



Stone Mountain Proposed Wilderness Area Lee County

The Stone Mountain Proposed Wilderness Area is a 3,270-acre tract of remote forest land adjacent to the North Fork of the Powell River in Lee County. The steep south-facing scarp of Stone Mountain provides outstanding views of Powell Mountain across the Powell River, which is famous for its rich populations of freshwater mussels. Two rare salamanders inhabit a gated cave within the area.

The Stone Mountain and Payne Branch trails provide access for hikers and hunters. The Stone Mountain Trail follows the crest of the mountain amid giant boulders and sheer cliffs. The trails are connected to an adjacent developed campground at Cave Springs.

The slopes of Stone Mountain are forested with tulip trees, red maple, and several species of oak. There are at least 100 acres of old growth. Unusual for this part of the Jefferson, the mineral rights are owned by the Forest Service. Although the area was omitted from the most recent roadless inventory, it nevertheless meets the criteria for roadlessness. The old Olinger fire tower has long since been dismantled. This large tract is probably the least disturbed forest in all of southwest Virginia and therefore deserves to be preserved as wilderness.

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Proposed Wilderness Area
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