



Hunting Camp Creek Proposed Wilderness Area Bland County

The valleys of Hunting Camp Creek and Little Wolf Creek provide unusual opportunities for solitude and the wilderness experience. The headwaters of these two streams, and indeed the entire drainage of Little Wolf Creek, lie within a designated “roadless area” of the Jefferson National Forest.

The potential 8,470-acre wilderness stretches from ridge top to ridge top, and is traversed by the Appalachian Trail. There is an intermittent trail along an old logging railroad grade next to Hunting Camp Creek, and another informal trail along the crest of Brushy Mountain, which forms the southeast boundary of the proposed wilderness. Garden Mountain forms the northwestern edge of this exceptionally secluded area; VA routes 623, 615 and 610 complete the boundary. There are only two internal Forest Service roads, both now gated and unused.

The area exhibits the typical peculiarities of Ridge and Valley geology, with older Silurian sandstone forming the tops of the mountains and younger Devonian shales appearing in the valleys. The slopes are steep to very steep. The vegetation is characteristic of eastern deciduous forest, with tulip tree, cucumber tree, Fraser magnolia, northern red oak, white oak, basswood, white ash, red maple, sourwood, white pine, and hemlock at lower elevations, and chestnut oak, scarlet oak, striped maple, Virginia pine, and Table Mountain pine at higher elevations.

Although beavers do not seem to be present, the valley of Hunting Camp Creek shows evidence of their past workings, including old beaver dams, and a long chain of marshy areas that probably represent old beaver meadows. There are extensive stands of rhododendron along the creeks and on the ridges. Wild flowers abound: flame azalea, mountain laurel, red catchfly, Indian physic, teaberry, columbine, nodding milkweed, and waist-high specimens of cinnamon and interrupted fern. There is abundant evidence of deer and bear. Bird life is rich, with an especially fine dawn chorus of veeries and wood thrushes. Ruffed grouse are common, despite the absence of “improved” wildlife openings.

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