

Spice Run Wilderness Area (Proposed)

Size: approx: 7,254 acres

Location: Greenbrier, Pocahontas Counties

Watershed: Greenbrier

USGS Topographic Maps: Denmar, Droop

Elevation Range (approx.): 2,000 – 3,284 ft

Dominant Vegetation: Mixed Oaks



Photo © Jonathan Jessup

This wild area rises from the Greenbrier River on its western boundary, and is named for Spice Run, which is also the boundary between Pocahontas and Greenbrier Counties. The area is bounded on the north by Calvin Price State Forest, on the east by County Road 21 and private land, and on the south by roads up Little Creek. It contains the watersheds of Spice, Davy and Kincaid Runs, all native brook trout streams which drain into the Greenbrier River.

Spice Run lies within the Appalachian Plateau physiographic province of West Virginia, just west of the Allegheny Front. It is underlain with sandstone from the Mississippian Period and shale from the Denovian Period. Spice Run, along with Davy Run and Kincaid Run, two smaller tributaries of the Greenbrier River, cut steep hollows which define the terrain. The elevation goes from just under 2,000 feet along the Greenbrier River up to 3,284 on the top of Slab Camp Mountain.

If designated, Spice Run would be one of the most remote wilderness areas in West Virginia. Access is by rough jeep road on the west, by canoe or kayak on the Greenbrier River, or by fording the Greenbrier on foot from the Greenbrier River Trail, which can only be done during normal to lower flows. There are no marked trails within the area, just a jeep trail along Spice Ridge, which separates Spice Run from Calvin Price State Forest, and another coming in from the south to Slab Camp Mountain.

In their Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS) analysis for Spice Run, the U.S. Forest Service reported that the area had high potential for wilderness experience. It was found to have very strong opportunities to provide solitude and primitive recreation. Spice Run's wilderness attributes were among the highest of all areas evaluated in the WARS process. The majority of the proposed area has been managed for over 17 years in a way that has maintained these wilderness attributes. It is clear that Spice Run is even more appropriate for wilderness designation today because of this.

Across the Greenbrier River, the logging town of Spice Run was located next to the railroad, which is now the Greenbrier River Trail. Here the timber was hauled out by the Spice Run Lumber Co. at the turn of the last century. Pillars from a bridge spanning the Greenbrier still stand in the river. The forest has grown back, and the wildlife has returned, making this a great place to hunt or hike for the adventurous explorer who needs no trail to keep from getting lost.