

Laurel Run Wilderness Area (Proposed)

Size: approx. 3,032 acres

Location: Greenbrier County

USGS Topographic Maps: Alvon, Rucker Gap

Watershed: Greenbrier

Elevation Range (approx.): 2,200 - 3120 ft

Dominant Vegetation: Mixed Oaks

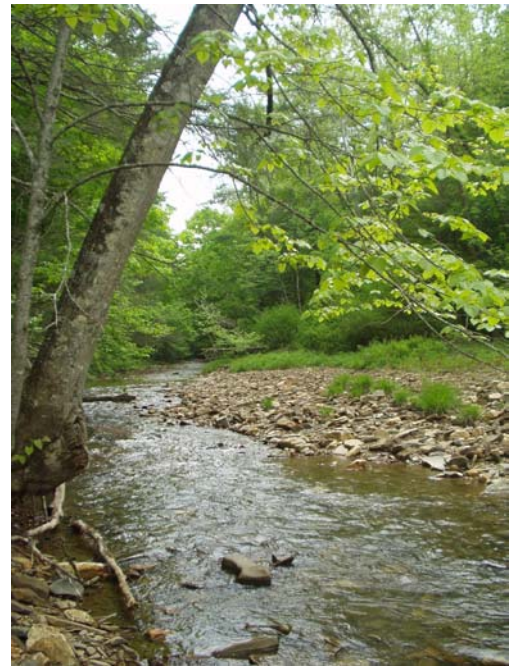


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Situated in extreme eastern Greenbrier County on the Virginia border, the proposed Laurel Run Wilderness area is also on the eastern edge of the Monongahela National Forest. It is bounded on the north by County Road 14, on the south by private land, on the east by the WV State and National Forest boundaries, and on the west by FS road 372. The area itself meets the size requirement for eastern wilderness areas at just over 3,000 acres. Importantly, however, it is directly adjacent to another proposed wilderness area, Little Allegheny Mountain (6,153 acres), the two being separated only by the gated, high clearance (four-wheel drive) road, FS 372. The area has been managed as ‘semi-primitive, non-motorized’ (management prescription 6.2) by the U.S. Forest Service for the past 18 years.

The Laurel Run area is vegetated mostly by mixed oak forest with isolated stands of White Pine, Pitch Pine and Yellow Poplar. Some of these stands are 130-140 years old. The area has many acres of open country dominated by herbaceous species. The proposed wilderness provides habitat for Black Bear, Wild Turkey, White-Tailed Deer, and countless other species, including various rare species.

Laurel Run lies within West Virginia’s Ridge and Valley Province. The sandstone bedrock was formed during the Mississippian Period of the Paleozoic Era, between 310 and 345 million years ago. The central feature of the area is Laurel Run, which drains into Meadow Creek to the north. Laurel Run is classified as a Tier 2.5 stream, one that will support trout populations due to its high water quality and topography. Wilderness designation would protect nearly the entire watershed of Laurel Creek as the proposed boundaries extend from near the top of Little Allegheny Mountain on the west, to crest of Allegheny Mountain on the east.

The Laurel Run area offers many miles of hiking trails. The Allegheny Trail traverses the heart of it, mostly following Laurel Run and offering great trout fishing access. The Allegheny Mountain Trail closely follows the eastern border of the area along the West Virginia/Virginia state line. The two trails connect near the area’s southern boundary. These are both long trails and offer connectivity to many others outside the boundary of this proposed wilderness area, adding to the recreational benefits.

Laurel Run is a wild, seldom visited portion of the Monongahela National Forest that would make a solid addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System. It is located in the White Sulphur Springs Ranger District, which currently has no designated wilderness.