



Roadless Area is Threatened by Marshall Run Timber Sale

Local Residents, Wild Virginia & Others Act to Protect Beech Lick Knob in the George Washington National Forest

The permanent protection of the roadless areas in our national forests is critically important. It is a means by which large areas of remote, relatively undisturbed areas of mature forest can be secured for future generations. The ecological services, wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities provided by these areas are irreplaceable. Wild Virginia has made passage of the Roadless Area Conservation Act its top conservation priority.

Unfortunately, the recently proposed Marshall Run Timber Sale jeopardizes an important roadless area in the George Washington National Forest. The project lies within the beautiful Beech Lick Knob area - 17,000 plus acres just west of Fulks Run in Rockingham County. Though Beech Lick Knob has not formally been identified as a roadless area, this project helped bring its omission to the attention of the Forest Service. We intend to make sure it is designated as a roadless area when the forest planning process resumes.

Identified are nine cutting units totaling 185 acres. Modified shelterwood cuts are planned for each of the units. Construction of 2.4 miles of road is planned, with 1 mile being a temporary road. Due to the inaccessibility of portions of the project area, helicopter logging is planned for three units. A prescribed burn is proposed for approximately 1,300 acres.

Many residents of the small community of Yankeetown and the surrounding area responded immediately to news of the project. Over the

years, they have witnessed and suffered from increased runoff and erosion following nearby timber sales and the road construction that accompanied them. Flooding of Marshall Run is also a danger. Some residents were unable to reach their homes by car for many months following a 1996 flood. Local reactions to the project were printed in the Harrisonburg *Daily News Record* on September 28 (www.dnronline.com/news_details.php?AID=12484&CHID=1).

In addition to the local citizens, Wild Virginia and several other conservation groups submitted comments on



Cutting Unit 7, proposed Marshall Run Timber Sale.

the proposed timber sale. Through emails and other means, many people were informed of the project and commented as well. Hundreds of letters, emails and phone calls were received by the Forest Service. Many thanks to all that responded!

There are many reasons why we oppose this sale. First and foremost, nothing should be done to jeopardize Beech Lick Knob being officially desig-

nated a roadless area. The criteria for roadless areas require minimal amounts of road and other human disturbance, including logging. No disturbance should be allowed prior to the area being evaluated for roadless area designation and other potential protections.

A number of other issues need to be addressed:

- Some of the cutting units approach the Forest Service definition of "old growth." A review of these units should be conducted as well as a thorough survey for old growth in the area. Allowing units to mature into old growth should be considered.
- Marshall Run and its tributary Root Run are home to brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*), the only native trout species in Virginia. Great care should be exercised to keep these trout waters clean and habitable.
- Two invasive species, Japanese stilt grass (*Microstegium vimineum*) and tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) occur on the site. Other invasive plants could be present. A rigorous plan for dealing with the potential spread of these species should be developed.
- The scoping notice for this project was short on substance and detail. There was not enough information to assess the prescribed burn of 1,300 acres. **Cont on page 2**

Wild Virginia Update

Letter from our President, Eric Gilchrist

I'm in constant awe watching weather changes and what nature has to offer us. With the drought we have been facing, it is fascinating to observe growing cracks in lawns and water banks receding from local rivers. What will winter bring, and then spring? Yes, I can be easily entertained, but sometimes these weather patterns give me cause for concern. Are these short term swings or more indicators of rapid climate change? I hope humanity understands that our decisions and choices today are impacting what our natural environment will offer us for years to come. The worry extends beyond us to wildlife and plants worldwide.

You, our readers, are keenly aware of the connections we have to our ecosystems and why we need to protect them. There are others though, like some public officials, who say we cannot afford protection because people need jobs, housing and food. Arguing against this stance can be difficult because those issues may be true in the short term for certain voting population segments.

Ah, there is hope! Today, rumbling exists among mainstream economists that ecosystem destruc-

tion is harmful for economies too. Public officials and business leaders focusing on revenues and profits will begin to take notice of evidence which demonstrates negative economic impacts. With economics explained, more of the general public may start to comprehend the critical relationship they have with the planet's ecosystems.

For example, with the current drought in the Southeast, you may notice various political entities squabbling over water supplies and the reality that citizens are being asked to do their part to conserve. Much of this is due not only to the drought, but increasing population levels and aging water supply infrastructure.

We are also noticing that municipalities with water reservoirs are concerned about sediment buildups within the local watersheds. Sedimentation in waterways is a natural process, but can be accelerated by human activities. The removal of protective vegetation does this. You can easily see this problem created by land clearing for strip malls and housing developments along highways.

However, the activities of build-

ing new logging or recreational roads and unnecessary removal of trees in our beautiful national forests often go unseen by the general public. Millions, if not billions, of dollars will have to be spent in dam remediation or building new water intakes because of sediment buildups. It is taxes and economics again. Politicians want to get re-elected. Should we spend more taxpayer money on fixing drinking water supplies or see that protective vegetation remains mostly intact?

Wild Virginia hopes to shed more light on the decisions being made in the George Washington National Forest and how they impact abilities of local governments to provide affordable, clean drinking water and flood control. We are working toward finding strong, verifiable evidence that will show decision makers the relationship between sediment flow rates and logging and road building in our forests.

We have limited resources. If you can help us find the necessary data and information, please contact me, our Conservation Director, David Hannah or any of our volunteer board members with advice or feedback. As always, we appreciate your support and care for our forests.

Marshall Run Timber Sale

(continued from page 1)

The official comment period for this project ended on October 5. It will likely be many months before a next step is taken. We hope the Forest Service will decide to drop this timber sale from consideration, as we and many others have recommended. Should they decide not to drop the sale, an Environmental Assessment of the proposed project should be developed, complete with a set of alternatives to the original proposal. The EA and its alternatives should be available for public review and comment before a final decision about the project is made.

The Marshall Run area is beautiful, remote, and scenic. As part of Beech Lick Knob, the entire area represents an all too rare resource in the eastern U.S., a large block of mature, non-fragmented, relatively undisturbed forest. Thanks for your help and support as we continue to fight for protection of this forest gem.



Wood Thrush. By Jen Creasy

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WILD VIRGINIA



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Wild Virginia Hikes and Outings

All hike info also available on our website: <http://wildvirginia.org/programsRecreation.html>

A Full Outings Calendar : COME JOIN US!

Saturday, December 8th

Spy Rock

Twenty-five miles of the Appalachian Trail curl and dip through Nelson County. The AT through Nelson County includes a short jaunt out and back from the top of famous Crabtree Falls to a little known jewel of the George Washington National Forest: Spy Rock was a Civil War lookout that was used by Confederate soldiers to monitor Union troop movements.

The trail includes waterfalls, calf-burning inclines with matching plunges, peaceful isolation and spectacular perches. The main perch—Spy Rock—offers nearly 360-degree views (especially in the winter). You also will see giant boulder outcrops that seem to hang in the air.

This is an 8-mile strenuous hike. Please bring sturdy shoes, water, lunch, and be prepared for any weather. Meet at 8am at Java Java in Charlottesville (2214 Ivy Rd., near Sneak Reviews). For more info call Heather Horn 703-732-3419 (cell).

Saint Mary's was given Wilderness designation in 1984. Even with the mining scars, the area is a joy to hike. The tread varies from rocky footpaths to old work roads and trails almost totally engulfed by mountain laurel and rhododendron. St. Mary's Wilderness has an abundance of diverse scenery: waterfalls, fern forests, open meadows, valley vistas, and high mountain wetlands.

As with most wild areas, there are places that become over-used or abused and this special place is no exception. The primary route into the Wilderness off of FR41 was severely damaged by Hurricane Isabel in 2003. We will start on the Blue Ridge Parkway and descend down the Mine Bank Trail, then go back up the Saint Mary's River Trail to Green Pond before walking a more level trail to the parking lot.

Meet at 8am at Java Java (see Dec. hike). For more info call Heather Horn 703-732-3419 (cell).

Sunday, February 24th

Elliot Knob

At 4,463 feet, Elliot Knob is the highest point in the George Washington National Forest and one of the highest peaks in Virginia. Just west of Staunton and secluded in Buffalo Gap, this hike features two waterfalls, several great views to the west and east, and a grass covered summit. It is a hidden treasure to explore on a winter weekend in Virginia!

This is a strenuous 8.5 mile hike. Be prepared for any weather! Meet at 8am at Java Java (see Dec. hike). For more info call Heather Horn 703-732-3419 (cell).

Sunday, January 20th

Saint Mary's Wilderness

This is a ten-mile loop hike. At nearly 10,000 acres, this is the third largest Wilderness Area in Virginia. Until 1950, the area was heavily mined for iron ore and manganese. Artifacts and ruins from those days are still visible as the forest tries to recapture what was once wild. This area dispels the myth that once industrial areas cannot be designated as Wilderness.

Legislative Update:

Virginia Ridge and Valley Act Passes in the House!

House Resolution 1011, The Virginia Ridge and Valley Act passed the House of Representatives on October 23, 2007 and was sent to the Senate. It should pass the Senate and then be signed by President Bush, but as always it deserves your support. Both Senators Warner and Webb support the bill. This bill would protect over 55,000 acres on the Jefferson National Forest in southwest Virginia.

Virginians should be proud that both its Senators are cosponsors of the **Roadless Area Conservation Act (S. 1478)**. Please thank Senators Warner and Webb for their strong support of Roadless Area protection. S. 1478 would protect over 58 million acres of National

Forest lands currently inventoried as roadless, including over 394,000 acres in Virginia. This legislation would codify what Bill Clinton put in place administratively in 1999 as the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. As Wild Virginia members know, this legislation would end the 40-year debate over the last largest unprotected wildlands in America. BUT, most of the Virginia House delegation has not cosponsored the companion bill **HR 2516**. Please especially write to Congressmen Goode, Goodlatte, Wolf, and Cantor.

Call 202-224-3121 to reach your Representative, or look up your member of Congress at: www.congress.org. **Thank you for contacting your representative in support of full protection of our last wild places.**

Species Spotlight (continued from page 5)

The story of the Eastern Hemlock is now completely entwined with the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid. The loss of an important ecosystem and the resulting endangerment of the species that depend on that ecosystem is already well underway. Evidence of this change can be seen along all the streams in the mountains of Virginia. Today, when you close your eyes and imagine a stream, it looks very different than it did 20 years ago.

Sources:

"Hemlock Woolly Adelgid" Mark S. McClure, Scott M. Salom, Kathleen S. Shields, *Forest Health Technology Enterprise Team, Morgantown, West Virginia, FHTET-2001 - 03, March 2001.*

www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/hwa/

www.cnr.vt.edu/dendro

www.nps.gov/shen

Photos from Recent Wild Virginia Outings Come join us on a hike soon!



Photos (l & r) from our October hike to Mount Pleasant National Scenic Area in Amherst County.



Photos (l & r) from our November hike to Blackrock Summit and Trayfoot Mountain in Shenandoah National Park.

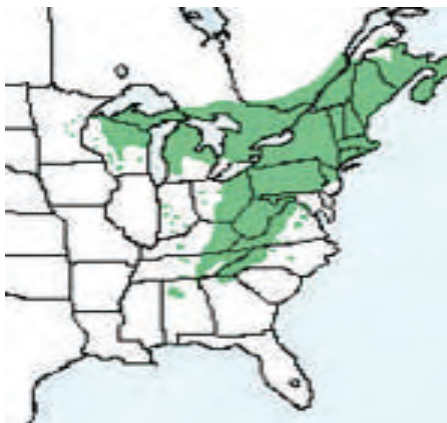


Species Spotlight : Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*)

Article by Chris Bowlen

Close your eyes and envision walks you have taken along streams in the Appalachian Region of the Eastern US before 1990. Chances are good your image includes *Tsuga canadensis*, Eastern Hemlock. A conifer found in cooler, moist coves or north facing outcrops, Eastern Hemlock stands create unique ecosystems no other tree can replace. The trees provide cover for ruffed grouse, turkey, deer, snowshoe hare and rabbits. Black throated warbler, solitary vireo and northern goshawk require hemlock habitat. Many plant species flourish in a hemlock ecosystem: leatherwood, rattlesnake plantain, Canada May Flower and bluebeard are only a few. Bear commonly den in hollow hemlock trunks. Hemlock trees keep stream temperatures cool enough for brook trout to thrive. In winter, hemlock stands act as a wind break to keep the area warmer than a comparable hardwood grove.

Eastern Hemlock is a slow growing tree that can attain a height of 160ft, a diameter of 6-7ft and live for almost 1000 years! The terminal leader often droops in contrast to the pointed tops of most other evergreens. Leaves are comprised of single, flat needles, ½ inch in length. Needles are dark green



Geographic range of eastern hemlock. Map courtesy VA Tech Department of Forestry.



Photo by Robert Mohlenbrock, USDA NRCS.

on top and lighter underneath with two lines of white stomata (pores) running the length of the needle. Branches have a flattened array of needles rather than a spiral effect. Flowers are produced in spring—followed by cone production on branch tips through the summer—maturing in early fall. Seeds are released from the cones during the winter. It takes 20-40 years for a tree to begin seed production.

During pre-colonial times, hemlock comprised about 20% of upland forests. By the turn of the 20th century, the percentage had decreased to about 6% due to logging. The number of Eastern Hemlock trees continues to steadily decline due the presence of *Adelges tsugae*, hemlock wooly adelgid (HWA). The HWA is an aphid-like insect, native to Japan, and poses a serious threat to both the Eastern and Carolina Hemlocks. Introduced in Oregon in 1924, probably from contaminated nursery stock, HWA does not affect Western or Mountain Hemlock. HWA arrived in Richmond, VA in 1951 and has been moving through the range of the Eastern Hemlock at about 10% per year. Eventually, HWA will cover the entire range as it is well adapted to cold.

HWA hatch from eggs protected in the white wooly-looking cases found on the hemlock twigs. Eggs hatch in June and the insect aestivates (is dormant) during the summer until October when the nymphs start sucking on the newest growth of a branch. Nymphs feed on the

food reserves stored within a needle, resulting in the slow decline of branches and eventual death of the entire tree, which can take up to 4 years. The insect becomes an adult in February, when it can lay more eggs on hemlock branches or a variant, a winged adult, called a sexuparae, flies off to lay eggs on spruce trees. In North America, eggs laid by this adult form do not develop; thus, only the hemlock is affected by the adelgid.

Control efforts for HWA in forest systems are very expensive. Systemic insecticides are introduced as a soil drench or injected directly into the tree. Both methods rely on a healthy flow of sap inside the tree, which is not very likely in infested trees. Currently, the most promising effort to control HWA is a non-



Egg cases of HWA deposited on hemlock leaves. Photo courtesy VA Tech Department of Forestry.

native biological control in the form of a coccinellid (beetle) from Japan: *Pseudoscytmus tusugae Sasaji*. The beetle feeds on all life stages of the HWA and field tests have shown encouraging results. But will introducing another foreign insect create new problems? What happens to the beetle when no more HWA is present? Does it search for an alternative food source? **Con't on page 4**

Wild Virginia Annual Party

Many thanks to all who helped make it possible!

We had a great time with the members and supporters of Wild Virginia at our Annual Party on November 9th.

Big **THANK YOUs** go to the following people and businesses that contributed goodies or otherwise helped us organize the event:

Karen Walker Rob Gardner

Kevin Lynch Starr Hill Brewery

Eppie's Integral Yoga

Mudhouse Feast!

Whole Foods Java-Java

Market Street Wine Shop

And a **HUGE Thank You** to the Musicians who made the evening so much fun.

We look forward to celebrating with everyone again next year!



Wild Virginia member writing a letter to Rep. Virgil Goode in support of the Roadless Area Conservation Act.



Our evening of fun also included some work on behalf of our national forests!

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