



Virginia Governors Advocate for Full Protection of Inventoried Roadless Areas*

GOOD NEWS DEPARTMENT: As a big present to all of us, on December 22, 2005 outgoing Governor Mark Warner officially filed a petition with the United States Department of Agriculture for permanent protection of over 394,000 acres (23.7% of the total National Forest acreage) in Virginia's George Washington and Jefferson National Forests. Warner's petition to Secretary Mike Johanns, who oversees the management of all National Forests, asked that the federal government follow the terms of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule in Virginia to ensure all inventoried roadless areas receive permanent protection from logging, road building, mining and drilling. The Bush Administration repealed in the Roadless Rule in May 2005.

On March 1st, Virginia's new governor, Tim Kaine, showed his support for Warner's policy by writing directly to Mike Johanns and the chief of the U.S. Forest Service asking for full protection of roadless areas in Virginia. His letter was accompanied by a petition signed by more than 5,000 Virginians asking the Forest Service to reinstate the 2001 Roadless Rule. This is in addition to the more than 80,000 comments the U.S. Forest Service has already received from Virginians in support of full protection for roadless areas.

By supporting Warner's policy, Governor Tim Kaine has shown the citizens of Virginia that he recognizes the value of keeping our wildlands intact. The George Washington and Jefferson National Forests already have 3,000 miles of roads, with an accompanying maintenance backlog estimated at \$20 million.

"Roadless areas in Virginia's national forests are critically important for wildlife habitat and help safeguard drinking water for thousands of citizens. Our forests also present really outstanding opportunities for recreation and tourism" said Governor Warner.

"I have determined it is in the best interest of the Commonwealth to have these areas protected in their current undeveloped state for current and future generations."

The demand for backcountry recreation in the national forests is projected to increase 170 percent by the year 2050. This increase in demand could help our economy as Virginia has the most roadless acreage of any state in the eastern half of the country.

If the U.S. Forest Service accepts Virginia's roadless protection petition, it will then negotiate a detailed plan with the state. Under the current Administration, the Forest Service will likely deny the petition. This is where the members of Wild Virginia come in.

There are three important ways you and your friends and family can help:

- **SIGN** the national petition to the Bush Administration (petition is at www.wildvirginia.org)
- **CONTACT** Senators John Warner and George Allen and your Representative to ask that they support and promote protection of Virginia's roadless areas. It is only with the support of Virginia's Federal legislators that the roadless protection petition will be accepted. Write a letter or e-mail as soon as possible.
- **SEND** letters of support and encouragement to say THANK YOU to Tim Kaine. It is important that Tim Kaine continue to pressure the Forest Service to protect roadless areas.

***Please contact them soon.
Thank you for helping in the effort to protect Virginia's last wild places!***

Governor Tim Kaine
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor,
1111 East Broad Street,
Richmond, VA 23219; 804-786-2211

Senator John Warner
1003 First Union Bank Building
213 South Jefferson Street
Roanoke, Virginia 24011; 540-857-2676

Senator George Allen
3140 Chaparral Dr. Bldg. C, Suite 101
Roanoke, VA 24018; 540-772-4236

The contact information for your district Representative can be found at:
www.house.gov/writerep.

*Not all roadless forests are included in the US Forest Service inventory. For example, Wild Virginia is actively researching the "loss" of roughly 18,000 acres from the Big Schloss Roadless Area on the Lee Ranger District (Shenandoah River Watershed) between 1979 and 1994.

Wild Virginia Hikes and Outings

Signal Corps Knob Timber Sale

The Forest Service is planning a 230 acre timber sale on a remote part of Shenandoah Mountain near Ramsey's Draft Wilderness. Help us scout the proposed cutting units and create a plan to stop this timber sale.

When & Where:

Sunday March 12th. 9 am. Meet at Java Java, 2214 Ivy Road (by Sneak Reviews) in Charlottesville.

Hike Details:

We will be hiking on logging roads and hiking into the woods to explore some of the different cutting units. This is a moderate hike with some off trail adventuring. Bring hiking shoes, appropriate winter clothing, lunch, water, and a camera (optional). Mountain biking to some of the furthest cutting units may be a possibility (for those who bring mountain bikes). We should be back in Charlottesville around 6:30 pm. Call contact person for rain date information.

Contact Person

Mike Kruse

mold@nexet.net

(434) 293-7401

Contact Mike if you are planning on attending. Also contact him with any questions, for directions, or if you'd rather meet the group in the forest.

Great Eastern Trail Scouting Trip on Shenandoah Mountain

Join Wild Virginia and the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club while we discuss new plans for a "Great Eastern Trail" and hike part of the route. We are very excited to learn about this plan to create a trail from Northern Alabama to the Adirondacks in New York. The trail would come through Virginia on the west side of the Shenandoah Valley and cross all 60 miles of Shenandoah Mountain. We will hike from FS road 95 to Reddish Knob, one of Virginia's most spectacular peaks.

When & Where:

Saturday April 8, meet at 7:30 am. Meet at Java Java, 2214 Ivy Rd (by Sneak Reviews) in Charlottesville.

Hike Details:

This is a difficult hike, 8 miles, 1,500 ft climb, with stream crossings. Bring hiking shoes, lunch, and water. Call contact person for rain date information.

Wildflower Hike in the Trillium Fields

This is a special hike for those who donated \$100 or more in response to our last fundraising letter.

If you are not yet a \$100 donor and would like an invitation to this hike, please contact Jason Halbert, jhalbert@wildvirginia.org

When:

Saturday, May 6, 2006

Tale of Two Timber Sales on Walker Mountain

We will be looking at two timber sales, one recently cut and another that the forest service is planning. Come learn about local ecosystems, national forest management, and corporate welfare for timber companies.

When & Where:

Sunday June 11, meet at 9 am. Meet at Java Java, 2214 Ivy Road (by Sneak Reviews) in Charlottesville.

Hike Details:

This is a moderate hike. We will be hiking on logging roads and hiking into the woods to explore some of the different cutting units with some off trail adventuring. Bring hiking shoes, lunch, water, and a camera (optional). We should be back in Charlottesville around 6:30 pm. Call contact person for rain date information.

Restoration Outing for Shenandoah Mountain

Shenandoah Mountain is one of Wild Virginia's priority areas. That's because it is the largest chunk of un-fragmented forest in the eastern U.S. that does not enjoy permanent protection. Join Wild Virginia and the Virginia Native Plant Society to learn about invasive plants and restoration efforts. Bring your work clothes and gloves as we may be pulling weeds! (Now that's direct action!)

When & Where:

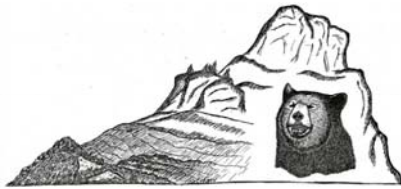
Sunday July 9, meet at 9 am. Meet at Java Java, 2214 Ivy Road (by Sneak Reviews) in Charlottesville.

Hike Details:

To be announced.

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WILD VIRGINIA



Protecting Your Favorite Wild Places

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S u b m i s s i o n s

We welcome submissions of articles, op-ed, poetry, cartoons, photos, drawings, etc. Please try to keep text under one typed page. Please be advised that we reserve the right to edit for space. Our next issue will be coming out in Spring 2006 so please submit by April 1st. Thanks!

Donations to Wild Virginia are gratefully accepted. Please make checks payable to VOP (our fiscal sponsor) and send to address above.

Ancient Mountain Sentinel is printed on 100% recycled, non-chlorine bleached paper. Your use of this or similar paper will prevent the destruction of native forests. **Recycle.... Pass this newsletter on to a friend!**

Wild Virginia Field Update

A species of particular concern to Wild Virginia is the Wood Turtle (*Glyptemys insculpta*). The Wood Turtle is found on the George Washington National Forest (GWNF) and is officially listed under Virginia's Endangered Species law as "Threatened". It is "very rare and imperiled" and is considered a "Tier 1" species, meaning it is in the greatest need of conservation.

The Wood Turtle's natural habitat is clean-running streams and associated forest in the far northern portion of the state, an area subject to intense growth and development pressures. Protecting Wood Turtle populations and habitat on the GWNF appears essential to the long-term survival of the species in Virginia. Unfortunately, the security of Wood Turtles continues to be threatened by timber sales and other US Forest Service management activities.



Photo of Wood Turtle by Steve Krichbaum taken on the George Washington National Forest.

Wild Virginia moved on several fronts in 2005 in our efforts to improve protection of this beautiful reptile. Wild Virginia staff and volunteers conducted numerous field surveys on the GWNF to collect information on Wood Turtle locations, habitat, and numbers. Our findings were communicated to the Forest Service, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and Virginia Division of Natural Heritage. We have also communicated our concerns and recommendations to the Secretary of Natural Resources at the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. Due partly to pressure from Wild Virginia and specifically Conservation Director Steve Krichbaum, these agencies are currently in the process of developing a formal Conservation Plan for the Wood Turtle.

In 2006 we will continue to gather on-the-ground data about Wood Turtles on the GWNF and will continue to press for effective and strict protections for them in our national forests. These protections include expanded buffer zones, revised logging and road building plans, and designation of Special Biological Areas. Wild Virginia is optimistic that through our persistent involvement Wood Turtles and all wildlife will get the respect and consideration they deserve on the George Washington National Forest.



Public Lands Legislative Update

This update refers to legislation pending before the U.S. Congress regarding public lands in Central Appalachia. Each bill is supported by Wild Virginia and we list the Virginia Congresspersons who also support each bill. Please write to thank them! If you do not know who your Representative is, please go to this website: <http://www.house.gov/> or call Wild Virginia 434-971-1553 and we'll help you.

Please note that Congressman **Bob Goodlatte** (R-VA-6) from Roanoke represents most of the George Washington National Forest and Shenandoah Valley. He is the Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee where most legislation regarding National Forests is reviewed before going to vote before the full House. He is a powerful Congressman and historically opposes most Wilderness and conservation measures on National Forests. If you live in, or know someone who lives in Bob Goodlatte's district, it is especially important that you write to him in support of these bills.

If you have time for only one or two letters, please write to support the first two bills below. Handwritten letters are best, followed by emails, then post cards. We encourage you to write often!

HR 1975/S.942 Virginia Ridge and Valley Act of 2005: This bill, introduced by Congressman **Rick Boucher** (D-VA-9) in the House and Senator **John Warner** (R-VA) in the Senate, would establish 55,000 acres of new protected areas on the Jefferson National Forest in Virginia. Specifically, the bill would create the Seng Mountain and Bear Creek Scenic Areas and the following areas would added to the National Wilderness Preservation

System: Brush Mountain, Brush Mountain East, Garden Mountain, Hunting Camp Creek, Lynn Camp Creek, Raccoon Branch, Stone Mountain, and additions will be made to the following existing Wildernesses: Mountain Lake, Kimberling Creek, Lewis Fork, Little Wilson Creek, Peters Mountain, and Shawvers Run. For more information and sample letters please go to www.wildvirginia.org or www.virginiawilderness.org. This bill is supported by Congressman Tom Davis (R-VA-11), James Moran (D-VA-8), Bobby Scott (D-VA-3), and Frank Wolf (R-VA-10).

HR 3563 National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act:

This bill was introduced into the Senate by Maria Cantwell (D-WA) on March 2nd and is supported by Virginia Congressmen Boucher, Moran and Scott. The bill would codify the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule as law and protect over 58 million acres of roadless National Forest lands. Senator John Warner supports this bill despite the Bush Administration's hostility toward protecting roadless areas.

S. 1897 Act to Save America's Forests: Former Senator John Corzine (D-NJ) introduced this bill last year. It would ban clearcutting in favor of protecting native biodiversity on National Forest lands. It would also protect many special areas including all roadless areas. This bill has been introduced in various forms for the last 14 years.

S 1541 Public Land Protection and Conservation Act of 2005:

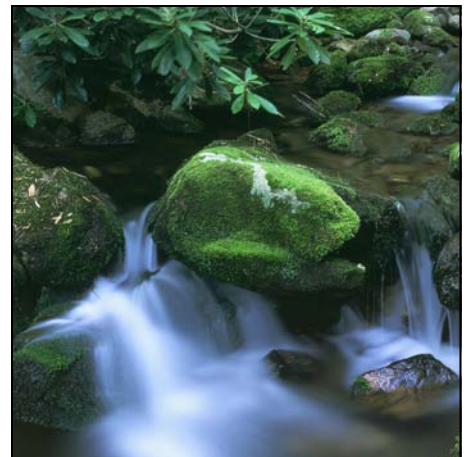
This bill would establish a national grants program for targeted control of invasive species on public lands, among other programs focused on

protecting native biodiversity. While this bill might encourage widespread use of herbicides, the intent is sound. Use your judgment in supporting this bill.

HR 3107 Ecosystem Protection Act of 2005: This bill, introduced by Robert Andrews (D-NJ-1) would establish a set of core areas as reserves for ecosystem protection and water quality. It would also allow land acquisition to add to the core reserves and allow buyout of grazing permits on public lands.

HR 3166 Multiple-Use Conflict Resolution Act of 2005: This bill, introduced by Congressman Raul Grijalva (D-AZ-7) and supported by Virginia Congressman Moran, would provide compensation to any holder of a grazing permit on public land who voluntarily relinquishes their permit and removes their animals. This is especially important for many western lands, but also applies to grazing permits on Federal lands in Virginia.

There are dozens of other bills affecting your public lands. Please search <http://thomas.loc.gov> for more information.



Stream in Dolly Ann Roadless Area, GWNF. Photo by Clint Farlinger

Species Spotlight

Cow Knob Salamander (*Plethodon punctatus*)

The native forests throughout the mountains of Virginia and the Southeast are home to the greatest diversity of salamander species in the **world**. These shy, secretive creatures are rarely seen by people not specifically looking for them as most hide during the day in places such as rotting tree stumps and typically emerge only on rainy, foggy or misty nights to feed or mate.

Salamanders have a complex life history that includes both an aquatic and terrestrial component and require shaded, damp, cool forests with abundant rotting downfall and leaf litter. They are very sensitive to high temperatures and moisture loss, and are quite vulnerable to habitat alterations, such as logging, that often removes vegetative cover and allows sunlight to reach the forest floor.

Most salamander species in the Southeast are widespread and abundant. Their wide range of habitat allows their populations to remain relatively stable in the midst of logging and other disturbances. New populations will migrate in from neighboring woods as the logged forest recovers. Of particular concern, however, are those whose range is limited to a single or a few mountains, valleys, caves or streams.

One such species is the Cow Knob salamander found **only** in the George Washington National Forest on Shenandoah, North and Great North Mountains between 2,400 and 4,300 feet. The Cow Knob salamander is medium-sized (up to 3" long) and is dark brown to black with various cream to yellowish spots. The species maintains small

home ranges in damp forests and it is most abundant in high-elevation old-growth hardwood and hemlock forests¹.

The Cow Knob salamander was not recognized as a distinct species until 1972 and it currently has no federal protection under the Endangered Species Act. It is listed as a species of special concern and is considered a sensitive species by the George Washington National Forest.



Cow Knob Salamander. Photo by Jeff Humphries

The status of the Cow Knob salamander is entirely dependent on intact forests in the George Washington National Forest. Thus, logging that opens up the forest canopy and increases moisture loss has a high potential to threaten the salamander's viability. A study conducted in 1987 by University of Richmond researchers found that if the Forest Service continued logging the habitat of the Cow Knob salamander it would drive the species to extinction. The salamander disappeared from sites that had been clearcut and was very slow (50 to 70 years) to recolonize regenerating patches of forest².

The results of this study prompted the Forest Service to designate a

43,000 acre Special Interest Area when the George Washington National Forest Plan was revised in 1993. The Special Interest Area is located on the crest of Shenandoah Mountain above 3,000 feet in the Dry River Ranger District. This designation precludes logging but allows traditional uses such as hunting, fishing, hiking and berry picking.

In 2000, Wild Virginia Conservation Director Steve Krichbaum submitted a proposal to the Clinton Administration to create the "Shenandoah Mountain National Monument". This designation would permanently protect the Cow Knob salamander habitat on Shenandoah Mountain as well as the largest group of roadless areas in the Eastern US. The Clinton Administration did not accept the proposal and Wild Virginia is currently revising the proposal with the hope that this special area will someday receive permanent protection to ensure the native forests remain intact and the Cow Knob salamander populations thrive for generations to come.

References:

- ¹Pague, C. A., K. A. Buhlmann, and J. C. Mitchell. 1991. Cow Knob Salamander, *Plethodon punctatus* Highton. Pp. 437-439 in K. Terwilliger (coord.). **Virginia's Endangered Species**. McDonald and Woodward Publishing Company, Blacksburg, Virginia.
- ²Zaber, D.J. 1998. **Southern Lessons: Saving Species Through the National Forest Management Act**. Defenders of Wildlife Publication.

URGENT ACTION ALERT : US NATIONAL FOREST LAND UP FOR SALE!

The Bush administration's FY2007 Budget proposes to fund budget shortfalls by selling nearly a billion dollars worth of our National Forest land. The administration has identified more than 300,000 acres of National Forest, including thousands of acres in the Southeast, that could be sold to fund the Secure Rural School and Community Self-Determination program . In Virginia, the total proposed acreage for sale is **5,717 acres**, largely within the Jefferson National Forest. Funding our nation's education system should be a priority, but selling off public land isn't an appropriate solution. Our public lands deserve better than to be treated as a budgetary slush fund!

The official notice and call for comments was released by the Forest Service on February 28, 2006. Here is the USFS link to the Lands Potentially for Sale: <http://www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/spd.html>

Please submit comments to the Forest Service! The deadline for comments is March 30, 2006.

No amount of money is worth the permanent loss of our public lands.

National Forests are where we hike, camp, paddle, and renew - NOT where we fund the Rural Schools program. Let's keep the 'public' in public lands!

Talking points for your comments can be found at : www.safc.org/campaigns/USFS_Land_Sales.php

Submit your comments by e-mail to: SRS_Land_Sales@fs.fed.us

By fax to: (202) 205-1604

By mail to: USDA Forest Service
SRS Comments, Lands 4S
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Mailstop 1124
Washington, DC 20250-0003

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