

North Fork Mountain Wilderness Area (Proposed)

Size: approx. 9,171 acres

Location: Grant, Pendleton Counties

Watershed: South Branch of the Potomac

USGS Topographic Maps: Hopeville, Upper Tract, Petersburg West

Elevation Range (approx.): 1,080 – 3,553 ft

Dominant Vegetation: Mixed Oaks, Mixed Hardwoods



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Located in Pendleton and Grant Counties, the North Fork Mountain area is a superb wilderness candidate. This dry, high-mountain area is a classic example of the West Virginia Highlands east of the Allegheny Front. It is bounded mostly by private lands but has good public access from multiple points.

In its' Wilderness Attribute Rating System, the U.S. Forest Service gave the North Fork Mountain area its highest rating for "natural integrity." The majority of the area has been managed as 'semi-primitive, non-motorized' (management prescription 6.2) for the past 20 years and has grown even wilder since this evaluation

The proposed wilderness contains several unique geological features, including Chimney Top and views of the Hopeville Gorge. In addition, several other Tuscarora Sandstone formations are found in the area. Tuscarora Sandstone, a layer of rock only about 50 feet thick, is a major ridge-forming layer of rock in Eastern West Virginia.

The vegetation in the proposed North Fork Wilderness area is mainly hardwoods along with Mountain Laurel, Flame Azalea and Wintergreen. Fern beds and an abundance of wildflowers are found in the area. It also provides habitat for several rare plant species including Butternut and Smoke Hole Bergamot.

Wildlife in the proposed wilderness includes deer, turkey, bear, and many other bird and mammal species. Peregrine Falcons, a US Fish and Wildlife Species of Concern are also found in the North Fork Mountain area. The Allegheny Woodrat, another Species of Concern would have habitat protected in a North Fork Mountain Wilderness Area. Many occurrences of other rare species have been found in the area. The area contributes flow and contains part of three Tier 2.5 streams, which support native Brook Trout. Redman Run, Long Run and Powdermill Run provide habitat for trout and related recreational opportunities

Spectacular views abound from the many rocky overlooks in the proposed wilderness area. Visitors can enjoy sights of the South Branch of the Potomac River, Seneca Rocks, Germany Valley, Fore Knobs and Champe Rocks. *Backpacker Magazine* described these views as some of "the best mountain scenery in the East". This area provides excellent opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Hikers throughout the mid-Atlantic Region come to this area to hike on the North Fork Mountain Trail and nearby spur trails. The North Fork Mountain Trail, which runs along the crest of the mountain, has been called the best trail in West Virginia by *Outside Magazine*.