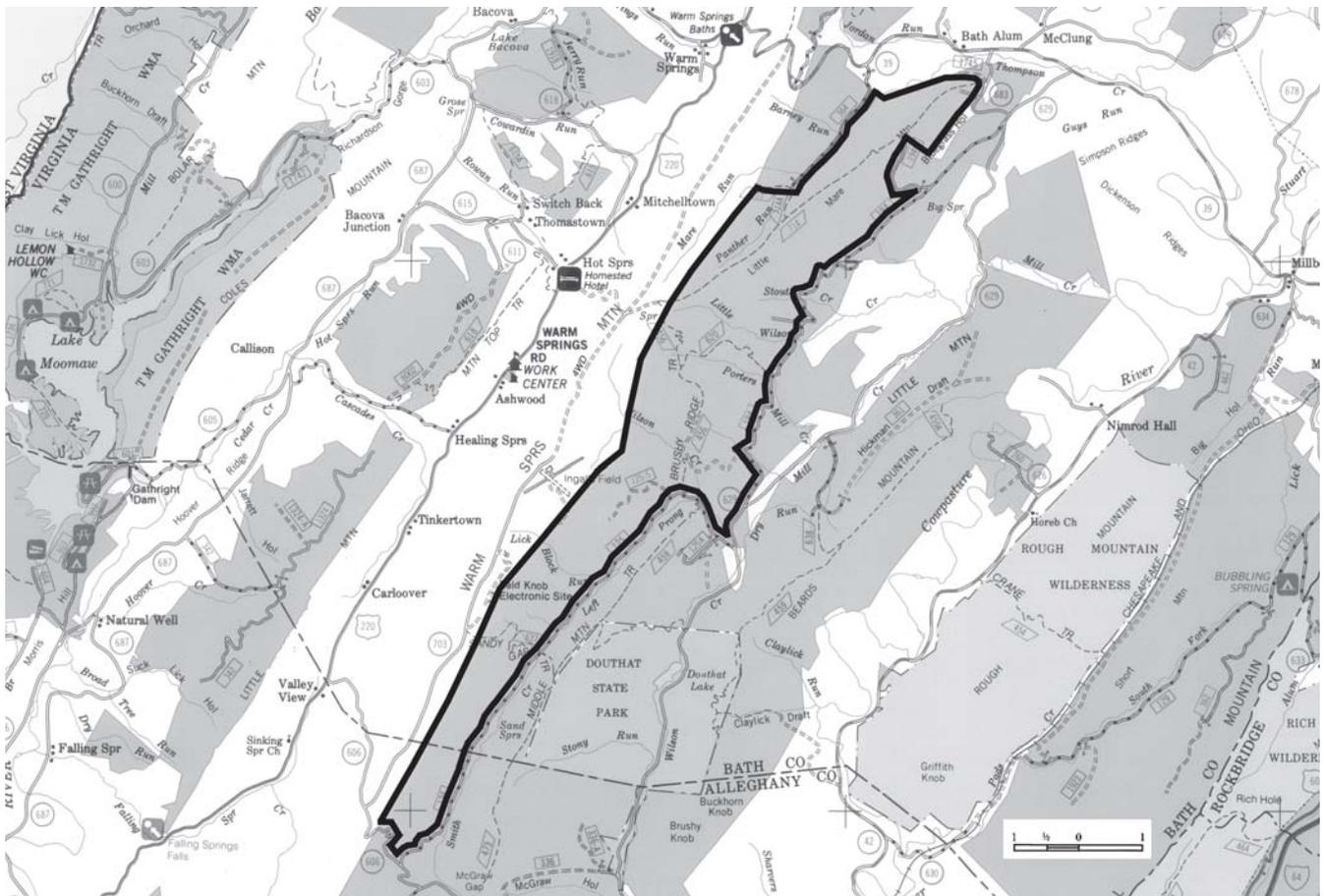
The Forest Service has identified some old growth within the boundaries of Warm Springs Mountain. There are also several species of note in the area including Potomac Sculpin, Roughhead Shiner, Millboro Leatherflower, and the endangered Shale-Barren Rockcrest.

Warm Springs Mountain may contain 1838 acres of possible old growth including a stand of small, stunted Chestnut Oak along the summit of the mountain.

**Approximate Size:** 7832 acres

**Location:** Bath County, Virginia in the Warm Springs District

**Topos:** Bath Alum, Warm Springs



## Little Mare Mountain

Little Mare Mountain encompasses the eastern flank of Warm Springs Mountain, Brushy Ridge, and Little Mare Mountain. Near the summit of Bald Knob on Warm Springs Mountain the elevation reaches almost 4000 feet. Moving toward the northeast, the elevation gradually declines, with Brushy Mountain near 3850 feet and Little Mare Mountain exceeding 3500 feet.

The ridge is deeply incised by numerous small streams. The streams in the southwestern portion of this area feed into Smith Creek, a part of the drainage system for the Clifton Forge Reservoir and the Jackson river. The northeastern section includes the upper

drainage of Wilson Creek, a tributary of the Cowpasture River.

There are many trails along Little Mare Mountain, including the Little Mare Mountain Trail and the Brushy Ridge Trail. In all there are over seventeen miles of trails. Some of these tie into the trail system that has been established at Douthat State Park

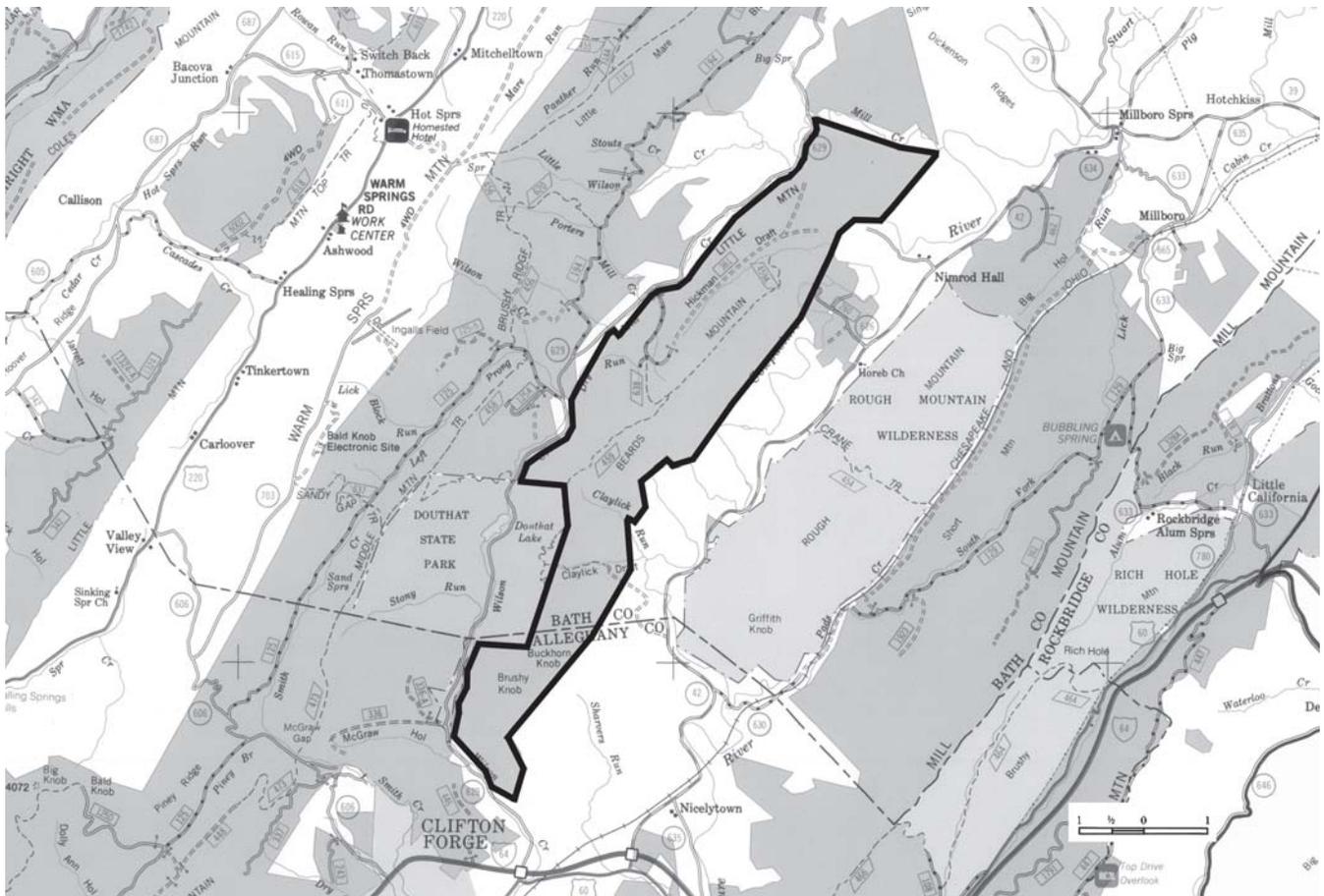
In addition, Little Mare Mountain provides the scenic backdrop for visitors to Hot Springs as well as motorists on US 39. The western edge of the ridge borders a very large Nature Conservancy reserve.

Little Mare Mountain may contain 2784 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 12,587 acres

**Location:** Alleghany County, Virginia in the Warm Springs and James River Districts

**Topos:** Healing Springs, Clifton Forge, Warm Springs, Bath Alum



## Beards Mountain

Beards Mountain provides a scenic backdrop for the eastern portion of Douthat State Park. Many of the peaks along the boundary exceed 2600 feet. The eastern portion lies in the Cowpasture River Valley and on the west by Mill Creek.

The Beards Mountain Roadless Area climbs in elevation from north to south from approximately 1200 feet near the Cowpasture River to almost 2850 feet on Gilliam Knob.

Both the eastern and western flanks of the ridge are dissected by many small streams. These include Gilliam Run, Dry Lick Hollow and Polecat Hollow. These small feeder streams flow to either the Jackson River or the Cowpasture River. On the east flank

Claylick Draft, Claylick Run, and Salt Hollow are tributaries of Cowpasture River. This is one of the few roadless areas on the Forest that can be directly accessed by canoeists.

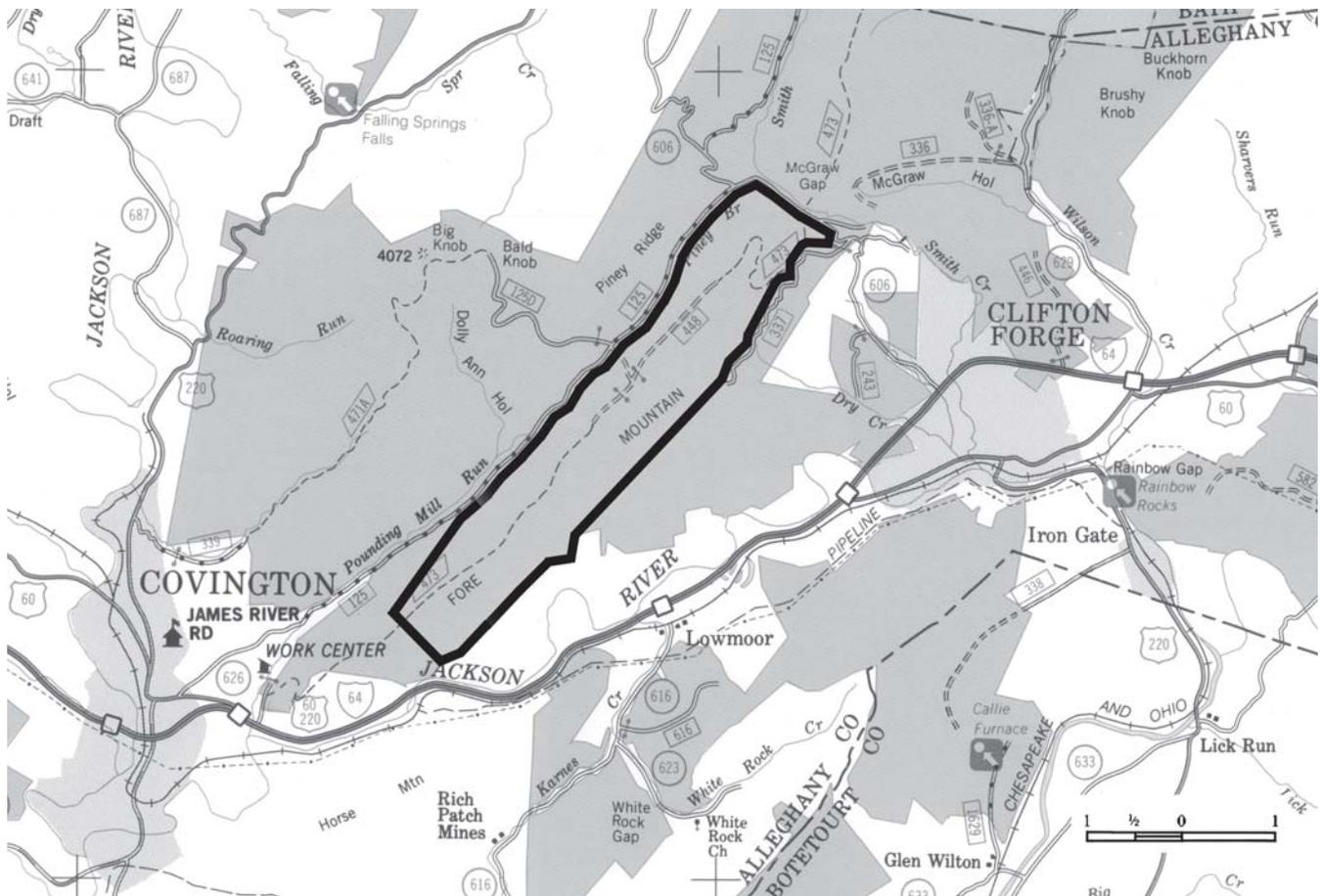
Hiking is the primary recreational activity of Beards Mountain. The Beards Mountain Trail climbs from the Cowpasture River to the Crest of Beards Mountain and travels south to Douthat State Park. In addition, several short side trails lead down to Wilson Creek.

There are a 743 acre Special Biological Area and 2921 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 11,721 acres

**Location:** Alleghany County and Bath Counties in the James River and Warm Spring Districts

**Topos:** Clifton Forge, Healing Springs, Nimrod Hall



## Fore Mountain

Fore Mountain is a long ridge extending from Covington, Virginia almost to Douhat State Park. This area contains both the eastern and western flanks of the mountain. It is a low lying ridge with a summit elevation of just under 3000 feet.

Both the eastern and western slopes are highly dissected ridges with many intermittent streams. The northwestern portion of Fore Mountain drains into Piney Branch which is a part of the water supply for the Clifton Forge Reservoir.

The Fore Mountain Trail is the only trail through the area. It extends from Covington to County Road 606. It is utilized primarily by equestrians.

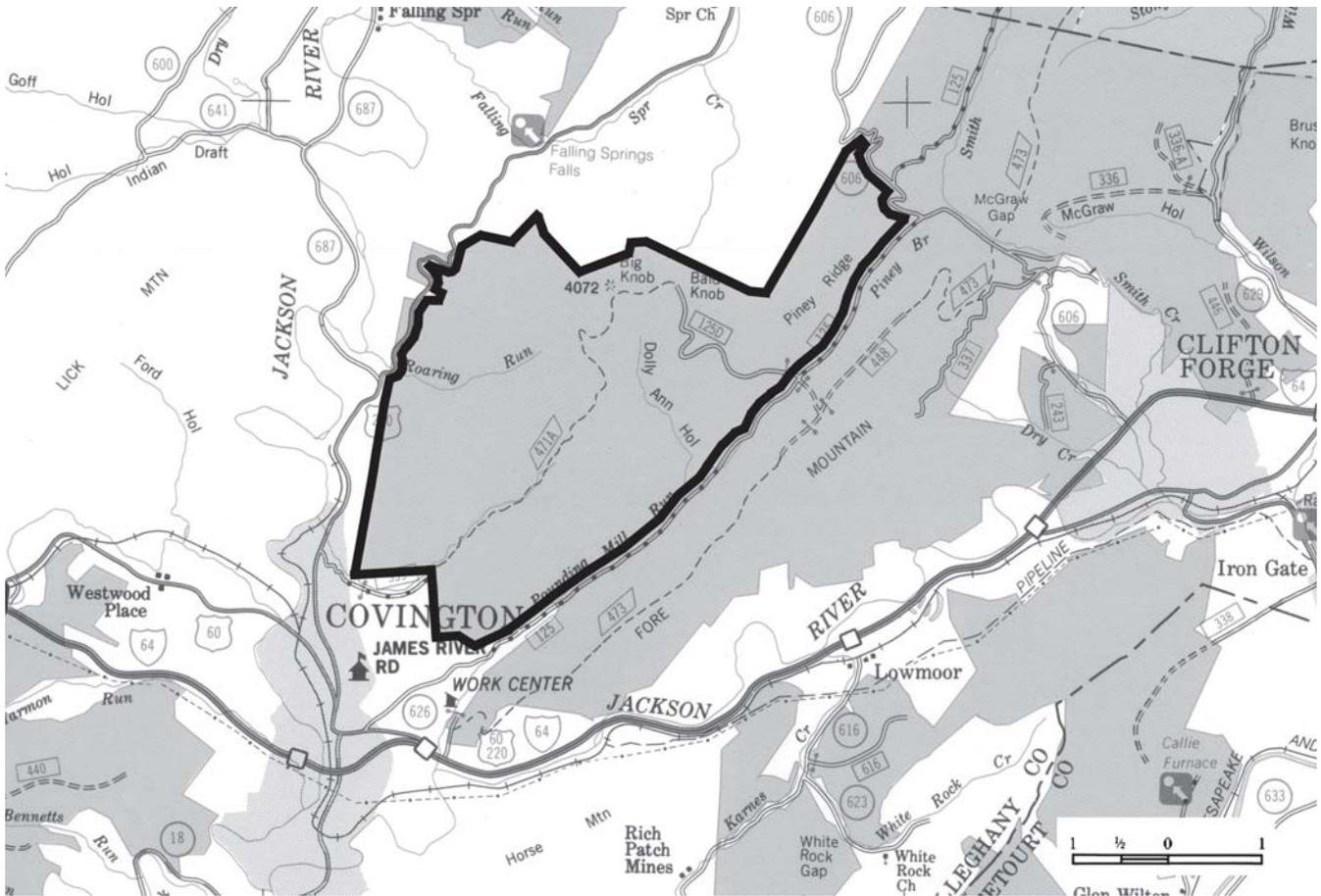
Fore Mountain provides spectacular scenery for motorists on I-64. Much of the area is currently open to logging and roadbuilding

This area may contain 1795 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 4590 acres

**Location:** Alleghany County, Virginia in the James River District

**Topos:** Covington, Clifton Forge



## Dolly Ann

Dolly Ann contains the highest point in Alleghany County. Elevations range from approximately 1480 feet near Covington to 4072 feet at Big Knob. There is a cliff near the top of the mountain on the west side that provides a wonderful view of Warm Springs Mountain and Falling Springs Valley.

On the summit of Big Knob there is a flat that presents an open, park-like atmosphere with herbaceous ground vegetation. It also contains large old White Oak and a plant species that is considered globally rare.

Dolly Ann Hollow was managed as a primitive area prior to 1986. This rugged area is characterized by large boulders, rock ledges, and several small waterfalls. In Dolly Ann Hollow the stream contains native Brook Trout. The area around Dry Run is a 2075 acre Plan-designated Special Biological Area.

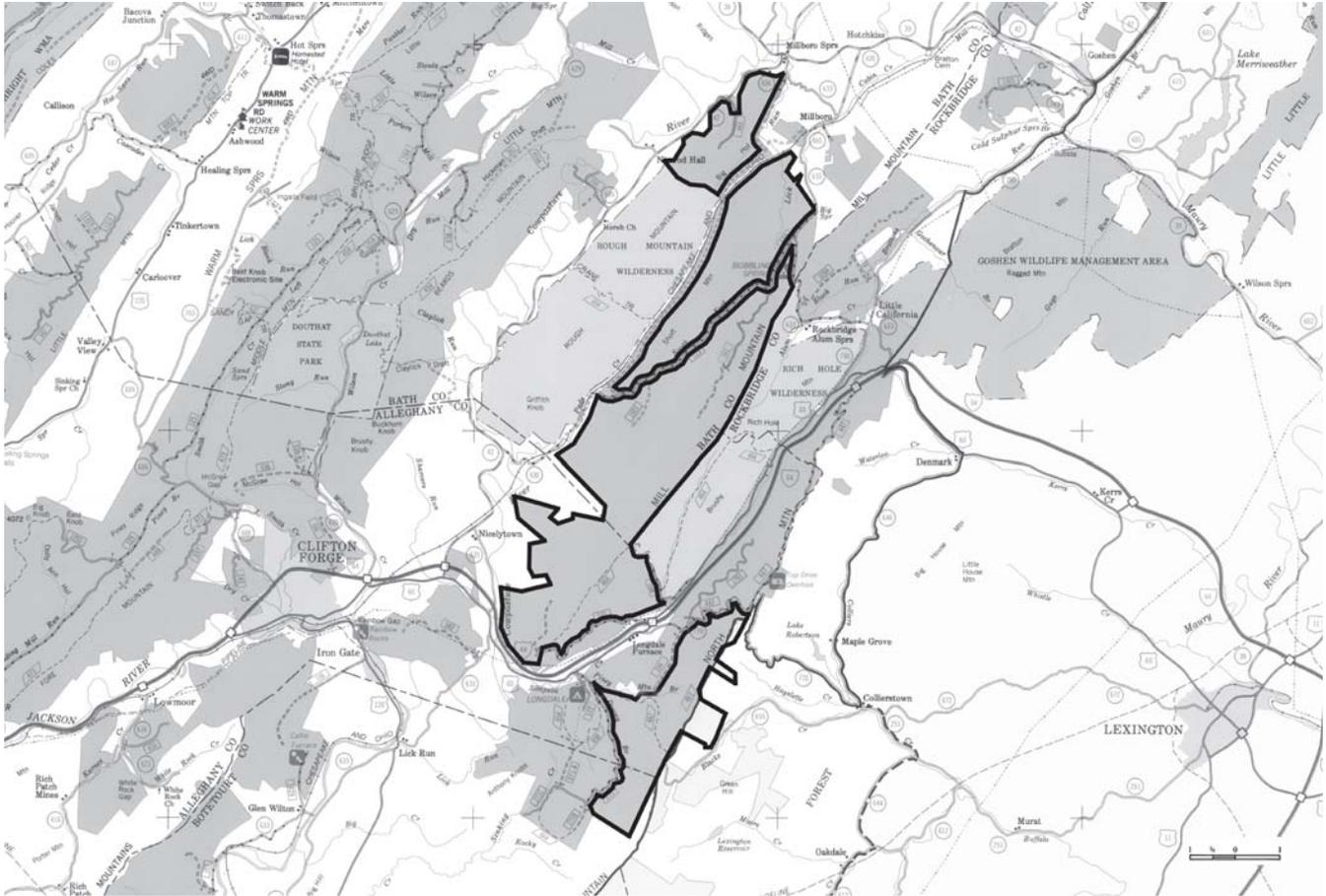
There is one trail through Dolly Ann. The Dry Run Trail climbs to the summit of Warm Springs Mountain.

This area may contain 2735 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 9613 acres

**Location:** Alleghany County, Virginia in the James River District

**Topos:** Covington



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# Rich Hole/Rough Mountain Wilderness Cluster

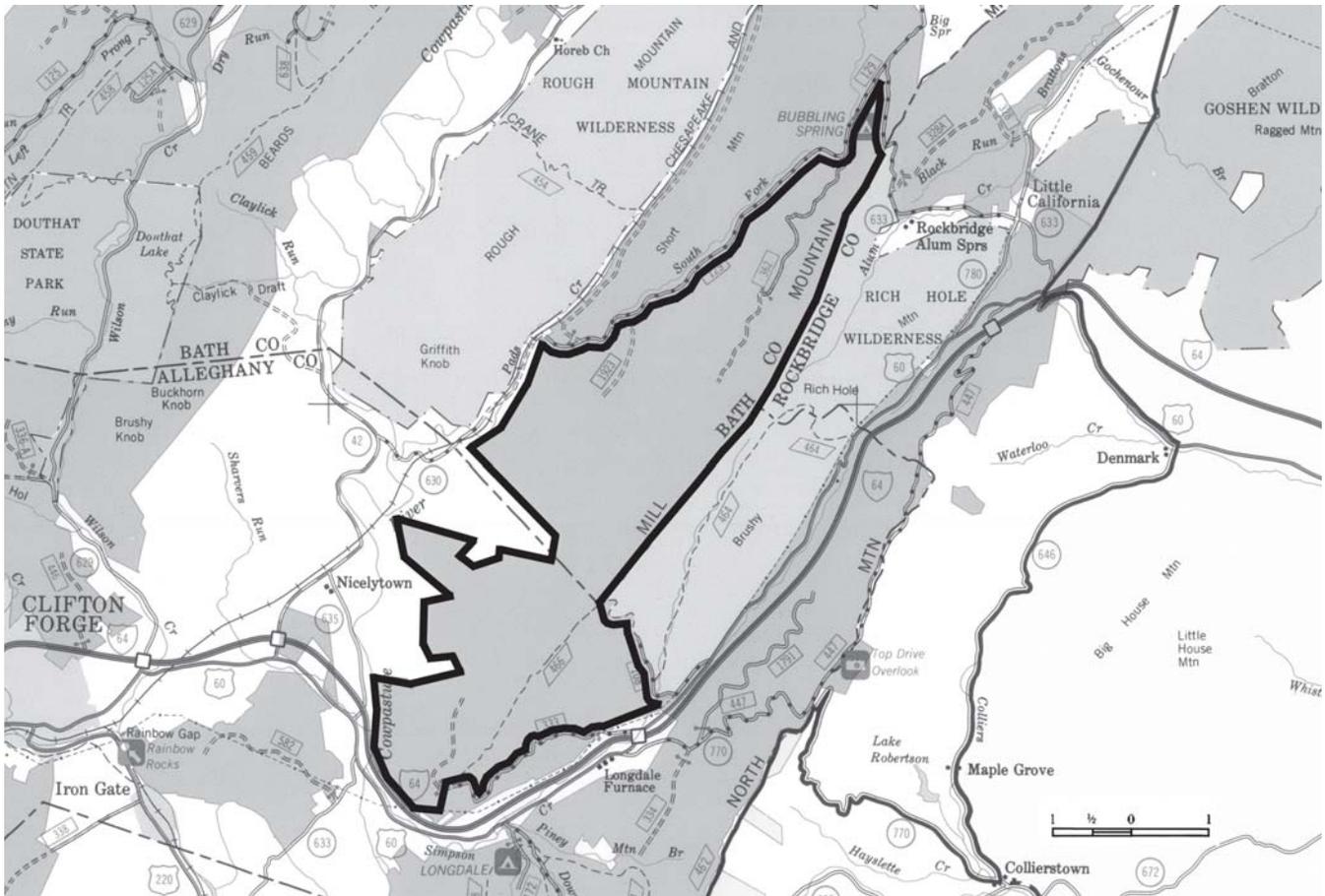
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## **Rich Hole Wilderness Addition Rough Mountain Wilderness Addition Bearwall Mountain**

This cluster is unusual for the George Washington National Forest because there is designated Wilderness. The Rich Hole and Rough Mountain Wilderness areas form the core of this cluster. Combined, these two Wilderness areas total almost 16,000 acres.

## **Short Mountain Longdale**

The Rich Hole Wilderness Addition is an inventoried roadless area and if designated Wilderness would more than double the current Rich Hole Wilderness. The smaller Rough Mountain addition would push the size of this Wilderness to over 10,000 acres.



## Rich Hole Wilderness Addition

Mill Mountain contains mountain ridges with parallel drainages in a contorted arrangement, with spur ridges and associated small drainages falling from the major ridge. Elevations range from about 1200 feet near the Cowpasture River to over 3300 feet on the top of Mill Mountain. Slopes vary from moderate to very steep and are dissected by numerous small and moderately sized streams.

Due to its location adjacent to the Rich Hole Wilderness, Wilderness designation of this roadless area would create a Wilderness of over 17,000 acres. This would be larger than any present Wilderness on the George Washington National Forest.

Due to its rugged nature of the area, there is only one, little used trail in the area. The White Rocks Tower Trail parallels the Rich Hole Wilderness boundary to the crest of Mill Mountain and then follows the ridge to FDR 333. Hunting is the primary recreational activity of the area. Mill Mountain's rugged terrain and remote location help to foster a healthy bear population.

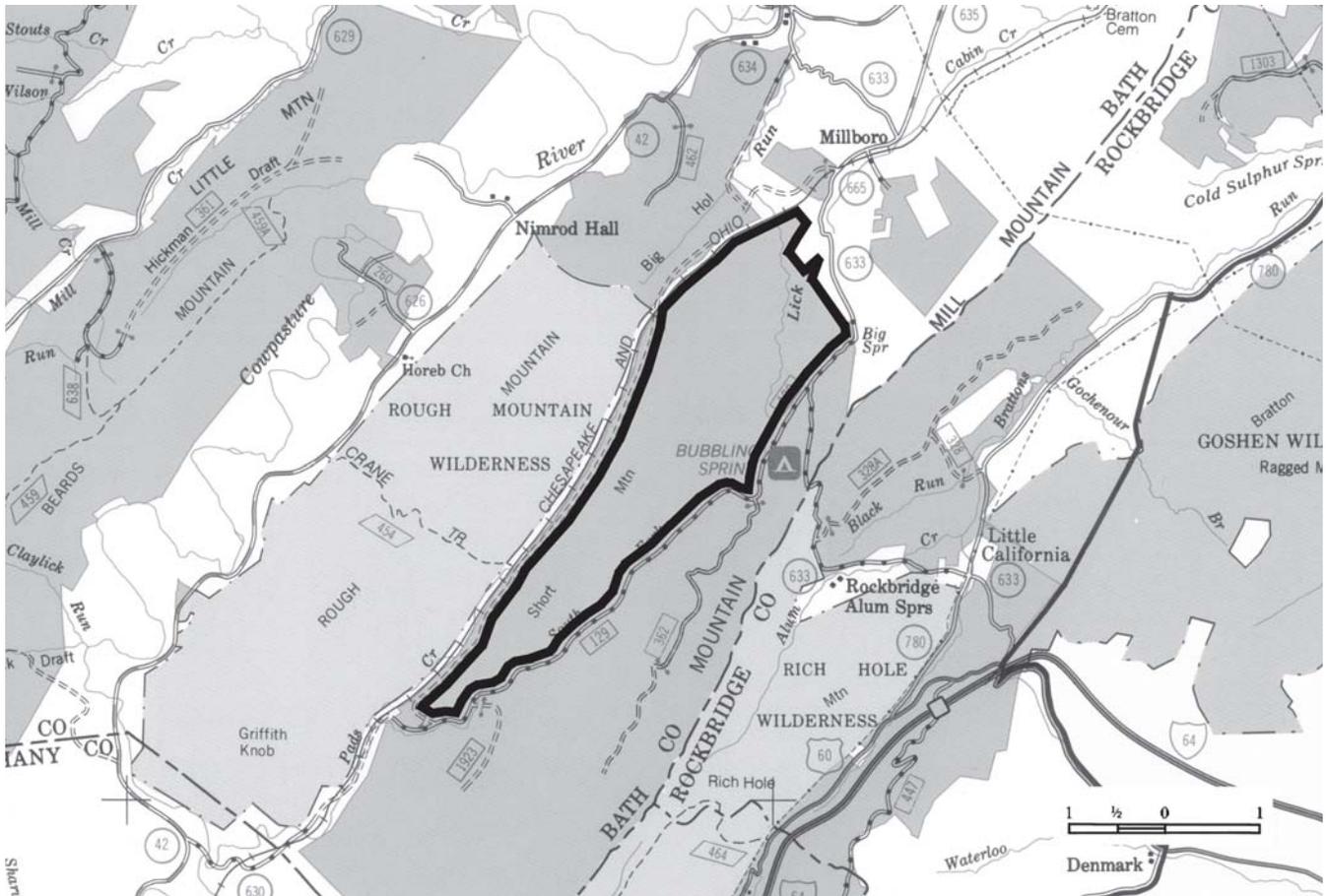
The Bubbling Springs Recreation Area, a small picnic and camping site, is near the boundary of the roadless area.

This area may contain 2376 acres of possible old growth present mainly along the long ridge line.

**Approximate Size:** 12,498 acres

**Location:** Alleghany County and Bath Counties in the James River and Warm Springs Districts

**Topos:** Longdale Furnace, Millboro, Nimrod Hall



## Short Mountain

Short Mountain is separated from the Mill Mountain Roadless Area by FDR 129 and from the Rough Mountain Wilderness by the CSX railroad tracks. Short Mountain itself is the dominant feature of the landscape.

Rising from a low elevation of just over 1300 feet near Copeland along Pads Creek and rising to almost 2450 feet, Short Mountain is a smaller version of the Rough Mountain Wilderness to the west. The mountain is steep with numerous narrow V shaped drainages that flow into the South Fork to the east and Pads Creek to the west. Lick Run drains the northern

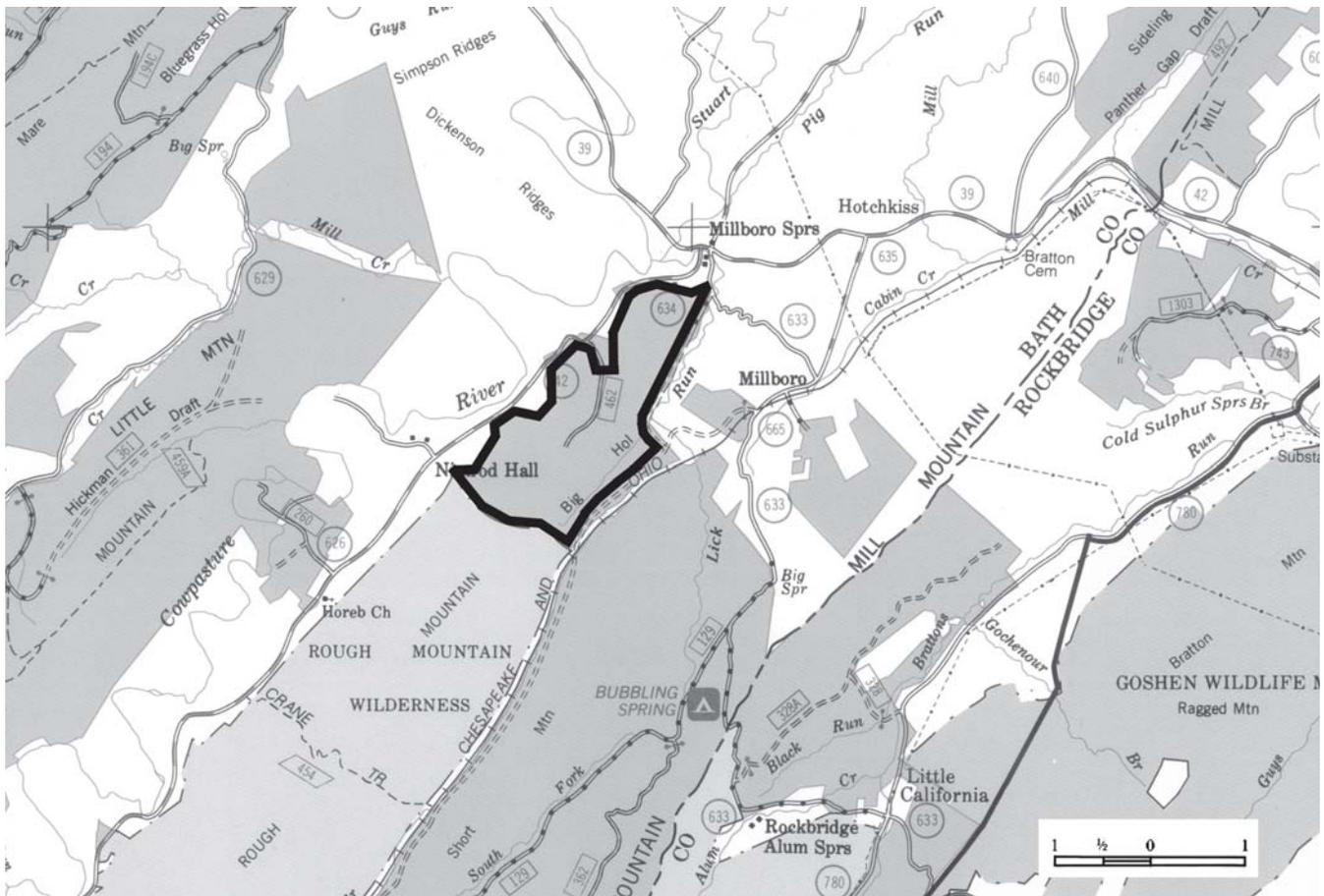
portion of the area.

The forest is composed primarily of mixed eastern hardwoods. The Virginia Natural Heritage Program has identified several species of plants along the South Fork as threatened in Virginia. There are three Plan-designated Special Biological Areas within the boundaries of this roadless area.

**Approximate Size:** 4647 acres

**Location:** Bath County, Virginia in the Warm Springs District

**Topos:** Nimrod Hall, Millboro

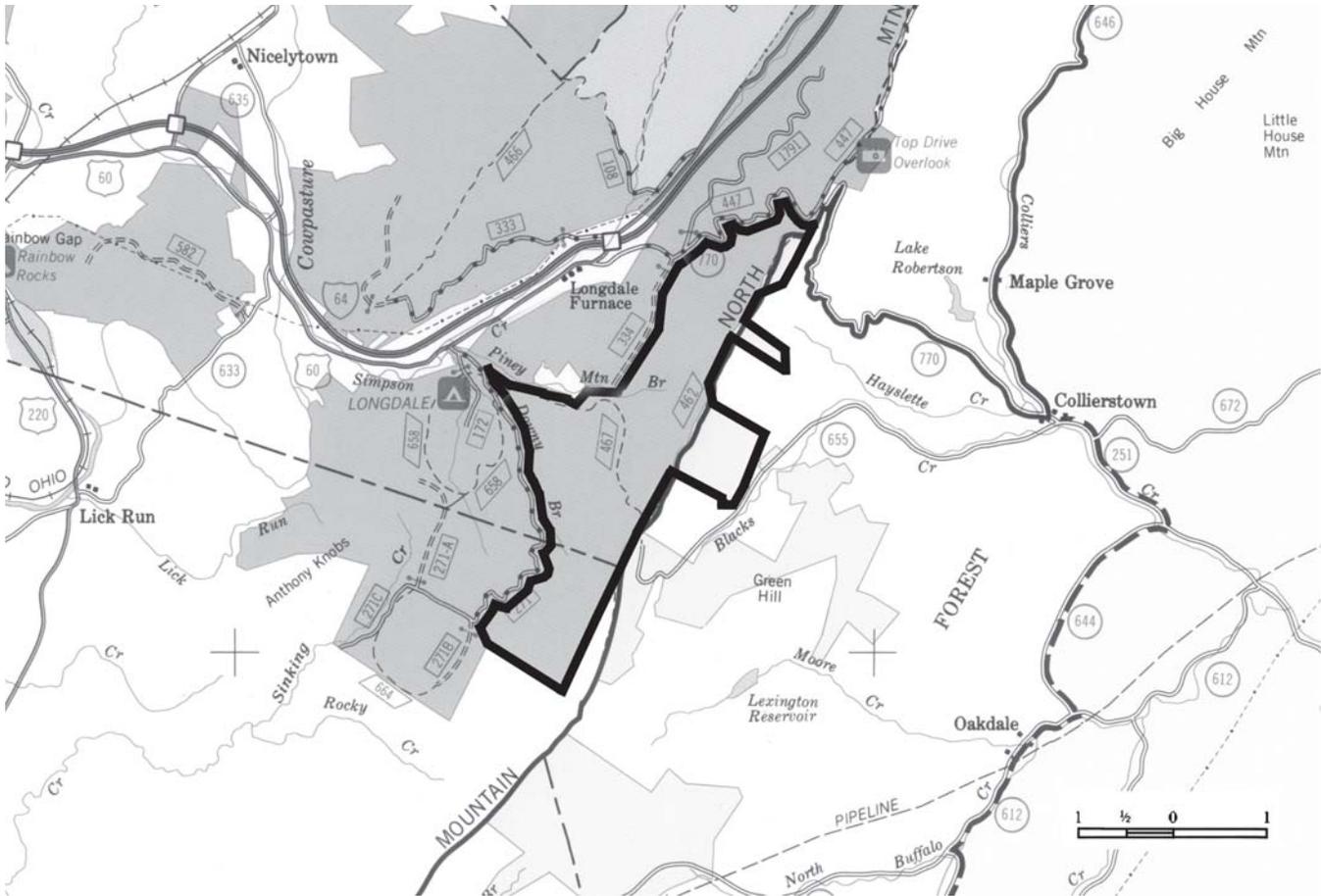


# Rough Mountain Wilderness Addition

This Wilderness addition includes the part of Rough Mountain that was not included in the Virginia Wilderness bill of 1988. Designating the addition as Wilderness would protect the upper drainage of Big Hollow.

Elevations range from about 1400 feet near Lick Run to approximately 2100 feet on Rough Mountain.

**Approximate Size:** 2196 acres  
**Location:** Bath County, Virginia in the Warm Spring District  
**Topos:** Nimrod Hall and Millboro



# Longdale

Longdale is located on the western flank of North Mountain, a long ridge that stretches from Eagle Rock to the Goshen Wildlife Management Area. The ridge provides a critical wildlife corridor.

The elevations in this area range from approximately 3250 feet on the summit of North Mountain to less than 1500 feet near Longdale Recreation Area. The ridge itself is pockmarked with karst formations, and numerous rock outcrops dot the crest.

Piney Mountain Branch and Downy Branch feed the North Branch of Simpson Creek, a tributary of the

Cowpasture River. The area lies in the James River drainage basin.

The slope of the ridge is dominated by eastern upland hardwoods with pockets of cove hardwoods in the protected drainages. Pine and Chestnut Oak are found on the drier sites.

Longdale provides the scenic backdrop for the Longdale Recreation Area. The North Mountain Trail climbs the ridge and then turns north to the old Turnpike Road.

**Approximate Size:** 4396 acres

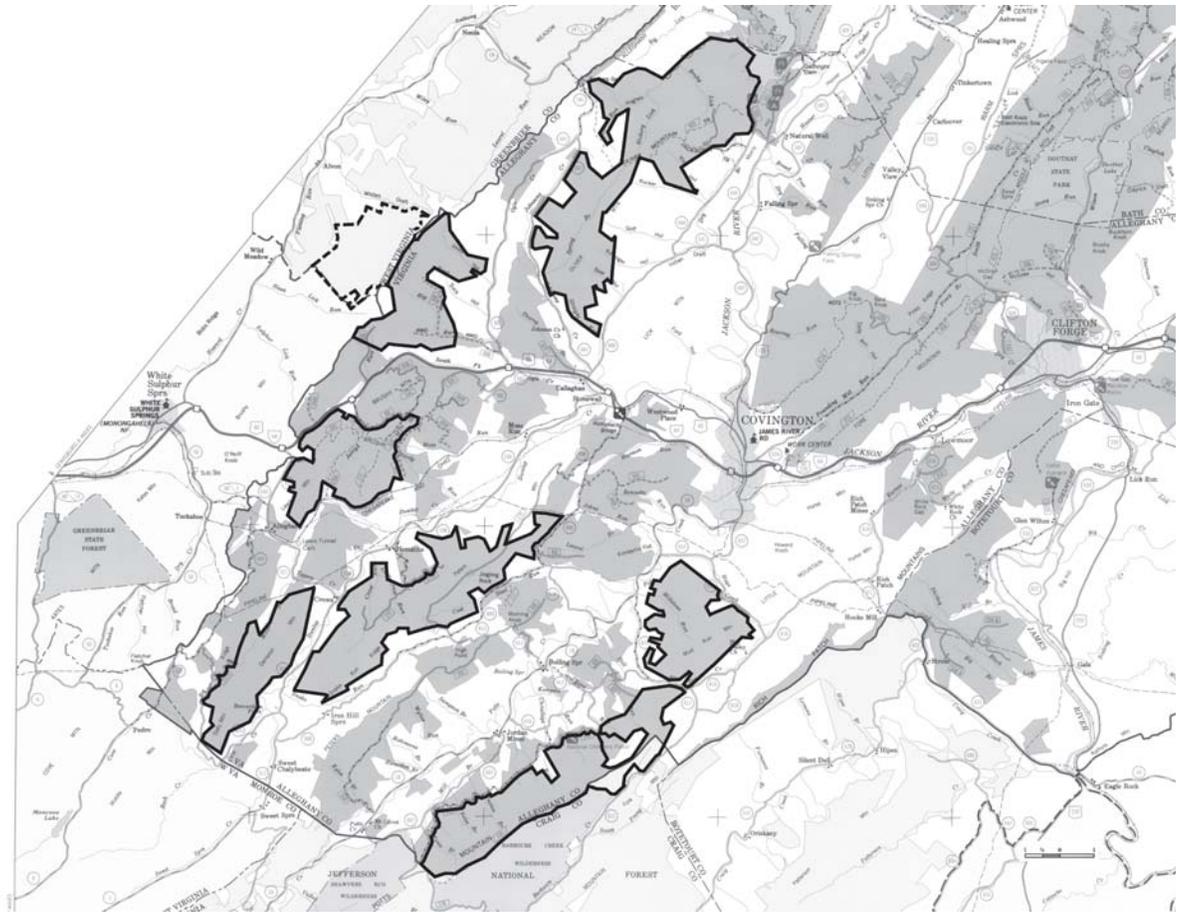
**Location:** Alleghany County, Virginia in the Warm Springs District

**Topos:** Longdale



*Brush Mountain Wilderness*

Mark Miller



## Southern Allegheny Cluster

**Mud Run Mountain**  
**Oliver Mountain**  
**Jerrys Run**  
**Slaty Mountain**

The Southern Allegheny Cluster is located in southwestern Allegheny County in the Warm Springs Ranger District. The seven areas that make up this cluster comprise a total of 47,300 acres, of which only Oliver Mountain with just over 13,000 acres has been designated as roadless by the Forest Service.

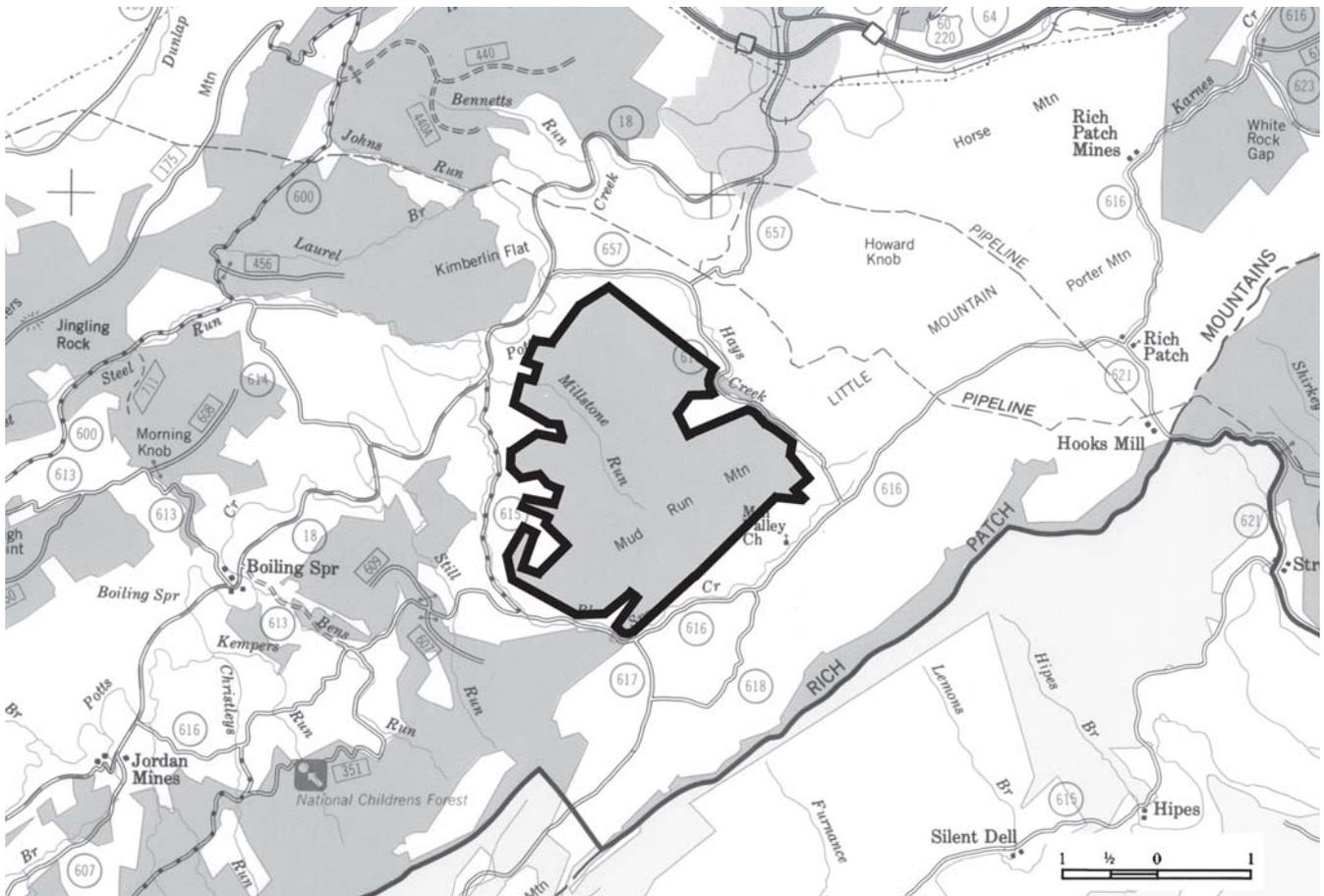
This cluster has significant biodiversity due in part to its significant geographic features. Karst topography and shale barrens are two such features. In addition, the area has striking differences in elevation from 4000 feet near Toms Knob to just over 1000 feet the Jackson and James Rivers.

Snake Run Ridge protects a significant stand of

**Toms Knob**  
**Panther Knob**  
**Snake Run Ridge**

old growth, and just to the south of Slaty Run are the Nature Conservancy Shale Barrens. These barrens offer habitat to several threatened and endangered species.

The Southern Allegheny cluster also provides significant recreation opportunities. Jerrys Run has an extensive trail system and provides the backdrop for the Allegheny Trail. Conversely Mud Run Mountain provides a wonderful primitive recreational opportunity.



## Mud Run Mountain

Mud Run Mountain is unique in that, unlike so many ridges in Virginia, it stands off by itself. It is separated from Potts Mountain to the south and from other ridges to the north by narrow water gaps.

The lowest point is near the Pond Lick Branch reservoir with an elevation of just under 1500 feet. The summit of Mud Run Mountain, is a knob, at 3514 feet, that drops off rapidly to the east.

There are several small streams flowing off the

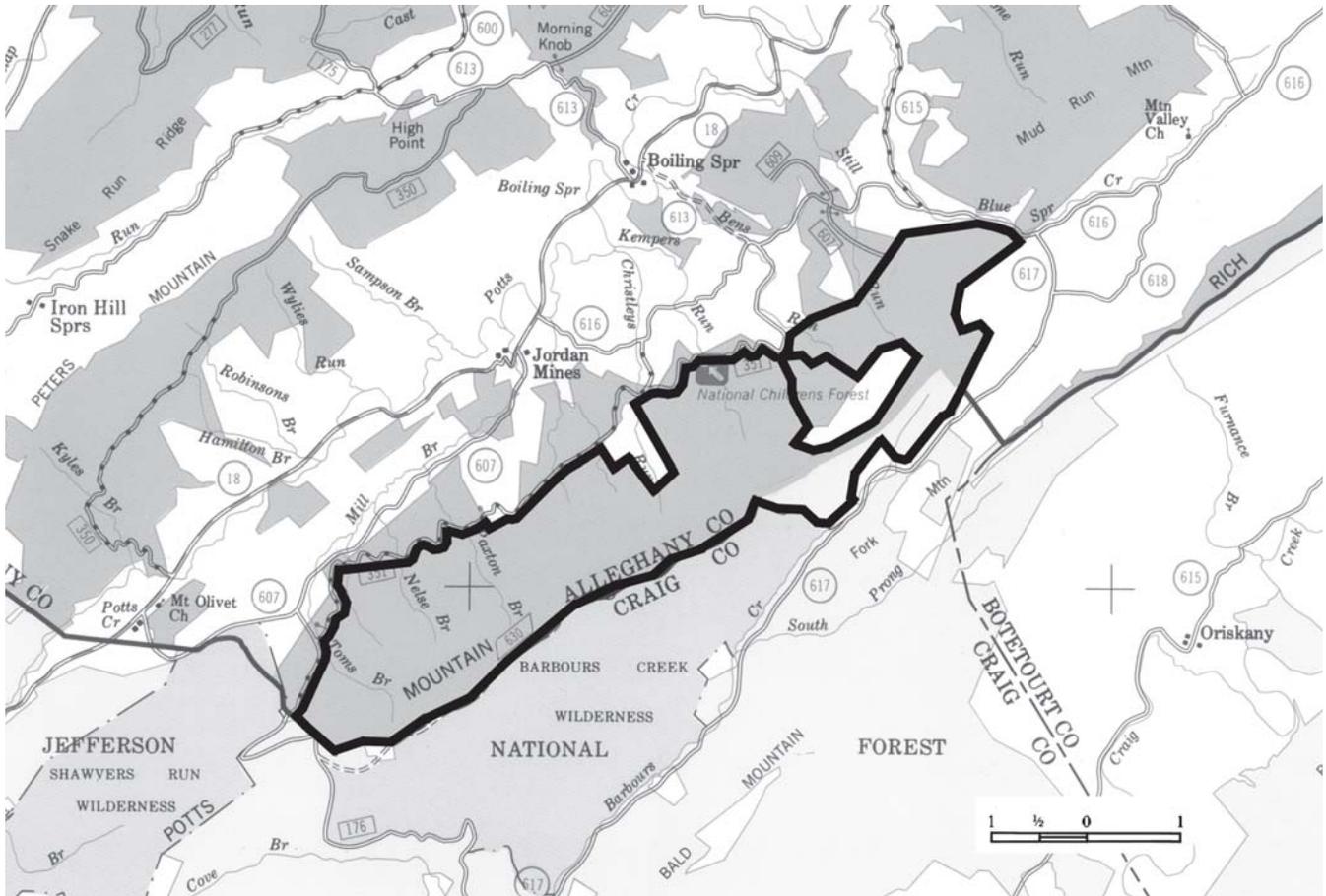
mountain. These include Pond Lick Branch, Millstone Run and Mud Run. This area protects the upper drainages. All three streams flow into Potts Creek, a tributary of the Jackson River. The area is very remote, and there are no trails of any sort within its boundaries of this.

There is a small stand of old growth located on the crest of Mud Run Mountain and in the drainages to the west.

**Approximate Size:** 4303 acres

**Location:** Alleghany County, Virginia in the James River District

**Topos:** Jordan Mines



## Toms Knob

Toms Knob gets its name from a series of rock outcrops on the crest of Potts Mountain. They provide beautiful views of the Potts Creek Valley and Peters Mountain to the west. This area is located almost entirely on the western flank of Potts Mountain. It is separated from the Barbour's Creek Wilderness by the Potts Mountain Jeep Road that runs along the crest of the mountain. A small portion of Tom Knob lies in the Jefferson National Forest.

The elevation ranges from about 3800 feet on the crest of Potts Mountain to 1750 feet in Shanty Hollow. Nichols Knob in the extreme northern part of

the area is clearly visible from the surrounding countryside.

The steep, rugged eastern flank of the ridge forms the headwaters for Barbour's Creek. Many small streams both perennial and intermittent cascade down the western side of the mountain and are tributaries of Potts Creek.

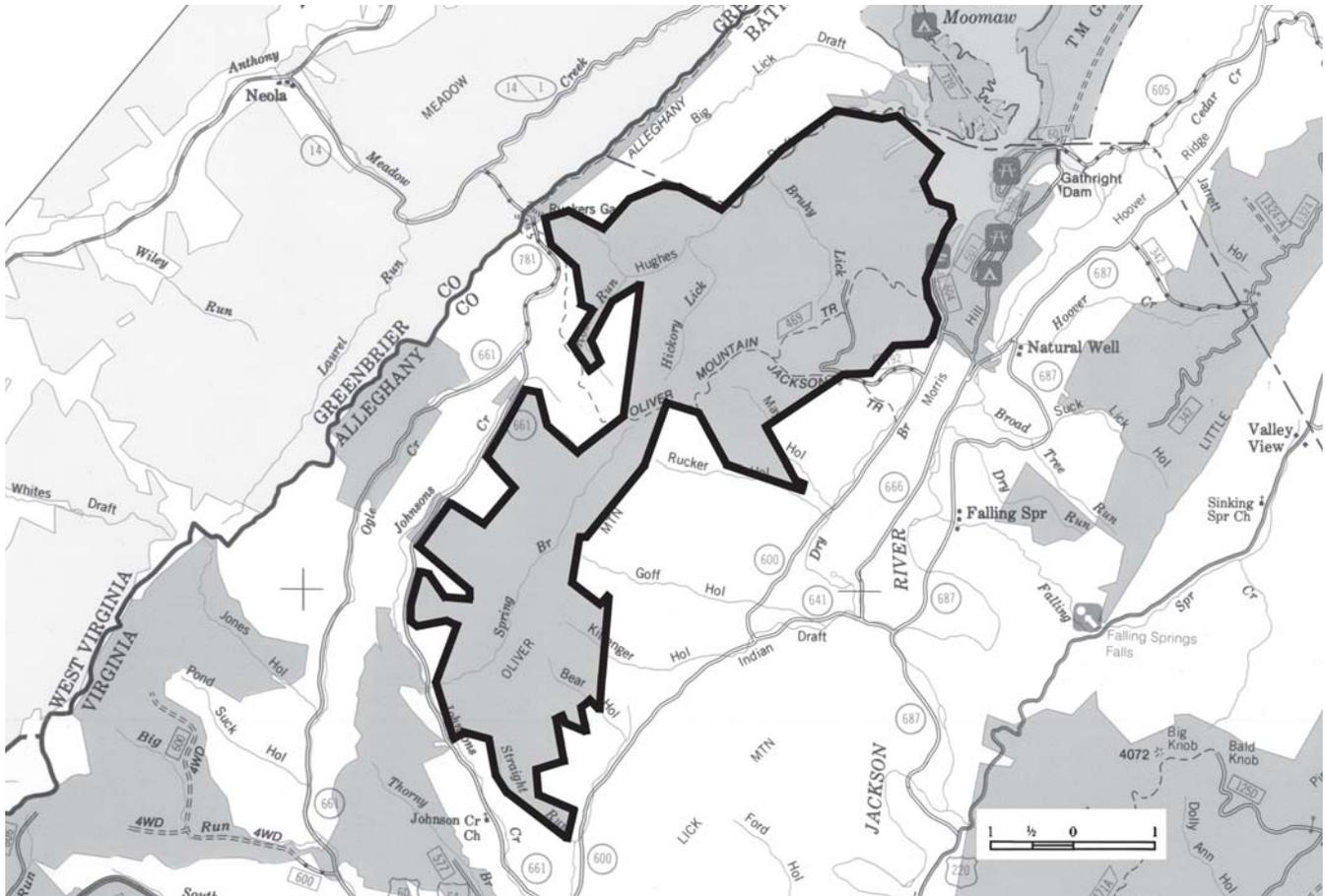
There are several short trails in the Shanty Hollow area. These are the only trails in the entire area.

There is a small Special Biological Area located on the crest of the ridge and small pockets of potential old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 7879 acres

**Location:** Allegheny and Craig Counties, Virginia in the James River and New Castle Districts

**Topos:** Allegheny, New Castle, Jordan Mines, Potts Creek



## Oliver Mountain

This wild and remote area is located in the north-west portion of Allegheny County. Oliver Mountain is the dominant feature of this roadless area. Several small creeks drain the mountain. Spring Branch drains the southern end, while Hickory Lick and Brushy Lick flow into Lake Moomaw. Lake Moomaw forms the northern boundary.

The area is predominately composed of eastern uplands hardwoods, with Pitch Pine, Table Mountain Pine and Virginia Pine located in drier regions. Elevations range from 1430 feet to 3565 feet along the crest of Oliver

Mountain. The terrain is steep and rugged.

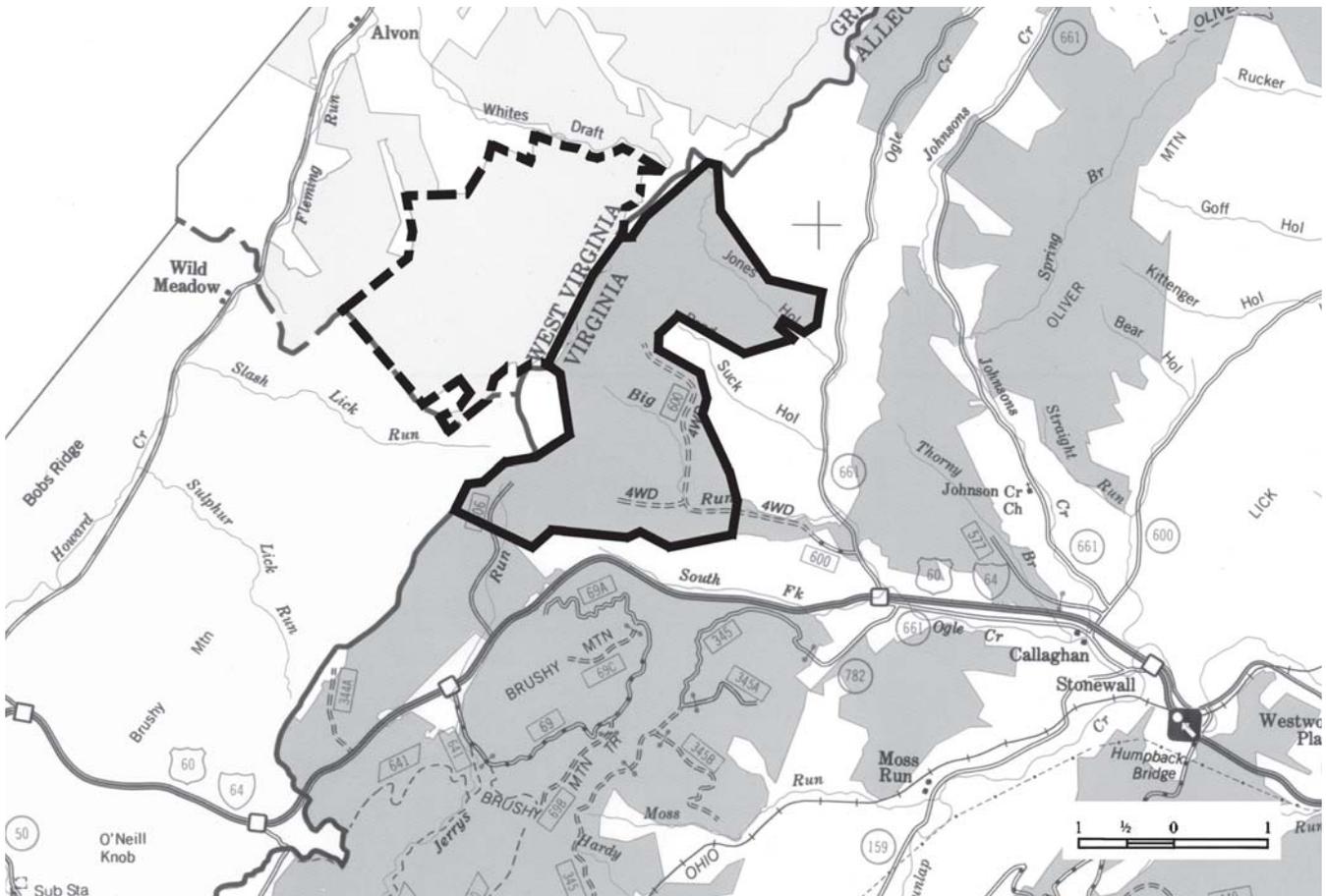
Much of the roadless area is regaining its natural untrammeled appearance. Hunting, hiking, and backpacking are the primary recreational activities. The Oliver Mountain Trail passes through the roadless area and beautiful stands of old growth forest. There are several miles of trail located near Lake Moomaw.

The Virginia Division of Natural Heritage has identified two Special Biological Areas with populations of rare plants. There is a 225 acre Plan-designated Special Biological Area and 1562 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 13,081 acres

**Location:** Allegheny County, Virginia in the James River District

**Topos:** Callaghan, Rucker Gap



# Panther Knob

Panther Knob is located in both the George Washington National Forest and the Monogahela National Forest in West Virginia. The area encompasses the eastern and western slopes of Allegheny Mountain. The entire treasure is 8063 acres.

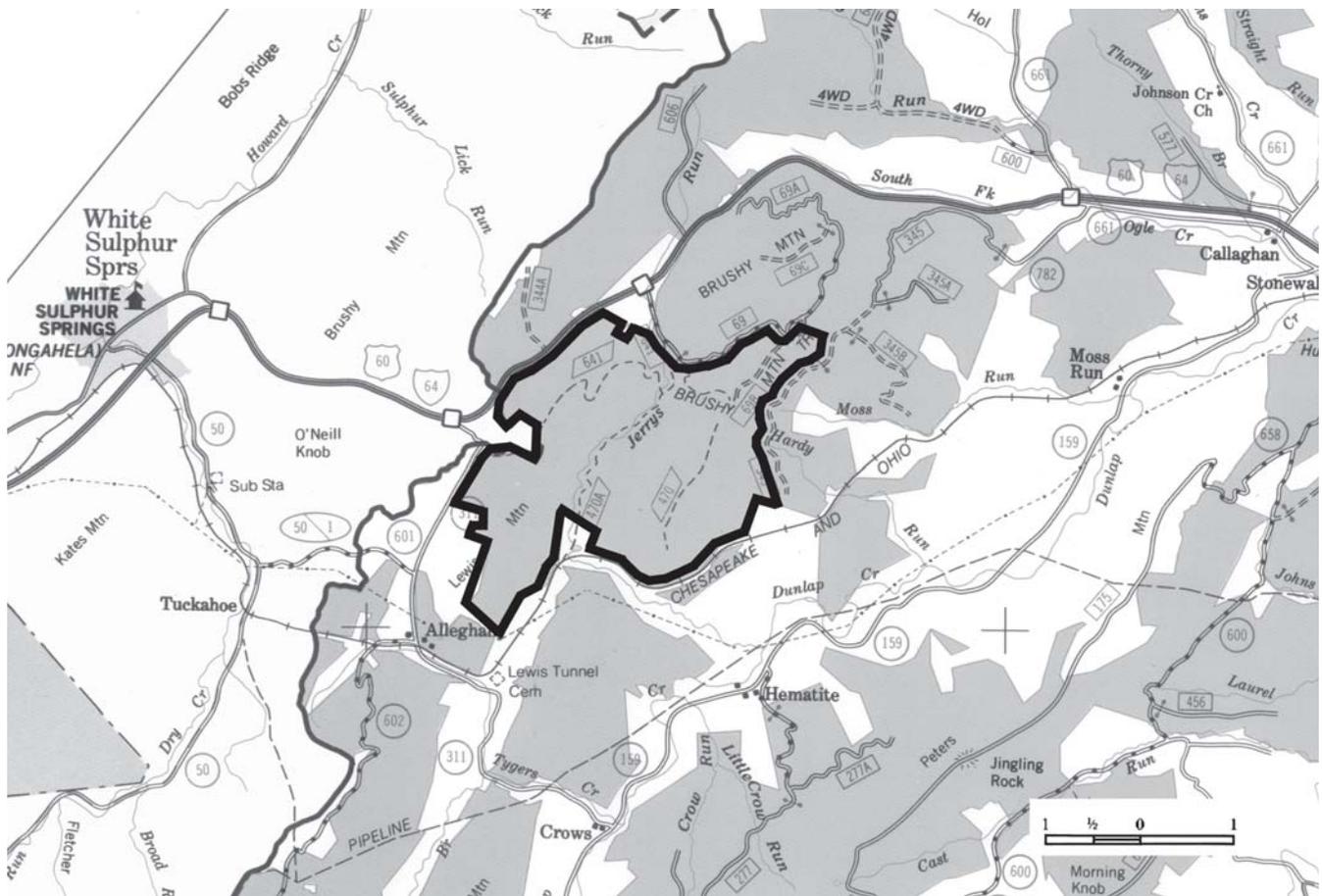
Panther Ridge is a long outlyer on the eastern slope of the mountain. Elevations range from 1600 feet on Big Run to over 3200 feet on the crest of Allegheny Mountain.

Big Run and Jones Hollow are the major creeks

on the eastern flank of the mountain. These steams lie in the James River watershed. Big Run creates a massive hollow in the flank of the mountain. Whitmans Draft and Whites Draft are the dominant stream on the western flank of Pather Knob. This stream is a part of the Greenbrier River system.

Eastern upland hardwoods dominate much of the area while cove hardwoods such as Tulip Poplar and White Oak thrive in the sheltered coves. In Big Run Hollow some of these trees are very large.

**Approximate Size:** 4231 acres  
**Location:** Alleghany County, Virginia in the James River District  
**Topos:** Alvon, Callaghan, Jerrys Run and Rucker Gap



## Jerrys Run

Jerrys run is located near the Virginia-West Virginia line in a remote section of Allegheny County. The region includes both the east and west slopes of Brushy Mountain, Lewis Mountain, and Batlick Mountain.

The elevation ranges from about 2000 feet at Hardy Run to 3050 feet on the crest of Batlick Mountain. Both Batlick Mountain and Brushy Mountain form the scenic backdrop for Jerrys Run, a high-elevation stocked trout stream. Cannonball Hollow

which separates Batlick from Lewis Mountain is a feeder stream of Jerrys Run.

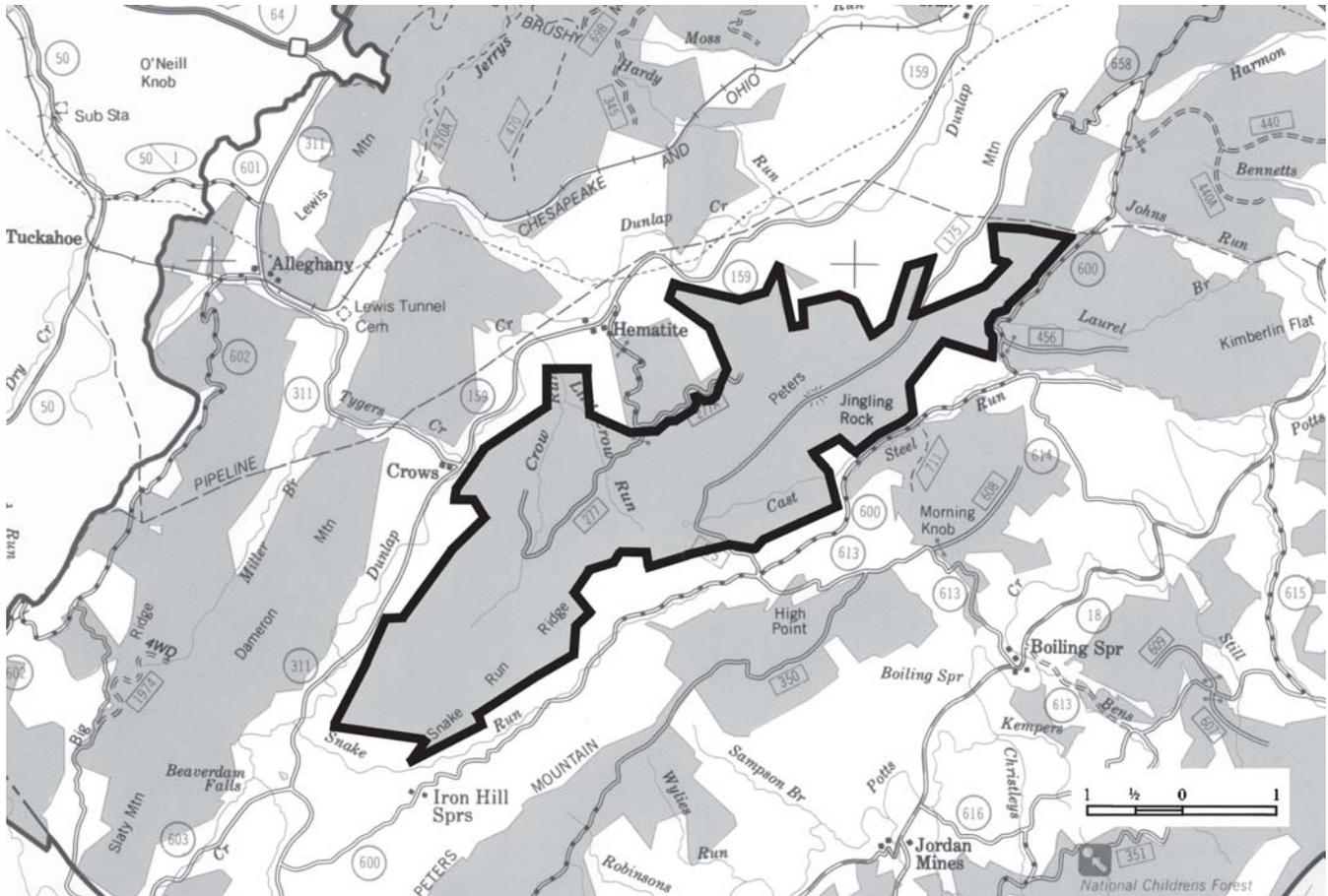
There are several hiking trails in Jerrys Run. The most notable is the Allegheny Trail. This trail is planned to run almost 300 miles along the Virginia-West Virginia border. Approximately five miles of this trail pass through the area. In addition to the Allegheny Trail, there are seven miles of additional trail including the Bat Lick Trail and Jerrys Run Trail.

Jerrys Run may contain 1754 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 4777 acres

**Location:** Allegheny County, Virginia in the James River District

**Topos:** Jerrys Run



## Snake Run Ridge

Snake Run Ridge is a prominent feature of Peters Mountain. This area includes the western flank of Peters Mountain and an outlying ridge that creates the watersheds of Little Crow Run and the upper portion of Crow Run. Slopes are steep and rocky and rich stands of mixed mesophytic forest and hemlock can be found in the deeply incised coves.

To the northeast, Peters Mountain reaches an elevation of just over 3500 feet. Near the summit there are old overgrown meadows. Thomas Spring bubbles out of the ground and forms the

headwaters for Cast Steel Run, a tributary of Potts Creek and the Jackson River.

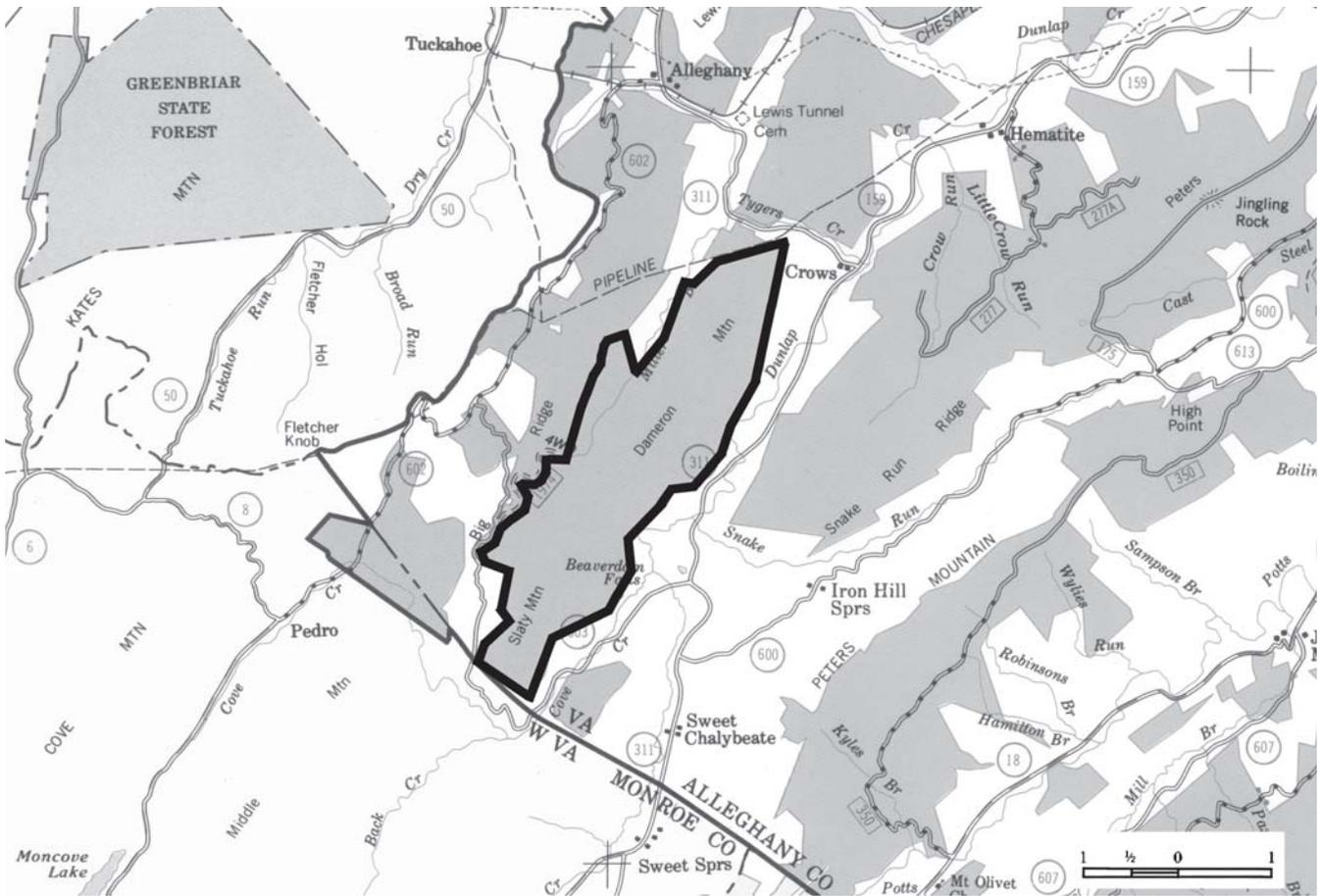
Both Crow Run and Little Crow Run are wild trout streams. Species sensitive to human disturbance such as Black Bears and Timber Rattlers find refuge in this wild area.

This area includes tracts of old growth that the Virginia Division of Natural heritage identify as perhaps the most extensive in Central Appalachians. Snake Run Ridge may contain 3600 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 8166 acres

**Location:** Alleghany County, Virginia in the James River District

**Topos:** Alleghany



# Slaty Mountain

This area includes both Slaty Mountain and Dameron Mountain. These two mountains are separated by Falls Hollow. Both Slaty Mountain and Dameron Mountain climb to elevations just under 3000 feet.

The area protects the upper drainages of both Miller Branch and Falls Hollow. Miller Branch drains the western slope of Dameron Mountain and is a tributary of Dunlap Creek and Jackson River.

Falls Hollow cuts a 600 foot canyon between Dameron Mountain and Slaty Mountain. The hollow is appropriately named as Beaverdam Falls tumbles

through the canyon.

In addition, due to the protective nature of the canyon and the steep walled terrain, the area has been left undisturbed. The Forest Service has identified several old growth stands in Falls Hollow and other areas of Slaty Mountain.

The area just south of this roadless area was recently donated to The Nature Conservancy to protect the shale barrens of the steep southern slope of Slaty Mountain.

Slaty Mountain may contain 896 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 4043 acres

**Location:** Alleghany County, Virginia in the James River District

**Topos:** Alleghany and Glace



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# Massanutten Mountain Cluster

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## **Signal Knob Catback Mountain Southern Massanutten Mountain**

Five areas of around 45,000 acres on the Lee Ranger District compose the Massanutten Mountain Cluster of Mountain Treasures. Massanutten Mountain is a relatively low-lying outlier in the center of the Shenandoah Valley with elevations generally under 3000 feet.

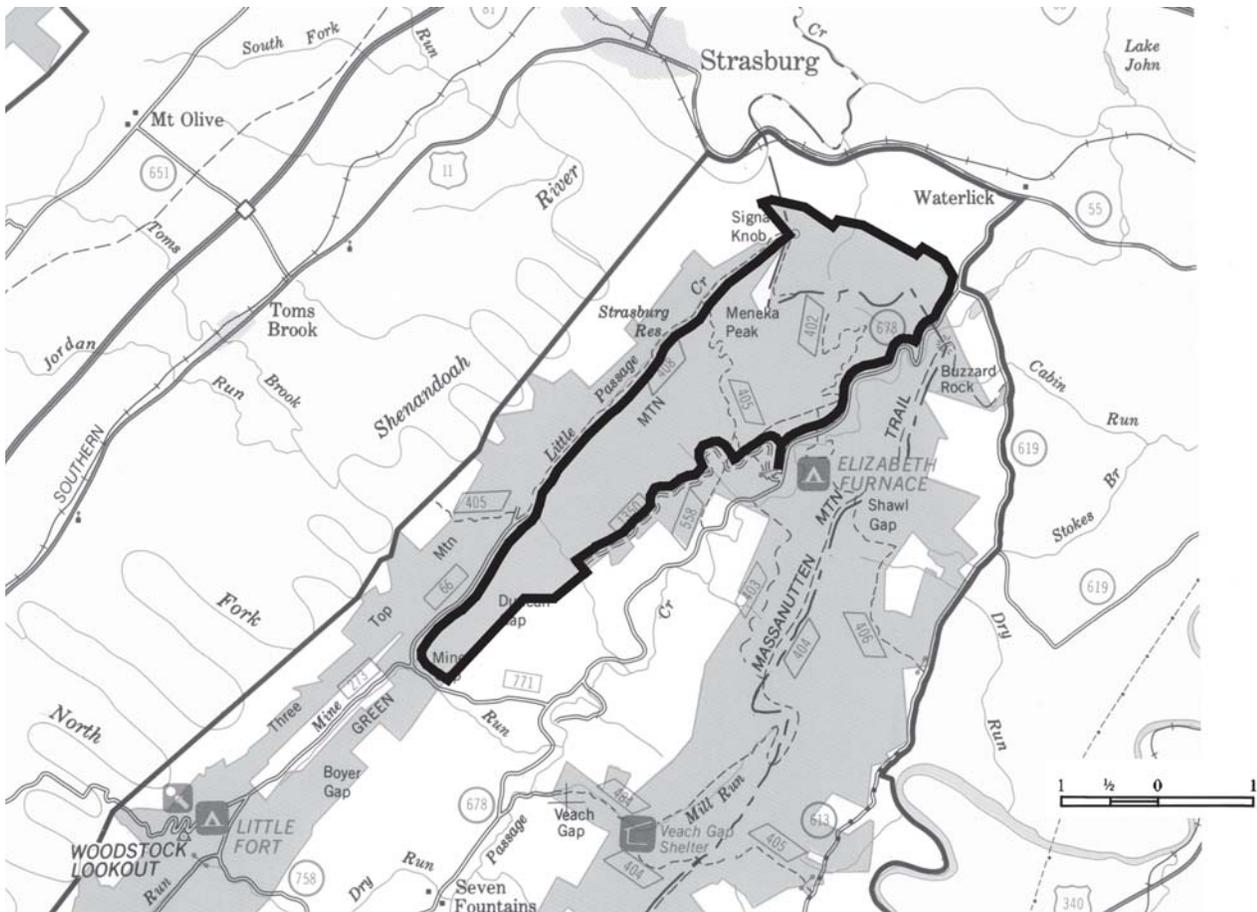
It is part of the Ridge & Valley physiographic province and is noteworthy for its close proximity to the Blue Ridge Mountain province to the east. Because of this position, Massanutten Mountain serves as an important corridor and stepping stone linking Blue Ridge wildlands such as Shenandoah National Park to the east with the bulk of the GWNF lands to

## **Northern Massanutten Mountain Browns Run**

the west.

The Massanutten Mountain Treasures embrace the drainages of the North and South Forks of the Shenandoah River. Forest growing conditions here are generally poor with soils derived from low nutrient value sandstones and quartzites.

A well-developed trail system exists on Massanutten Mountain. The Big Blue/Tuscarora Trail serves as a connector from the Appalachian Trail in the Park to the North Mountain trails across the Shenandoah Valley to the west. There are no designated Wilderness Areas in the vicinity of this cluster.



## Signal Knob

The Signal Knob area is found at the far northwest end of Massanutten Mountain high above the Shenandoah Valley and the North Fork of the Shenandoah River. The popular campground at Elizabeth Furnace is just to the east.

Situated as it is between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains, the Knob's unique topographical prominence lent it its name, as it was an important east-west signaling location during the Civil War.

The area encompasses Richardson Knob, Meneka Peak, Mudhole Gap, and Little Passage Creek. The area also includes two Special Biological

Areas designated in the Plan, Signal Knob Shale Barren and Mudhole Bog. The Virginia Division of Natural Heritage recommends a significant extension of the boundary around the Bog to protect the groundwater recharge area for the seep. In addition, the municipal reservoir for Strasburg is located at the western boundary of this Treasure.

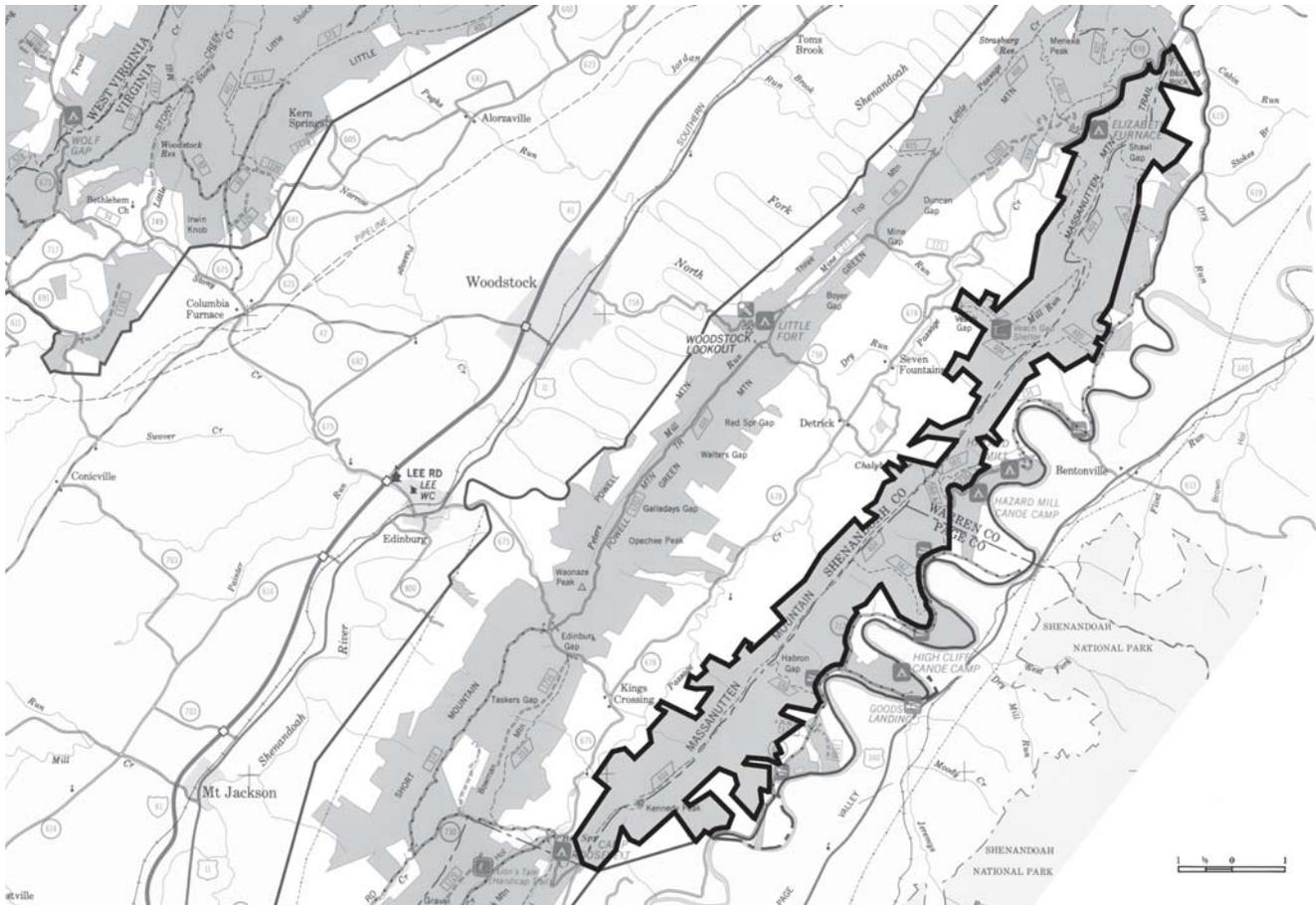
The Signal Knob Trail combined with the Tuscarora Bear Wallow Trail provides a loop hiking experience over eight miles long.

The area may contain 1361 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 5471 acres

**Location:** Shenandoah County and Warren County in the Lee District

**Topos:** Strasburg



## Northern Massanutten Mountain

Serving as a scenic backdrop to the slow moving South Fork of the Shenandoah River, Northern Massanutten Mountain stretches south from Front Royal almost fifteen miles to Camp Roosevelt. This roadless area extends westward down into Fort Valley and eastward almost to the South Fork. The area is significantly expanded from the original Forest Service roadless inventory

The long ridge is dotted with several low gaps including Habron Gap, Millord Gap, and Shawl Gap. Many rock outcrops are visible along crest of mountain. Kennedy Peak is the highest point with an elevation of 2550 feet. Many small unnamed feeder streams drop off the eastern flank as tributaries of the

South Fork. On the west, small feeder streams drain into Passage Creek, a tributary of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River.

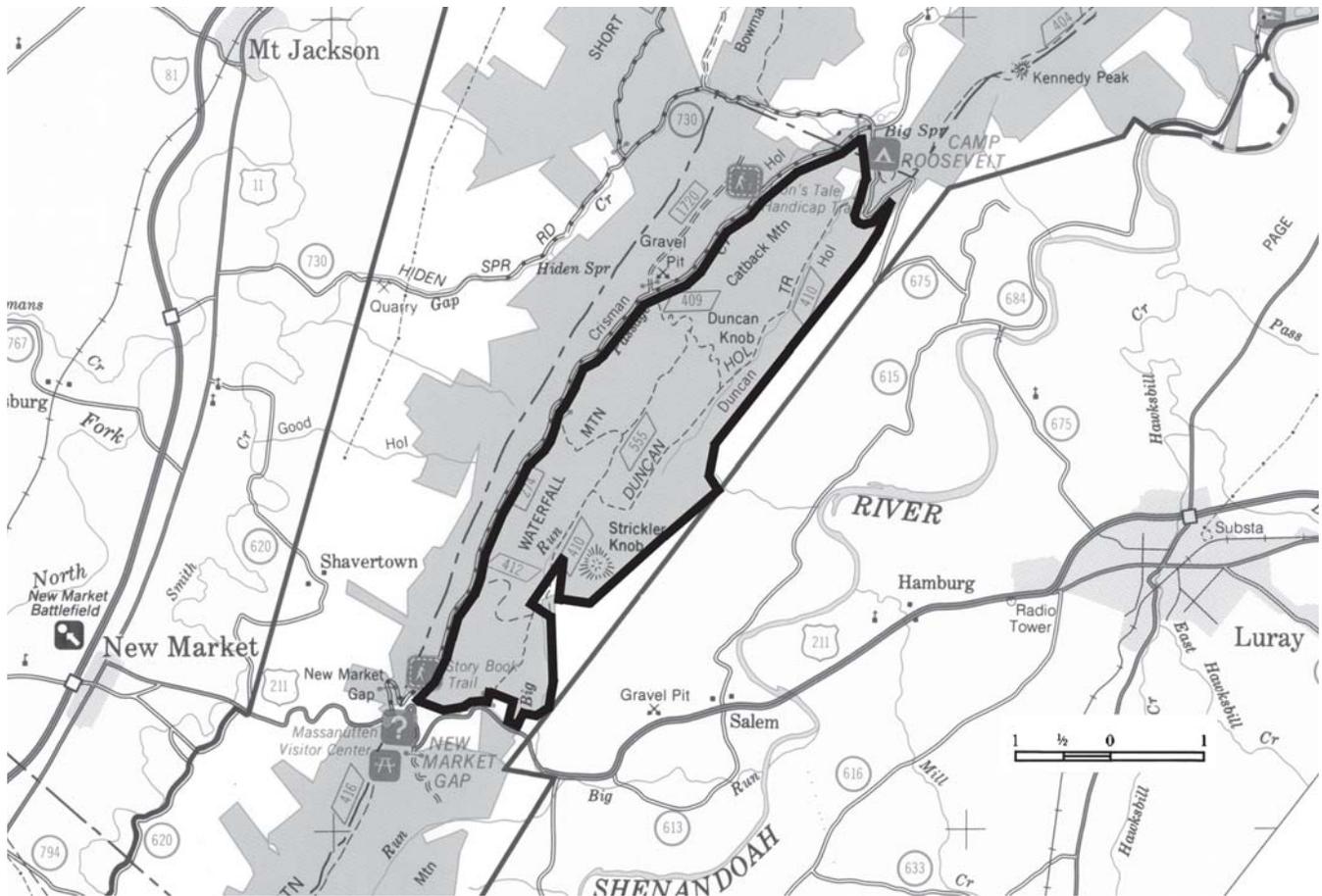
The area is a recreational paradise. The Massanutten Mountain Trail travels the entire length of the ridge, and there is a shelter at Veach Gap. Numerous side trails climb from the bottom of both the eastern and western flanks to the ridge crest, connecting to the Massanutten Mountain Trail. The South Fork is a popular canoeing river with several sites to put in and take out.

North Massanutten Mountain may contain 3727 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 17770 acres

**Location:** Page County, Shenandoah Counties and Warren County in the Lee District

**Topos:** Luray, Rileyville, Bentonville, Strasburg



# Catback Mountain

The Catback Mountain area contains a diversity of terrain, with two main parallel ridges. This Treasure is the headwaters of Passage Creek, whose Fort Valley splits the northern Massanutten. Catback Mountain, Duncan and Strickler Knobs, Duncan Hollow, and Big Run are some of its prominent topographical features.

Scothorn Gap Shale Barren is a 34 acre Plan-designated Special Biological Area. In addition, Waterfall Mountain Cliffs is a conservation site that the Virginia Division of Natural Heritage recommends be designated as a Special Biological Area. The Forest Service has identified significant amounts of semi-primitive acreage here.

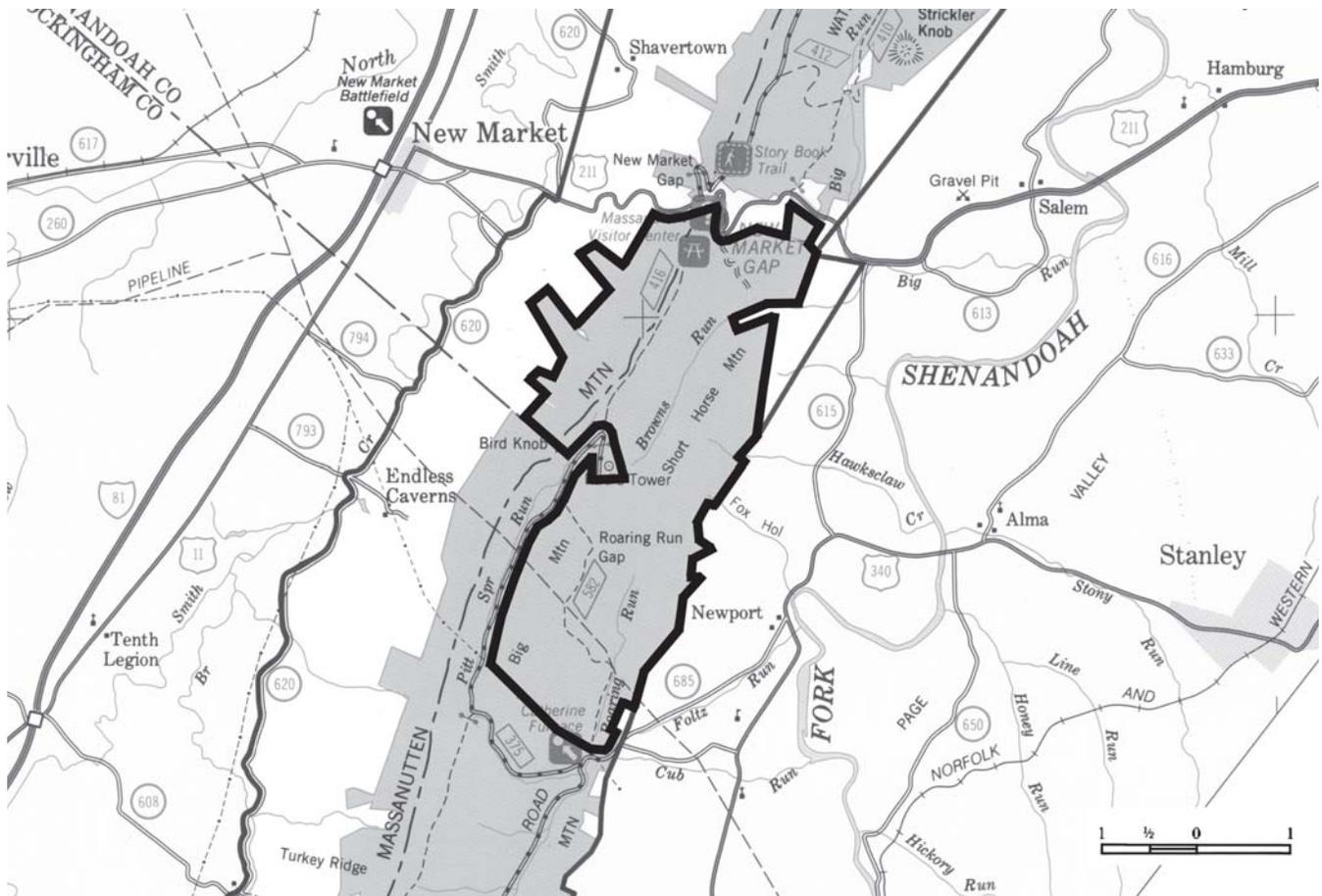
Catback Mountain is adjacent to and southwest of the National Forest campground Camp Roosevelt. Duncan Hollow Trail passes through Duncan Hollow and Big Run over nine miles and connects Camp Roosevelt to US Route 211. Several side trails create loops for any skill level. In addition to these trails, there is a handicapped boardwalk that leads to spectacular cliffs.

Catback Mountain may contain 246 acre of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 6386 acres

**Location:** Page County in the Lee Ranger District

**Topos:** Hamburg



## Short Horse Mountain

Short Horse Mountain is located south of New Market Gap and north of Catherine Furnace. It includes Short Horse Mountain, Roaring Run, and Brown's Hollow. The Forest Service's Massanutten Visitor Center is located near the north end of the area.

Brown's Hollow Shale Barren is a 1089 acre Plan-designated Special Biological Area. There are also significant amounts of semi-primitive acreage here

that offer remoteness and serenity.

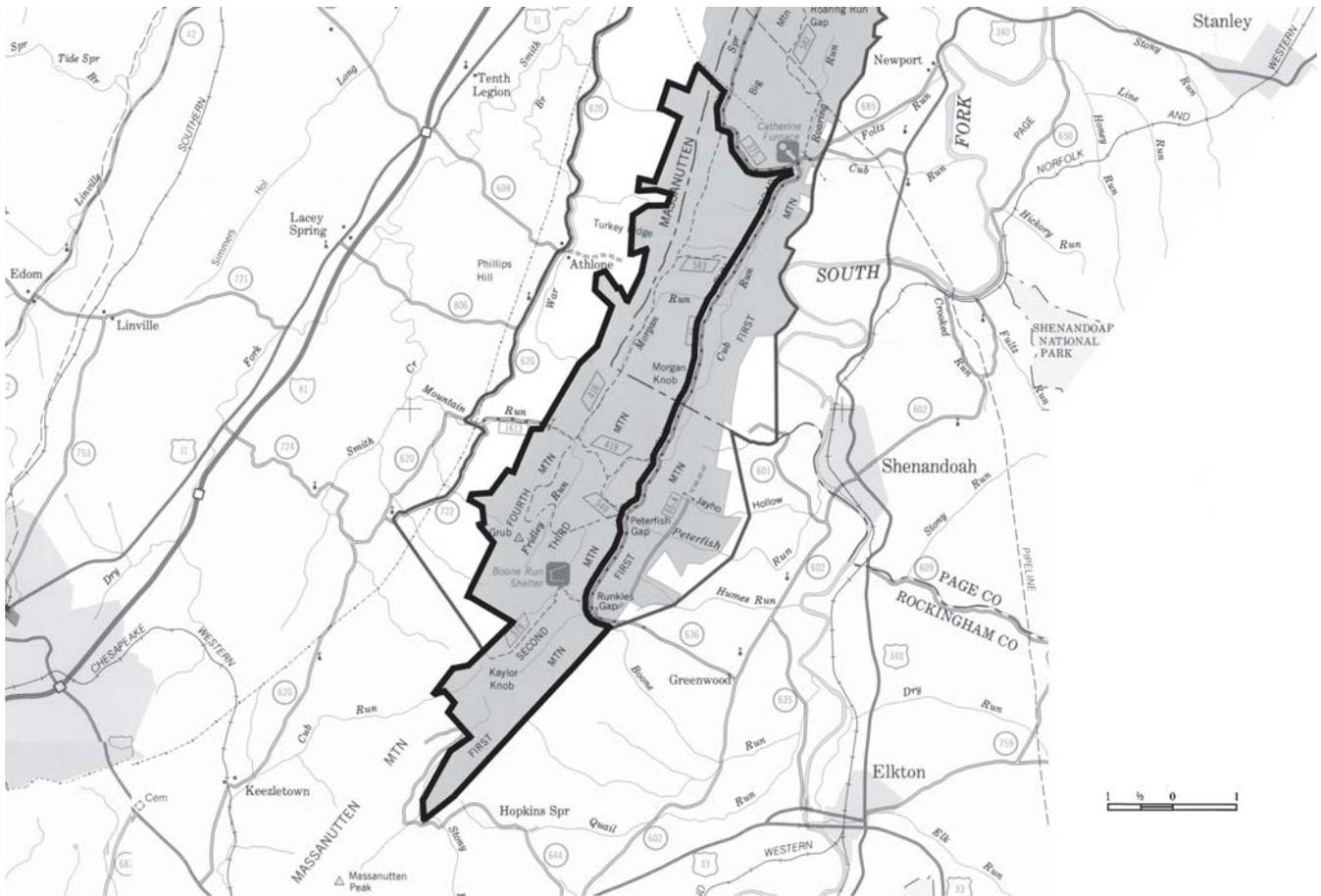
Roaring Run Trail runs four miles from Roaring Run in the southeast to FDR 375 on the west; Bird Knob Trail runs 2.2 miles along the crest of Massanutten Mountain from the Visitor's Center to Forest Development Road 375 at Bird Knob.

Short Horse Mountain may contain 271 acre of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 7243 acres

**Location:** Page County and Shenandoah Counties in the Lee Ranger District

**Topos:** Tenth Legion, New Market, Hamburg, Stanley



# Southern Massanutten Mountain

Like Northern Massanutten Mountain this area serves as the scenic backdrop to the beautiful South Fork of the Shenandoah River. The area is adjacent to the Short Horse Mountain area to the north. Grubb Knob and Morgan Knob both climb to over 3000 feet. Other notable peaks include Kaylor Knob and Bird Knob.

The southern part of this roadless area is divided by three separate but narrow drainages. Of the two main drainages, Cub Run separates Second Mountain from Third Mountain, while Fridley Run divides Third Mountain from Fourth Mountain. Farther north all these ridges

are drawn together into the narrow Massanutten Mountain ridge line.

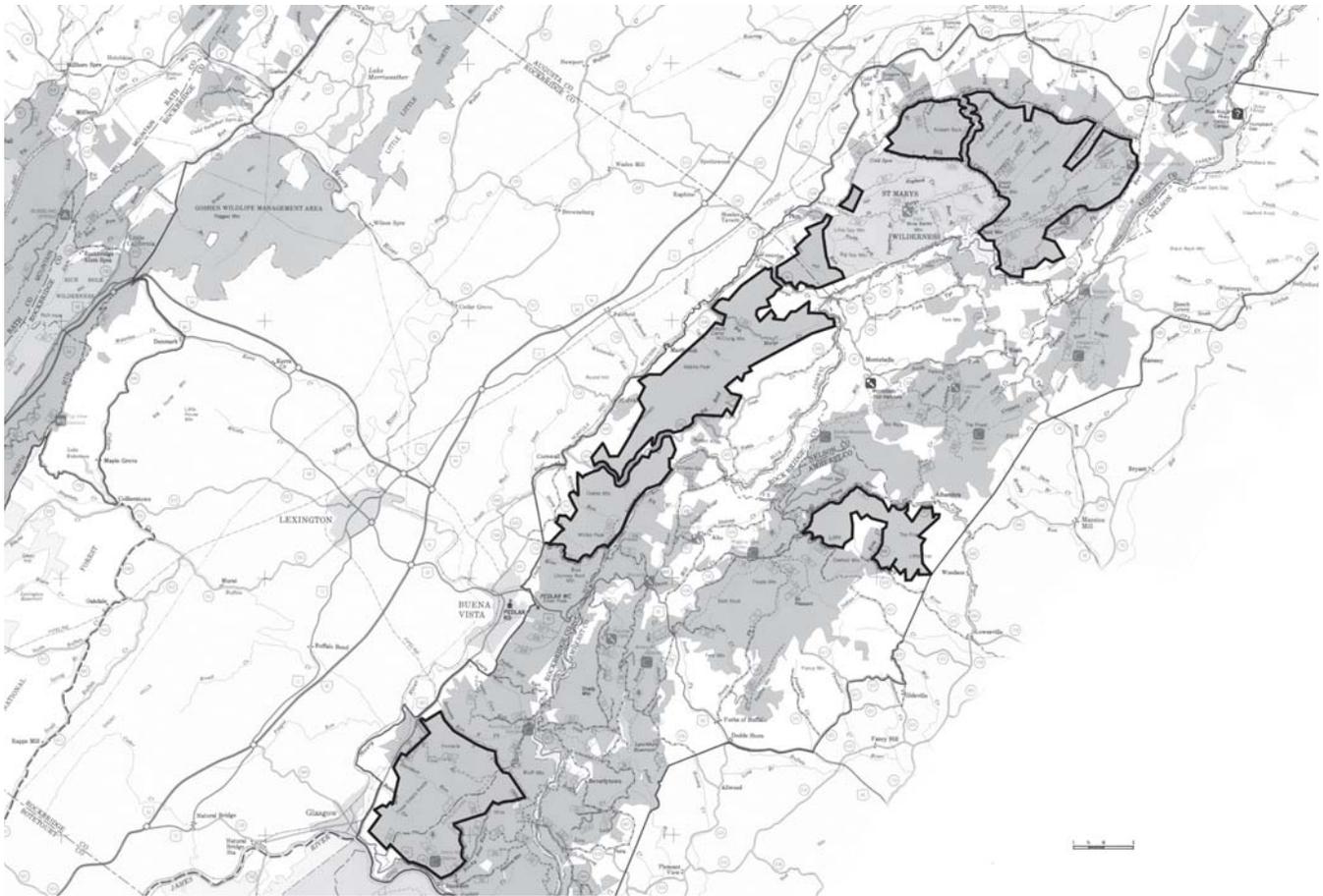
Numerous hiking opportunities exist within the narrow confines of this roadless area. The many small valleys and ridges create a trail lover's dream. The Massanutten Mountain Trail extends almost from the southern boundary to the the Visitor's Center and many short side trails allow for the exploration of the smaller drainages and hollows.

Southern Massanutten Mountain may contain 2266 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 11,919 acres

**Location:** Page County, Rockingham County and Shenandoah Counties in the Lee District

**Topos:** Hamburg, 10th Legion, Elkton, Stanley



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## Pedlar Cluster

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### **Kelley Mountain The Friar Whites Peak**

The Pedlar Cluster offers diverse recreational activities, beautiful scenery, and a rich biodiversity. The primary recreational trail is the Appalachian Trail. The Appalachian Trail winds its way about 120 miles across the high ridges, including the high bald of Cole Mountain and the rocky ridge crest of Three Ridges Wilderness and The Priest Wilderness.

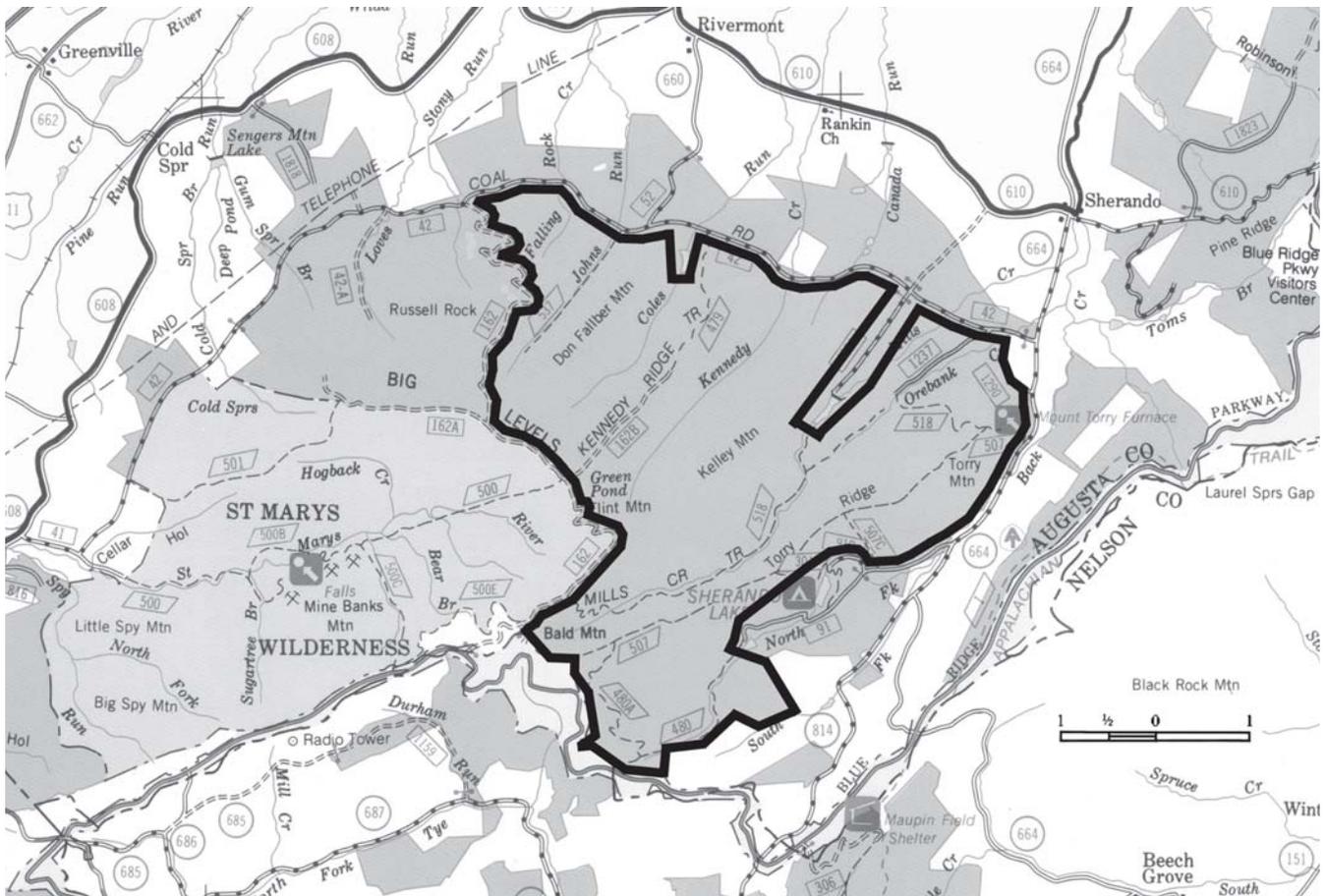
The Blue Ridge Parkway provides another popular recreational activity. The parkway meanders along the crest of the Blue Ridge from Rockfish Gap and the Shenandoah National Park to the James River and the Peaks of Otter and on to its terminus at the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. Horseback

### **St. Marys Wilderness Addition Adams Mountain Three Sisters**

riding is another popular recreational activity on the Pedlar District.

The Cluster is located east of the cities of Lexington and Staunton. From the James River to the south the Pedlar District stretches northeast to the Shenandoah National Park. Beginning with the Three Sisters Roadless Area adjacent to the James River a series of roadless areas continues northward to Kelley Mountain.

About 20,000 acres is protected as Wilderness. Another 9000 acres is within the Mount Pleasant National Scenic Area.



# Kelley Mountain

The Kelley Mountain Roadless Area is located in the southeast corner of Augusta County. Major creek drainages include Kennedy Creek, Mills Creek, and Johns Run. There are several small waterfalls located in the upper drainage of Johns Run. These streams are identified as wild trout streams.

The area is composed primarily of eastern upland hardwoods with pine on the drier slopes. Small pockets of old growth Hemlock are found in the upper drainages of some streams. Dense stands of laurel and rhododendron are found in the understory. The area is underlain by a great diversity of rock types that owe their origin to a wide variety of sedimentary, igneous, and metamorphic processes. Many of the rugged,

steep slopes are covered with significant scree slopes. There are rock outcrops that provide tremendous views of the Shenandoah Valley.

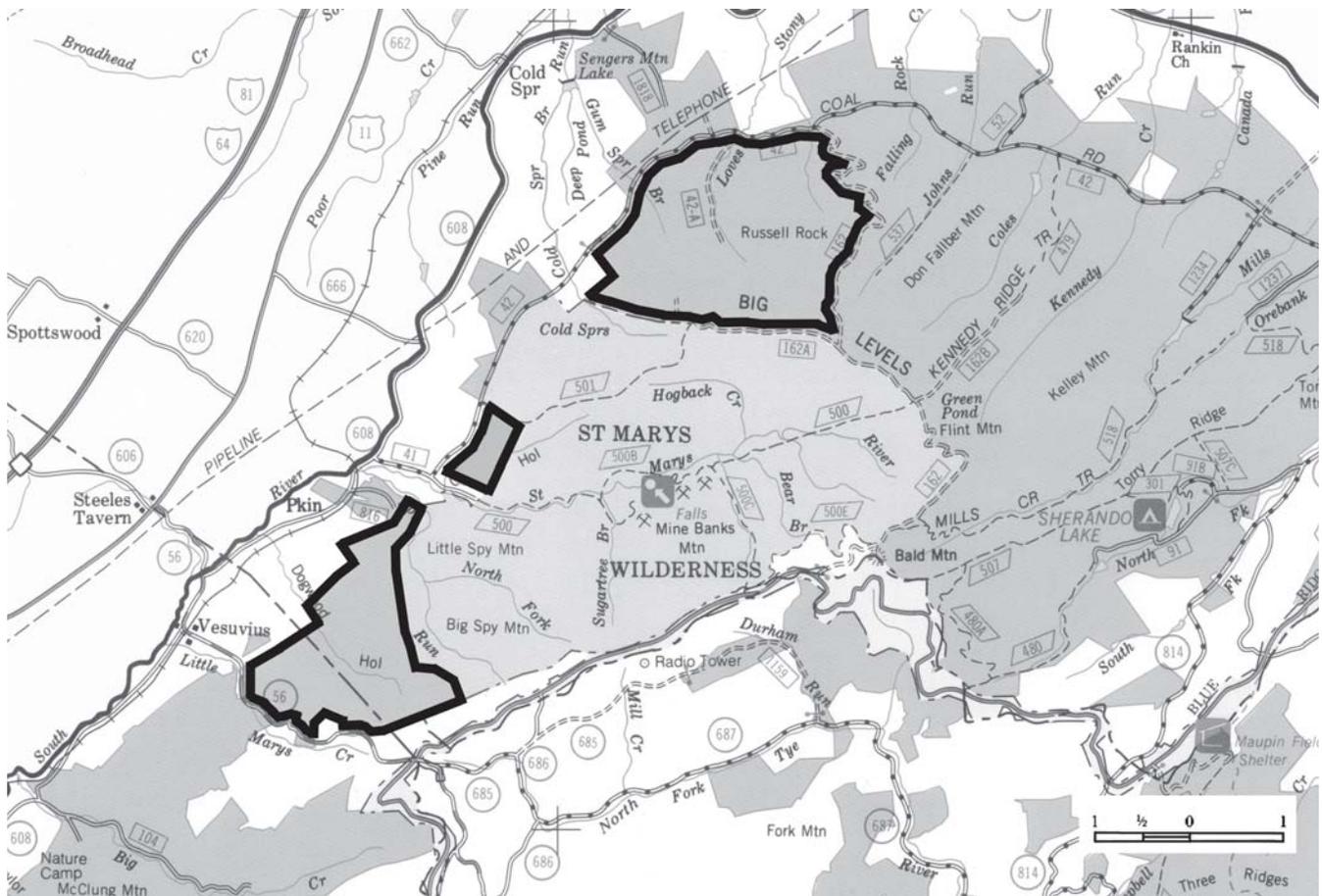
The upper region of the roadless area is known as the Big Levels. Several rare species have been identified by the Heritage Program including Swamp Pink, Variable Sedge, and Large Cranberry as well as possible rare invertebrate species. There is a 8376 acre Plan-designated Special Biological Area. Kelley Mountain may contain 958 acres of possible old growth.

Recreational activities include hunting, fishing, camping, mountain biking, and hiking. There are about 25 miles of trail with loop hikes available.

**Approximate Size:** 12,895 acres

**Location:** Augusta County, Virginia in the Pedlar Ranger District

**Topos:** Big Levels, Sherando



## Saint Marys Wilderness Additions

Located on the western flank of the Blue Ridge, the Saint Mary's Wilderness is 10,090 acres of rugged slopes, deep ravines, and scree. Addition A located to the north of the Wilderness includes the extremely inaccessible Russell Rocks, a unique geological feature of large jagged boulders. Russell Rocks are drained by Loves Run and Stony Run. There is also a 2910 acre Plan-designated Special Biological Area.

Addition B is a recent Forest Service acquisition. The dominant geological feature of the area is Cellar Hollow and the small stream that drains the steep and

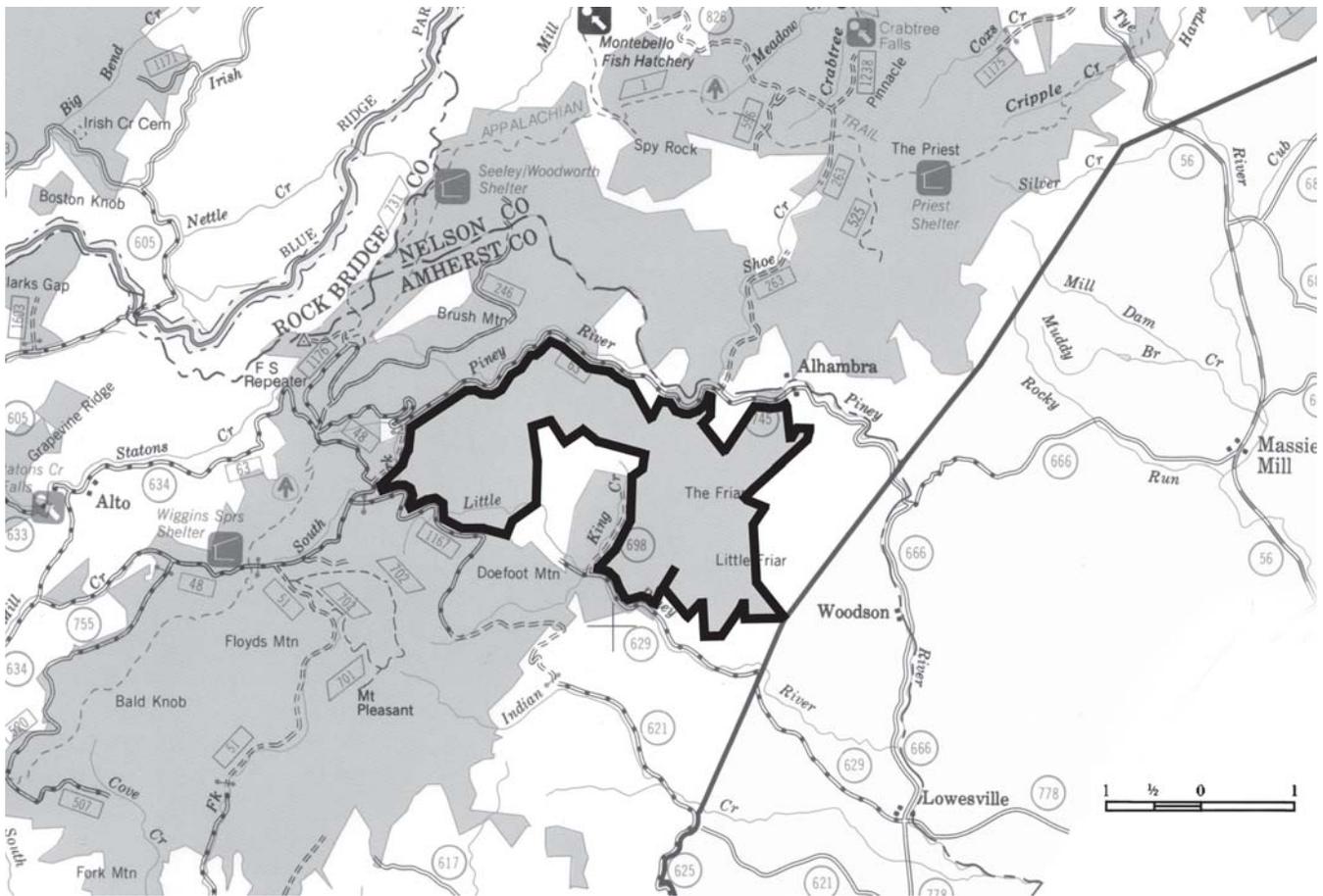
rugged Cellar Mountain. While the area is small the forest is not. Cellar Hollow provides a wonderful refuge for cove hardwoods like Tulip Poplar and Hemlock. Some of these trees are very large.

Addition C is located on the southwestern edge of the existing Saint Mary's Wilderness. The area is known for its steep V drainages and numerous scree slopes especially in Dogwood Hollow. There is evidence of past human activities including an old homestead site and sites of past mining activities from the early 1900s. One old mine fissure has become a bat hibernaculum.

**Approximate Size:** Addition A 3008 acres, Addition B 277 acres, Addition C 1508 acres

**Location:** Augusta County and Rockbridge Counties, Virginia in the Pedlar District

**Topos:** Big Levels, Vesuvius



## The Friar

The Friar is located in a region locally known as the Religious Range. This area has been expanded to include the Cardinal and its steep northern slope. Other notable peaks in this area include the Little Friar and Doefoot Mountain. The elevations of the Friar range from a 1000 feet along the Piney River to almost 3400 feet at the crest of the Friar. The terrain is characterized by steep V-hollows and high ridges.

Chestnut Oak and Scarlet Oak dominate the drier ridge crests while the mid-slope forests are comprised of White Oak, Red Oak and Hickories. In several

locations small patches of old growth occur. The most striking feature of the area is its nearly unbroken forest canopy.

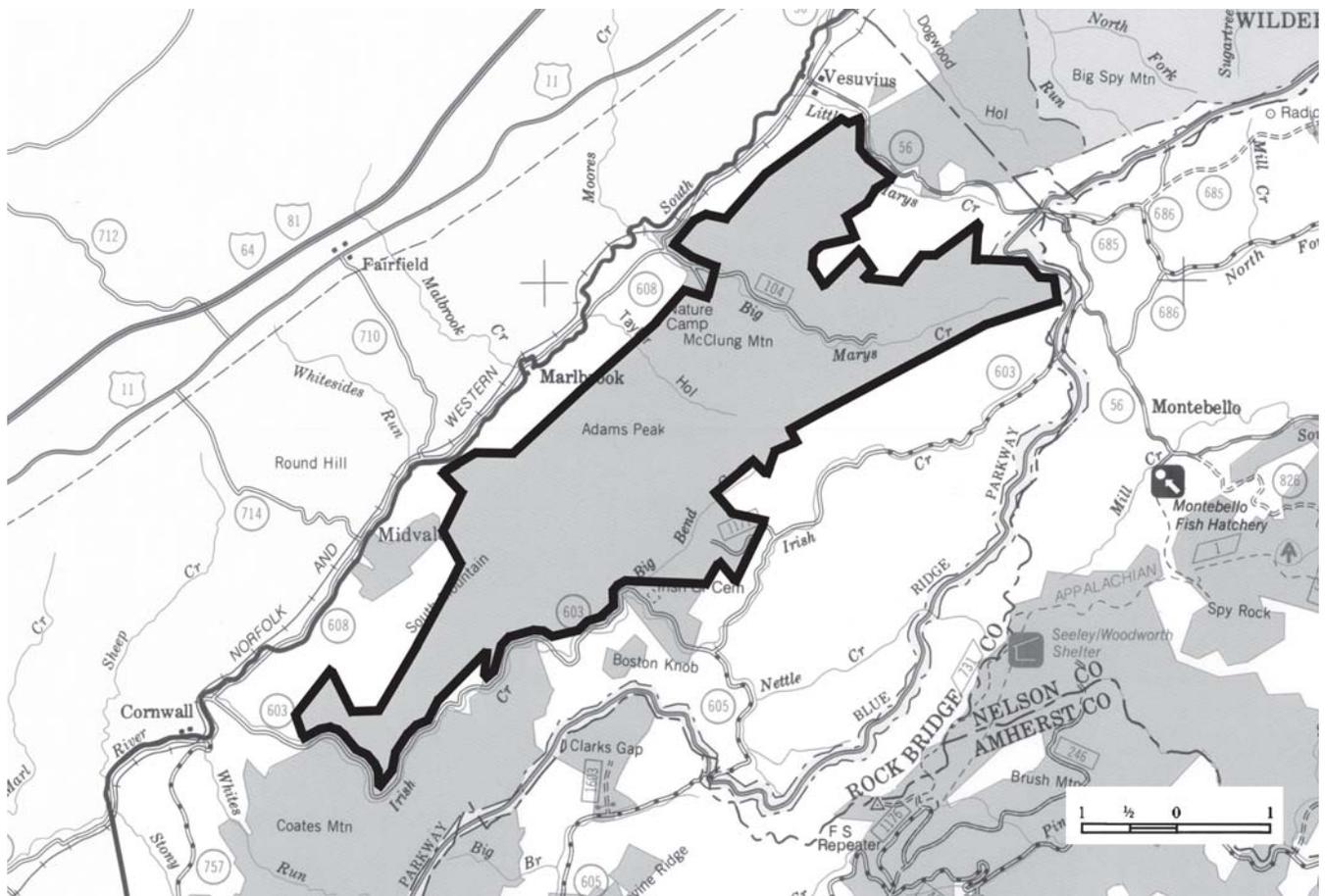
The area is open only to primitive types of recreation. The Friar's steep, rugged ridges have resisted road building and timber harverting. There are no designated trails. However, several game trails and hunter trails provide limited access to the interior.

The Friar may contain 1592 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 3977 acres

**Location:** Amherst County, Virginia in the Pedlar District

**Topos:** Massies Mill, Montebello



## Adams Peak

The Adams Peak roadless area is dominated by the steep and rugged Whetstone Ridge and South Mountain. McClung Mountain and Big Marys Creek form the northeastern boundary. Irish Creek forms much of the eastern and southern boundary. Elevations range from 1200 feet to 3200 feet at the summit of South Mountain. This long ridge is dissected by numerous deep, narrow drainages with steep side slopes. Rock slides are common on the side slopes.

The entire area is forested by upland hardwoods with Pitch Pine communities occurring on the driest and warmest slopes and ridges. In some of the sheltered hollows, stands of tall cove hardwoods are present. Scenic rock outcroppings and pinnacles

occur within the area. The rugged interior provides habitat for Black Bear and Timber Rattlesnakes.

There are several small prehistoric sites scattered throughout the area. The northern area contained a post road dating from the nineteenth century. A mail carrier on horseback traveled this route delivering mail to several homes located on Big Mary's Creek.

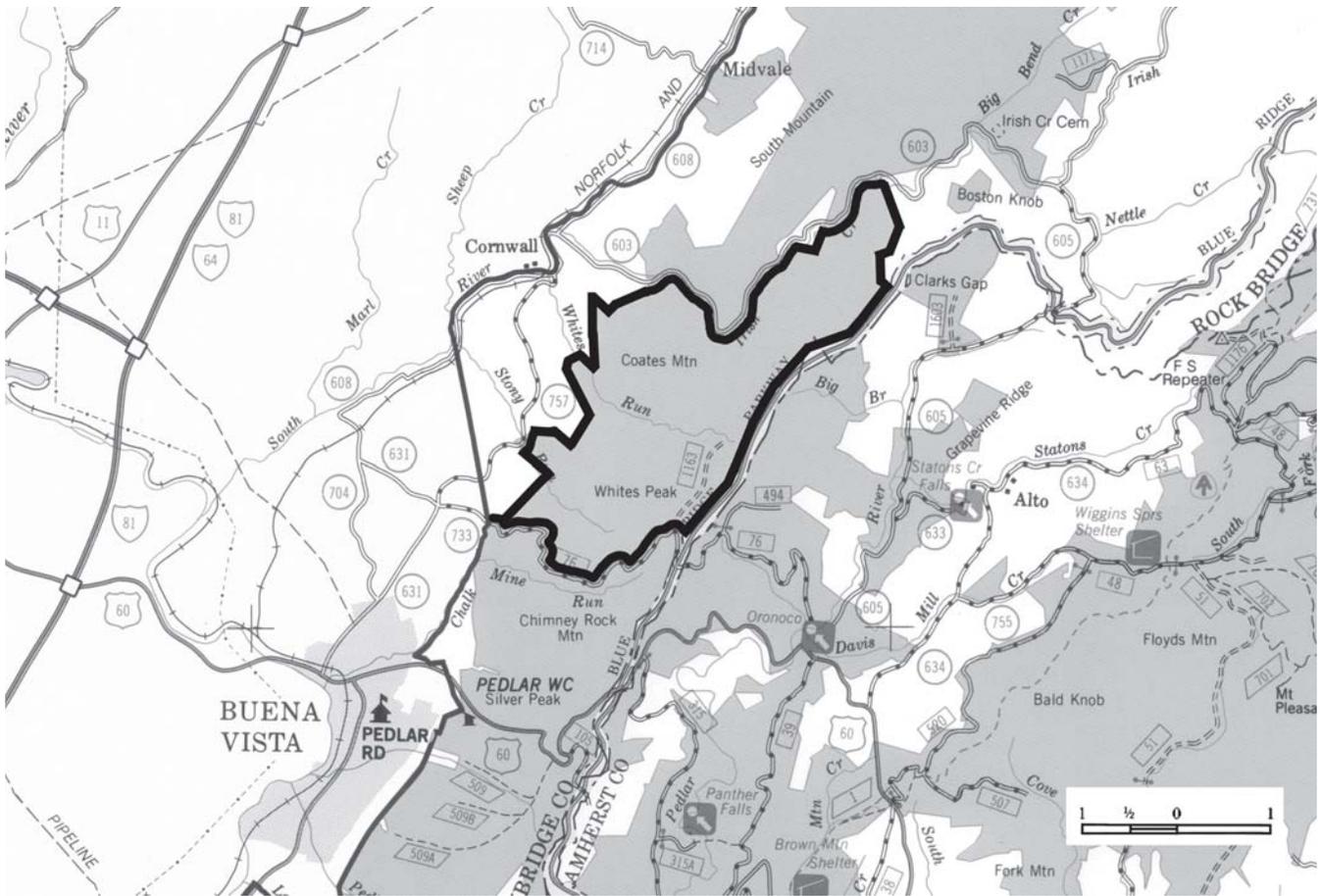
The major recreational activities include hunting and hiking. The long Whetstone Ridge Trail begins at Irish Creek and climbs to the Summit of South Mountain and then follows Whetstone Ridge to the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Adams Peak may contain 1066 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 9969 acres

**Location:** Rockbridge County, Virginia in the Pedlar District

**Topos:** Cornwall, Montebello, Vesuvius



# Whites Peak

Whites Peak is the leading edge of a series of small outliers along the western flank of the Blue Ridge Escarpment. These small peaks extend southwest from Buena Vista to the Three Sisters Knobs east of Glasgow. The numerous knobs are bounded by steep, narrow, V-shaped hollows.

Whites Peak includes three such knobs called Coates Mountain, Whites Peak, and McClure Peak. Whites Peak is the highest with an elevation of 2896 feet. These knobs provide scenic backdrops for visitors to the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Whites Run separates Coates Mountain from Whites Peak, while Stony Run serves to drain the slopes of Whites Peak and McClure Peak. Both streams are tributaries of the South River.

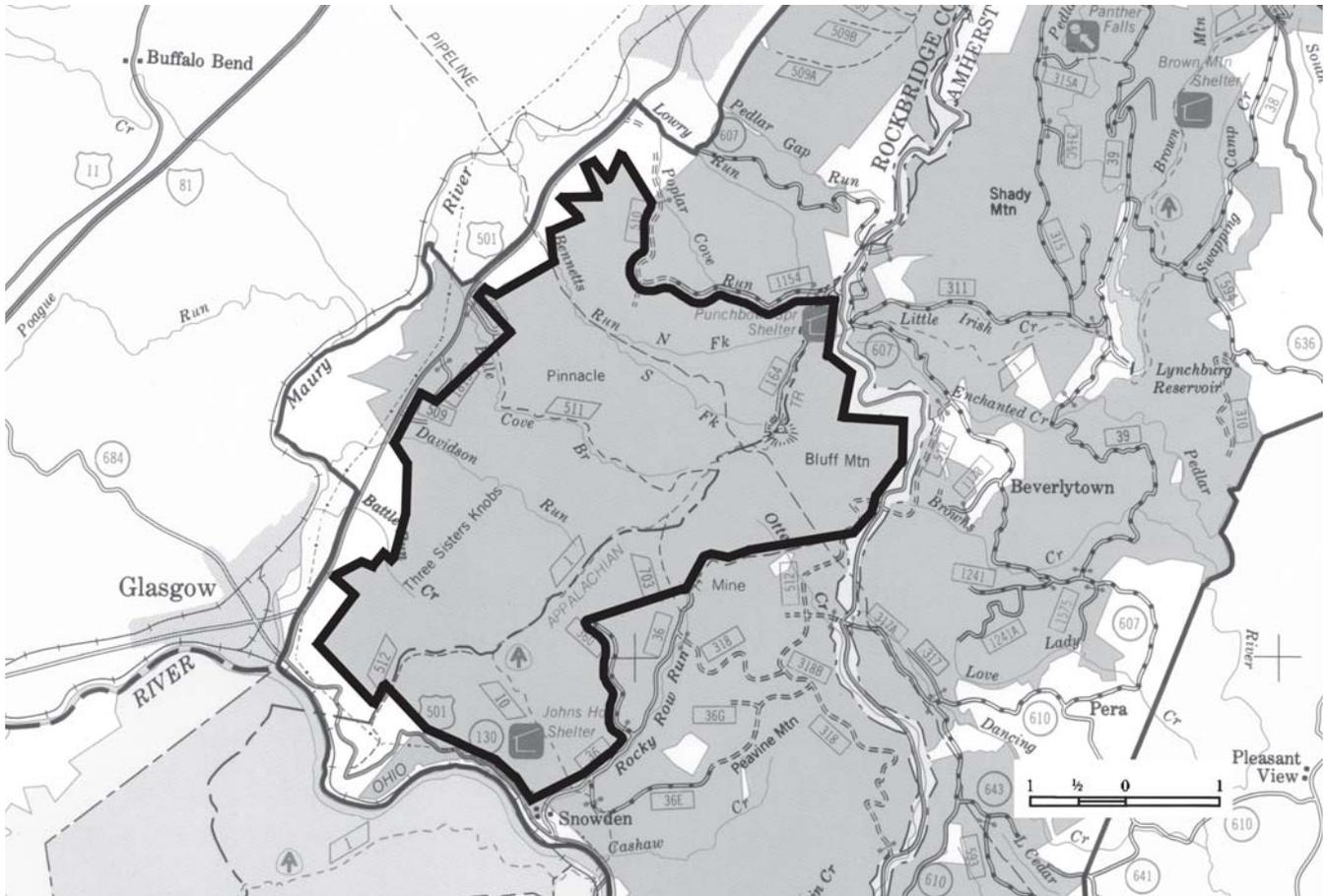
Although close to Buena Vista, Whites Peak is very remote. There are no designated trails and, therefore, opportunities for primitive recreational activities.

This area may contain 247 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 4614 acres

**Location:** Rockbridge County, Virginia in the Pedlar District

**Topos:** Cornwall



## Three Sisters

Three Sisters forms the northern slope of the James River Gorge, where the James River cuts through the Blue Ridge and debouches into the Virginia Piedmont.

Straddling the high crest of Rocky Row, the Three Sisters area has elevations ranging from almost 3400 feet on Bluff Mountain to less than 900 feet near the James River. This ridge gives rise to several small streams including Bennetts Run, Belle Cove Branch, and Battle Run. These all drain into the Maury River. Bennetts Run supports a small population of native trout. The headwaters of Otter Creek are located

on the eastern slope of Rocky Row Ridge.

Rocky Row Ridge is the most prominent geological feature. The ridge provides outstanding view of the James River and the James River Face Wilderness.

There are several trails that climb the ridge to the crest. The Appalachian Trail also passes through. The trail begins climbing to Rocky Row from the James River. Once on the ridge crest it follows along to the summit of Bluff Mountain.

This rugged mountain ridge has 2777 acres of possible old growth.

**Approximate Size:** 13,028 acres

**Location:** Amherst and Rockbridge Counties, Virginia in the Pedlar Ranger District

**Topos:** Buena Vista, Glasgow



A view from Adams Mountain Roadless Area

Mark Miller

*After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, I felt like our peace and security were shattered. It seemed our world would never be the same. I found myself searching for stability. At the end of that fateful week, my husband and I walked up Benso Run and sat by the stream. For the good part of the afternoon we listened to the trickle of the stream and admired the beauty of the ancient trees. We felt comforted by the stability and solitude of this special wild place.*

Lynn Cameron is from Mt. Crawford, Virginia

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# Conclusions

An opportunity is at hand to preserve some of the last remaining wild places in Virginia's George Washington National Forest. In the near future, the U.S. Forest Service plans to issue a Draft Management Plan for public comment and, after review of those comments, to adopt a long-range Plan for the forest that will guide its management for 10 to 15 years. Protection of the areas described in Virginia's Mountain Treasures must be a cornerstone of this upcoming plan.

The 1,061,000-acre George Washington National Forest is a part of the Southern Appalachians. The forest is mountainous, with much steep, rugged, and remote terrain. It features clean mountain streams, scenic waterfalls, popular byways, miles of hiking trails, rich biological diversity, and many other attractions.

This proposal would protect the wildest and most natural of these lands, totaling about \_\_\_\_\_ acres. As noted in the summary table, \_\_\_\_\_ acres, or about \_\_ percent, of these wildlands are at risk of logging and road building that would damage their natural values.

Protection of these wildlands would yield many benefits, including:

**Clean Water.** These forested areas contain important watersheds. Streams in the George Washington National Forest form the headwaters of numerous streams that feed the James, Shenandoah, and Potomac Rivers. Keeping these wildlands in an undisturbed condition would help maintain our outstanding water quality and high-priority fisheries.

**Recreation and Visual Beauty.** 4396 Because there are so few wild areas left, the rugged mountain forests of the George Washington, with their pristine streams, spectacular waterfalls, scenic hiking trails, and rich biological diversity, must be protected if future demand is to be met. These areas also provide valuable opportunities for hunting and fishing in remote, backcountry settings.

**Biological Diversity.** Many native plants and animals, including neotropical migrant songbirds, Black Bear, and many wildflowers, will benefit from the protection of the large tracts of contiguous forests these areas provide. Old-growth forests are especially important for maintaining diverse wildlife populations. Since several of the areas listed in this book link together to form natural wildlife corridors and sizable blocks of contiguous forest, their combined protection would reduce forest fragmentation.

**Jobs and Income.** The natural attractions of the George Washington National Forest generate millions of dollars annually in benefits from the many recreation opportunities. Economic health in the mountain counties and the state itself is supported by the beauty of these forested areas. The removal of these wildlands from the timber base would have only a minor effect on the timber supply and little, if any, impact on timber-related jobs. At the same time, it would save taxpayers millions of dollars. The rugged terrain found in these areas is not well-suited for timber production, and the costs to log them, including the expense of building roads, exceed revenues received. Moreover, the costs in silted streams, scarred vistas, fragmented wildlife habitats, and lost backcountry recreation opportunities are considerable.

In the Southern Appalachian region, only 10 percent of the timber comes from national forests; the rest is from private lands. Less than 1 percent of the timber cut in Virginia comes from the national forest. Payments to the counties would continue with little change under this proposal. By law, the annual payments to counties in lieu of taxes are based on the number of acres of land in national forest ownership, not on receipts from logging. Therefore, the federal payments which make up only a small share of each county budget, would not be reduced by decreased logging levels.



A hiker on the AT in Three Sisters

Mark Miller

**Text**

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# Summary Table

Area	Total Acreage For Each Area (Estimate)	Portion of Each Area in Current Roadless Inventory**(%)
Big Schloss Cluster		
Jonnies Knob	2,499	0
Big Schloss	31,204	20,755 (67)
Great North Mountain	6,681	0
Long Mountain	10,508	0
Falls Ridge	7,738	0
Church Mountain	12,506	0
Northern Shenandoah Mountain Cluster		
Beech Lick Knob	17,152	0
Little Cow Knob	5,335	0
Hogpen Mountain	9,229	0
Kretchie Mountain	6,677	0
Feedstone Mountain	4,057	0
Wildcat Ridge	8,522	0
Dunkle Knob	8,398	0
Central Shenandoah Mountain Cluster		
Gum Run	14,665	12,585 (86)
Oak Knob	10,866	10,866 (100)
Skidmore Fork	5,703	5,635 (99)
Dry River	12,939	7,313 (57)
Little River	29,342	27,248 (93)
Broad Run	5,047	0
Hankey Mountain	12,557	0
Ramseys Draft Wilderness	17,933	12,771 (71)
Addition		
Shaws Ridge	7,263	0
Southern Shenandoah Mountain Cluster		
Signal Corps Knob	4,044	0
Jerkentight	31,988	16,668 (52)

# Summary Table

Area	Total Acreage For Each Area (Estimate)	Portion of Each Area in Current Roadless Inventory**(%)
Great North Mountain Cluster		
Crawford Mountain	15,000	9,868 (66)
Elliott Knob	16,657	9,376 (56)
Ancher Knob	7,220	0
Sideling Hill	7,155	0
Walker Mountain	5,596	0
Alleghany Mountain Cluster		
Laurel Fork	10,324	9,983 (94)
Scaffold Run	6,611	0
Paddy Lick	5,444	0
Back Creek Mountain	5,713	0
West Back Creek Mountain	7,959	0
Little Alleghany Mountain	15,991	10,109 (63)
Warm Springs Mountain Cluster		
Warm Springs Mountain	7,832	0
Little Mare Mountain	12,587	0
Beards Mountain	11,721	7,457 (64)
Fore Mountain	4,590	0
Dolly Ann	9,613	7,804 (81)
Rich Hole/Rough Mountain Wilderness Cluster		
Rich Hole Wilderness Addition	12,498	10,826 (87)
Short Mountain	4,647	0
Rough Mountain Wilderness Addition	2,196	1,131 (52)
Longdale	4,396	0

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# Summary Table

Area	Total Acreage For Each Area (Estimate)	Portion of Each Area in Current Roadless Inventory**(%)
Southern Alleghany Cluster		
Mud Run Mountain	4,303	0
Toms Knob	7,879	0
Oliver Mountain	13,081	13,081(100)
Panther Ridge	4,231	0
Jerrys Run	4,777	0
Snake Run Ridge	8,166	0
Slaty Mountain	4,043	0
Massanutten Mountain Cluster		
Signal Knob	5,471	0
Northern Massanutten Mountain	17,770	9,410(51)
Catback Mountain	6,386	0
Short Horse Mountain	7,243	0
Southern Massanutten Mountain	11,919	11,919(100)
Pedlar Cluster		
Kelley Mountain	12,895	7,632(59)
Saint Mary's Additions	4,793	1,441(30)
The Friar	3,977	2020(51)
Adams Peak	9,969	7,076(71)
Whites Peak	4,614	0
Three Sisters	13,028	8,150(63)1

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# Summary Table

Total estimated acreage for all 62 wild areas:	602575
Estimated acreage in the 62 wild areas that is included in the current roadless inventory:	240,124
Estimated acreage in the 62 wild areas that is not included in the current roadless inventory:	362,451
Estimated percentage of the acreage of the 65 wild areas included in the current roadless inventory:	60%

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*These groups are co-sponsors of this report. Please contact them for further information*

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*These groups are co-sponsors of this report. Please contact them for further information*

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# Back Cover