



Management Plan for the George Washington National Forest: Will the Third Time be the Charm?

As many readers know, the forest planning process for the George Washington National Forest (GWNF) has been “on hold” for many months now. The process has actually commenced twice – first in February 2007 and again in July 2008. Each time, planning was suspended because changes made to the planning regulations by the George W. Bush administration were determined to be in violation of federal laws.

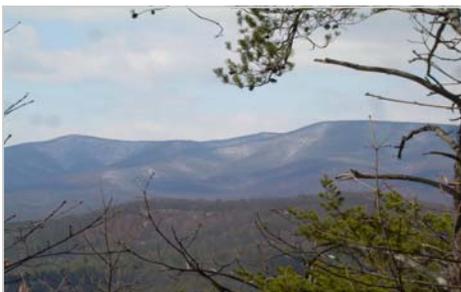
Planning for the GWNF is about to begin for the third and hopefully final time. The GWNF is one of 17 national forests that will continue working on their management plans under the original 1982 planning regulations. No other national forests or grasslands will develop management plans until new planning regulations are created by the Obama administration, a process which is just beginning.

A Notice of Intent to resume planning in the GWNF is scheduled to be published in mid-February. A 60 day public comment period will follow, during which a series of public planning meetings will begin.

Wild Virginia and many conservation organizations are content to move forward under the 1982 rules. Planning will now conform to all National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) standards (this was not the case in the two earlier planning attempts). Among other things, this means that an Environmental Impact Statement will be developed, a formal appeals process will be in place, a range of alternative forest plans will be developed, and the

Regional Office of the US Forest Service in Atlanta, GA has final responsibility for the plan, not officials with the GWNF.

Though planning for the GWNF to date has been a start & stop affair, the priorities for managing the forest remain constant. Wild Virginia is working with several partner organizations to identify and describe the biggest priorities for the new plan, and develop a “citizens’ vision” for managing the GWNF. Our priorities continue to be:



Winter view of Little River Roadless Area, from Trimble Mountain

- Strong protection of public drinking water resources with a watershed approach to management and attention to impaired waters.
- Manage all Inventoried Roadless Areas and newly identified roadless areas under the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule.
- Make reasonable recommendations for Wilderness Study Areas. The roughly 24,000 to 27,000 acre figures being discussed in earlier planning sessions are terribly inadequate and short-sighted.
- Use Special Biological Area designations and other means to protect rare species, natural communities,

and other special places. Wood turtles (*Glyptemys insculpta*) and other species rely on habitat in the GWNF.

- Focus on true ecological restoration of the forest. A number of issues come into play here, including: maintaining large blocks of undisturbed mature forest, identifying and protecting old growth patches, minimizing forest fragmentation, controlling non-native invasive species, and using fire in an ecologically appropriate manner.

We hope you will once again become engaged in developing a sound and appropriate management plan for the GWNF. Wild Virginia will be heavily involved in the process, as always. Attending public meetings is a good way to get involved. Communicating your ideas to the Forest Service, via email, letter, phone calls, etc., is **critical**. As the planning process resumes, please visit our website and use our email messages to assist you. Comments can be sent via:

Mail: Maureen Hyzer, Forest Supervisor, George Washington National Forest, 5162 Valleypointe Parkway, Roanoke, VA 24019-3050

Email: comments-southern-georgewashington-jefferson@fs.fed.us. (Please write “Comment on George Washington Plan Revision” in the subject line.)

Fax: (540) 265-5145, (540) 265-5109

Phone: (888) 265-0019, (540) 265-510

Wild Virginia Update

Letter from our President, Nathan VanHooser

The Board of Wild Virginia held its annual retreat this past November in a beautiful hollow nestled against Shenandoah National Park. These retreats involve assessing our work from the past year and planning new goals to advance our strategy in 2010. After a round of introspection on our 2009 work, a break in the day's rain allowed for a mind-clearing stroll along the slopes of Gibson Hollow. Hot chili revved us up for the next round – planning for 2010.

First order of business was setting the slate of Officers. I am pleased to announce that the fine folks administering in 2009 were voted back for another year. Eric Gilchrist has honed our record keeping and returns as Treasurer. Chris Bowlen remains the vanguard for Wild Virginia in the Shenandoah Valley while retaining the Vice President role. Jennifer Johnson will continue to polish our rants and ramblings into coherent prose as our Secretary. And I am humbled to serve again as President.

The defining mission statement that drives our organization remains: "Protecting Your Favorite Wild Places in Virginia's George Washington National Forest". To help achieve that mission, the Board crafted a five year vision in late 2008 that directs our annual goals. That vision is articulated in four points:

- We see opportunity to educate and inform the public about the inherent beauty, unique structure, and overall worth of diverse species at risk within our National Forests.
- We see opportunity to link local human dependencies to biologically healthy ecosystems within the National Forests.
- There are positive political and cultural shifts at all levels that favor protection of the George Washington National Forest. Wild Virginia must take advantage of this growth period to match the opportunities presented.
- Wild Virginia must focus attention on specific activities that

match the organization's size.

Specific objectives discussed for 2010 address formal project activity, finances, membership, and interactions with the Forest Service. We are excited about our three formal projects, all in different stages of completion. Our Drinking Water Study is complete with follow up and extension being the main focus this year. One extension of the Water Study has been our second project – a Forest Road Closure analysis with field work currently set to begin in 2010. And our third project, Non-Native Invasive Plant Control, is in a funding phase. We have also embarked on a novel membership drive through a partnership with the Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival series.

Despite many new initiatives, our historical role of monitoring the Forest Service will not be lost. A critical Forest Planning process is due to ramp up under older planning rules this winter. Wild Virginia will lead the charge to keep your favorite public places wild!

2010 Change to Wild Virginia Board of Directors

It is with some sadness that we announce Jen Creasy has officially stepped back from the Board of Directors as of January 2010. Jen has been involved with Wild Virginia since its early days as SEDG (Shenandoah Ecosystems Defense Group), and her dedication and enthusiasm will be sorely missed!

Whether leading hikes or organizing businesses in support of protecting roadless areas, Jen always has a contagious passion for the forests. Her wildlife biology degree and experience as a teacher were valuable skills in her work with Wild Virginia. This background

will serve her well as she begins a new path towards becoming a veterinarian. While all of us at Wild Virginia wish her the best, Jen has not gone away yet! She will remain heavily involved with the Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival coming this March (see page 4).

All of our Board members bring unique talents and do a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes. We are always looking for additions to the Board; please contact Wild Virginia if you know someone who has the passion for direct involvement with preserving our forests.



Ancient Mountain Sentinel
Volume XII, Number I - Winter 2010



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Jennifer Johnson—Secretary
Eric Gilchrist—Treasurer

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Carolyn Ettinger—Newsletter Editor

NEW UPDATE on DONATIONS:

Wild Virginia is now an independent 501(c)3 non-profit organization. We are no longer a partner of VOP. Please make checks payable to Wild Virginia and mail to PO Box 1065, Charlottesville, VA 22902. All donations are tax deductible to the extent of IRS law.

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!**

PLEASE BUY RECYCLED PAPER, OTHERWISE YOU ARE NOT COMPLETING THE CYCLE!

Wild Virginia Hikes and Outings

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

A Full Outings Calendar : COME JOIN US!

Sunday, March 7 White Rock Falls Loop

The hike to White Rock Falls, a 35 foot waterfall, is one of the most delightful hikes in the Pedlar District of the George Washington National Forest. Combined with the Slacks Overlook Trail, this is a moderate 5 mile loop hike with about 1000 feet of elevation gain. Bring lunch, snacks and water. Dress appropriately for late winter. Meet at the White Rock Falls trailhead, milepost 18.5 on the Blue Ridge Parkway, at 11:00 a.m.

Please contact Ron Fandetti at fanjet50@gmail.com or (434) 831-2193 to reserve a spot and for car pooling information. Closure of the Blue Ridge Parkway will cancel this hike. Check for road closures via the internet at <http://www.nps.gov/blri/planyourvisit/roadclosures.htm> or by calling (828) 298-0398.



Autumn hike in Oak Knob Roadless Area

Saturday, April 3 Trimble Mountain

Join us on a Saturday hike in early April. The Trimble Mountain loop is a moderately difficult 4 mile hike that will take about 3 hours. We'll enjoy views of Big Bald Knob and Little Bald Knob on

the western section of the loop. Before we get started, we'll make the short climb up to the Lake Todd dam embankment and have lunch with a beautiful view of the lake.

To carpool from Charlottesville, meet at Shenandoah Joe's (2214 Ivy Road near Sneak Reviews) at 10:30 am. The trailhead is opposite Todd Lake Recreation Area on FDR95. We will have lunch at Lake Todd at 12:00 then head out! Contact Jennifer Johnson (434.989.1236 or jenn276@gmail.com) for more information.

Sunday, May 2 Cole Mountain

Enjoy a high mountain meadow in springtime with a 360 degree panoramic view of the Mount Pleasant National Scenic Area. Combined with the Appalachian Trail, this is a moderate 5.8 mile loop hike with about 1300 feet of elevation gain. Bring lunch, snacks and water. Dress appropriately for mid-spring. The hike starts at 10:00 a.m. from the Mount Pleasant parking area.

Please contact Ron Fandetti at fanjet50@gmail.com or (434) 831-2193 to reserve a spot and for directions/car pooling information.



Mt. Pleasant National Scenic Area.

2010 Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival - Don't Miss it!

Wild Virginia is proud to be hosting the 2010 Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival "On Tour." The festival spans two evenings and two venues in two cities: Wednesday, March 24, at the Vinegar Hill Theater in Charlottesville, and Thursday, March 25, at the Visulite Cinema, in Staunton. Screenings will be at 7pm. We will be showing 16 different films in all, with an entirely different slate of films at each venue.



The Last Descent, 2009, Kathryn Scott, Charlie Center, Scott Ligare, Directors

Wild and Scenic On Tour brings together a selection of films from the annual festival held in the second weekend of January in Nevada City, California. The films tell a story about our planet, our beautiful and precious wildlands, and the people of the communities who love and defend them. They open our eyes and hearts to fantastic experiences in remarkable places. They beckon us towards action, highlight issues, and provide solutions.

The Charlottesville show will feature a series of short films, including the Wild and Scenic Festival's 2009 People's Choice Award winner, *The Last Descent* which documents a journey by a group of world-class whitewater kayakers to some of the world's most amazing rivers ... descending them possibly for the last time. The Marsyangdi River of Nepal, the Brahmaputra River in India and the White Nile River in Uganda are all threatened

or are in the process of being destroyed by large scale hydroelectric projects. The film closes in California with the Tuolumne River and the growing movement to restore Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park.

We will also be showing *Homegrown Revolution* which tells the story of an urban homestead in downtown Pasadena whose 1/10 acre garden has produced 3 tons of organic food over 20 years while incorporating many back-to-basics practices, as well as solar energy and biodiesel. Our guest Charlottesville emcee will be Paul Wagner, an Academy Award-winning independent filmmaker who has produced and directed over thirty films in his thirty-year career.

The Staunton show will feature *Rita*, winner of the 2008 Young Filmmakers Award at the Wild & Scenic Film Festival 2008 and Best Family Short from the Boulder Adventure Film Festival. *Rita* is a true story of a seven-year-old girl who, during one of her family's expeditions high in the Himalaya of Nepal, befriends a seven-year-old Sherpa girl named Rita. Together they embark on a wild and touching adventure over an 18,000 ft. pass near the base of Mt. Everest.

In addition to a variety of other short films, we will be showing *Division Street* which highlights a new generation of ecologists, engineers, city-planners, and everyday citizens who are transforming the future of the American roads and landscape from



Homegrown Revolution, 2008, Jules Dervaes, Director

pristine roadless areas to concrete jungles. The guest emcees for the Staunton evening will be Bruce Dorries and Steve Grande from Mary Baldwin College.



Papiroflexia, 2007, Joaquin Baldwin, Director

Door prizes and a raffle!

Admission \$8 each night.

Advance tickets in C'ville at Blue Ridge Mountain Sports.

Advance tickets in Staunton at Mint Spring Frame Shop.

We will be offering \$10 memberships at the door.

This is an event the whole family will love!

We would like to thank our major sponsors:

Blue Ridge Mountain Sports, Patagonia, Tom's of Maine, Clif Bars, Osprey Packs, Sierra Nevada Beer, Nutiva and Whole Foods.

Other sponsors include: Integral Yoga Natural Foods, Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine, Lithic Construction, Mint Spring Frame Shop, and Albemarle Baking Company.

For information on the Wild and Scenic Film Festival for 2010, visit: www.wildandscenicfilmfestival.org



Species Spotlight: Brook Trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*)

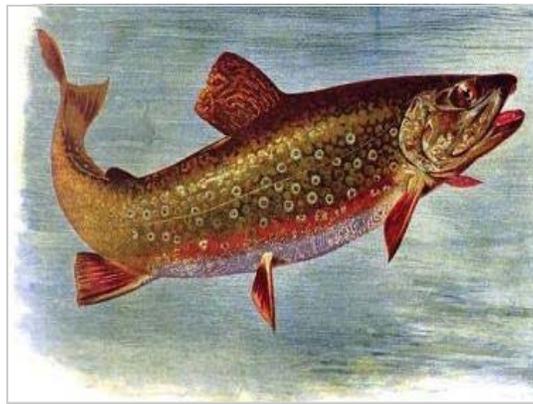
Article by Sam Wilmoth

There seems to exist in the minds of men and women the need to ascribe to animals our own traits and characteristics. We anthropomorphize in a familiar sense, as when the pet dog takes on a personality. But we also do it in more profound ways, such as the roles animals take on in mythology. The brook trout, *Salvelinus fontinalis*, is no exception.

Unlike the rainbow trout, which might be called a bawdy fighter, or the brown trout, a wily, shy newcomer, the brook trout is a dignified native. He quietly goes on his business, despite serious encroachment from his fish and human neighbors. Often called the speckled trout, the brookie, or the squaretail, is most well known as the Eastern brook trout. It is the only trout native to its range, which stretches through the Appalachians and into Canada. In Virginia, this means it can claim position amongst First Families of Virginia types. There are stories of George Washington being able to bring in bushels of brookies from the streams of western Virginia. Today, such excess earns one the wrath of those protecting our state fish. Harry Slone, in describing the fragile habitat of brook trout in Shenandoah National Park, writes of park rangers catching a poacher with a 5 gallon bucket full of three to four inch fish. His purpose, the man claimed, was to pickle them.

The brookie keeps a secret - it is not a trout at all. Brook trout are char, more closely related to the Dolly Varden, Arctic char, and the lake trout (also misnamed). Nevertheless, there is much to laud in this modest but charming fish. It found a biological niche in this region because it thrives in the type of habitat Appalachia provides. The shade of the deciduous Appalachian forests over cold, clear, and fast

running streams is an ideal location for the fish. Unlike the brown or rainbow trout, brook trout cannot live in a wide range of temperatures, usually needing the water system at no greater than 65°, nor can it survive an array of pH levels, but rather the narrow line between 5 and 7. However, within their sustainable environment, they are a hardy fish that is not easily preyed upon, and, until widespread logging and industrial pollution, the streams east of the Allegheny Mountains were perfect.



Brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*).
Photo from Wikipedia.

Brook trout are attractive fish. Their vermiculate sides reflect a greenish hue accented by red-orange spots that boast blue halos. The tail also carries some orange, and in the bigger specimens, the bottom also shows traces of orange. Similar to other trout, brookies have wild, staring eyes when taken out of the water. They are not the largest trout, although some do manage to grow to considerable size. They average between 10 and 20 inches, and 11 oz to 7 lb. The record in Virginia is only around 5 lbs, although the fly line world record is up to 10 lbs.

The larger fish tend to prove more sporting, as the brookie may lack in a fight or conniving avoidance of artificial flies. However, some of the most beautiful fly fishing destinations in the state are the brook trout's native habitats. There are few opportunities to catch trout in more idyllic settings than the

mountain laurel-lined slopes and small streams of the national forests.

A discussion of brook trout cannot exclude reality, and the fragility of the fish leaves it vulnerable to modern threats. The narrow pH range the brook trout can survive makes it particularly susceptible to acid rain. The St. Mary's River alone shows how the pollutant-charged precipitation can decimate a fishery. It was only through the limestone drops in 1999 and 2006 that the stream has rebounded towards viability. This illustrates that, like most of our wilderness today, trout streams, and thereby brook trout habitats, require close attention. If it were not for the efforts of the state wildlife agencies and the stocking programs, there would be little chance of our native trout's survival. The worth and value of the brook trout and its habitat seems immeasurable and obvious when juxtaposed with systematic deforestation or the polluting forces of industry, the so-called progress of man.

Sam Wilmoth is an avid fly fisherman of Virginia streams. A graduate of Washington & Lee University, he now lives in his hometown of Richmond. For more examples of his work or to comment, he can be reached at stwilmoth@gmail.com.



Photo by Sam Wilmoth



ENVIRONMENTAL
FILM FESTIVAL



Wed, March 24, 7pm
VINEGAR HILL THEATRE
Charlottesville, VA

Thurs, March 25, 7pm
VISULITE THEATRE
Staunton, VA

FILM SHOWCASE

- 180° SOUTH
- Litterball
- Roadless Is More: Talking Care of Our National Forests
- Homegrown Revolution
- Orangutan Foundation International
- A River's Last Breath
- Papirollexia
- The Last Descent

See Page 4 inside for more information

Check out our great sponsors!



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