

Middle Mountain Wilderness Area (Proposed)

Size: approx: 10,106 acres

Location: Greenbrier, Pocahontas Counties

Watershed: Greenbrier

USGS Topographic Maps: Lake Sherwood, Mountain Grove

Elevation Range (approx.): 2,200 – 3520 ft

Dominant Vegetation: Mixed Oaks



Photo © Rich Bailey

Located in southern Pocahontas and northern Greenbrier counties, the seventeen mile long Middle Mountain is

the largest roadless area in the Marlinton/White

Sulphur Springs Ranger District of the Monongahela National Forest. The Middle Mountain trail follows the spine of the mountain. Wildlife management has occurred here and it is much used by hunters. The proposed wilderness area would not comprise the entire mountain; rather, it would mostly contain lands currently designated as 6.2 – a total of just over 12,000 acres.

While the mountain is lower in elevation than many in potential wilderness areas, the topography is quite irregular. The mountain seems to repeatedly fold in on itself, with numerous hollows and drafts. The Douthat headwaters and Devil's Garden areas in particular are like this.

Middle Mountain would be unique among existing wilderness areas in Monongahela because of their relatively low elevation and rainfall. There is a marked difference between the east and west faces of the mountain. The forest community on the east facing slope is dominated by oaks and other mixed hardwoods, along with White Pine. The west slope receives considerably more rain, and is more verdant as a result. Rhododendron, Eastern Hemlock, and Striped Maple can be found here. Almost the entire forest here is mature second-growth with patches of older-growth interspersed.

There is very little in the way of water along the ridgeline. What water can be found exists as small springs in various places below the top of the mountain. This having been said, there is an excellent opportunity here to protect the headwaters of Douthat Creek – part of the Greenbrier River watershed.

Middle Mountain is well-known among hunters as heavily populated by deer, turkey, and bear. Evidence of Black Bear passing can commonly be found. This would be an excellent opportunity to protect bear habitat to a degree similar to that achieved with Otter Creek wilderness. A Middle Mountain Wilderness Area would also provide critical habitat for the Federally Endangered Shale Barren Rock Cress and other rare species.

Opportunities for recreation are considerable. This area is easily accessed from a number of places. Route 92 borders the eastern flank of the mountain. There are a number of access points here, and from Rt. 39 in the north. The Middle Mountain trail is easily traveled, with numerous spots to camp, given proper water storage. Scenery on the mountain is almost entirely wooded, with a few good east-facing views along the top of the ridge.

Middle Mountain will add wilderness to an area of the Mon that has seen little of this type of protection. Uses traditionally associated with this area would be able to continue, and reclusive species like Black Bear and native Brook Trout would benefit immensely.