

Draft Roadless Area Inventory and Wilderness Evaluation

Abstract.....	2
Introduction	4
Part One: The Roadless Inventory Process.....	5
A. Direction for Conducting a Roadless Area Inventory and Wilderness Evaluation	5
Purpose	5
Authority.....	5
Requirements	5
Details.....	6
B. The Description of Roadless Area Inventory Criteria	7
Primary Criteria	7
Exceptions.....	7
Interpretation.....	8
Improved Roads.....	9
Core Area of Solitude	9
Part Two: Matrix Summary of Potential Roadless Inventoried Areas.....	12
A. Summary of Potential Inventoried Roadless Areas	12
Matrix 1: Big Draft, Canaan Loop, Cheat Mountain, Cranberry Addition	13
Matrix 2: Cranberry Expansion & Botanical, Dolly Sods Expansion, Dry Fork	14
Matrix 3: East Fork Greenbrier, Falls of Hills Creek, Gauley Mountain, Glady Fork.....	15
Matrix 4: Laurel Fork, Little Allegheny/Laurel Run, Little Mountain, Lower Laurel Fork	16
Matrix 5: Marlin Mountain, McGowen Mountain, Middle Moutain, N. Fork Mountain	17
Matrix 6: Roaring Plains North, Roaring Plans East, Roaring Plains West, Seneca Creek	18
Matrix 7: Spice Run, Tea Creek Mountain, Turkey Mountain, Upper Shavers Fork East	19
Matrix 8: Upper Shavers Fork West.....	20
Final List of Areas that Do and Do Not Meet the Roadless Area Inventory Criteria.....	21
Part Three. The Wilderness Evaluation Process.....	22
A. Overview of Wilderness Evaluation Process.....	22
B. Specific Criteria Required to Determine an Area’s Capability for Wilderness Designation: ...	23
C. Specific Criteria Required to Determine an Area’s Availability for Wilderness Designation ..	25
D. Specific Criteria Required to Determine the Need for Additional Wilderness:	26
Wilderness Evaluation - FSH 1909.12, Chapter 7:.....	26
Forest-wide Wilderness Need Summary	28
Part Four: Wilderness Evaluation of Inventoried Roadless Areas.....	30
Big Draft	31
Canaan Loop.....	36
Cheat Mountain	41
Cranberry Expansion	46
Dolly Sods Expansion.....	51
East Fork Greenbrier.....	56
Middle Mountain	61
Roaring Plains West	66
Seneca Creek	71
Spice Run.....	76
Tea Creek Mountain	81
Turkey Mountain	86
Upper Shavers Fork East.....	91
Upper Shavers Fork West.....	96

Abstract

This document provides the process used to conduct the roadless area inventory and wilderness evaluation for the Monongahela Nation Forest, Forest Plan Revision and the results of this analysis. The inventory for the Monongahela National Forest began in June 2003 and concluded in March 2004.

This evaluation is divided into four parts: (1) roadless inventory process, (2) matrix summary of potential inventoried roadless areas, (3) The potential inventoried roadless area evaluation process, and (4) wilderness evaluation of inventoried roadless areas.

The Roadless Inventory Process used a variety of Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping exercises to initially identify 30 potential inventoried roadless areas (225,438 acres). Each of these 30 potential areas was evaluated against the eight criteria for roadless areas east of the 100th meridian and their semi-primitive non-motorized (ROS) characteristics (core solitude). Based on this evaluation, 14 areas (138,541 acres) met the criteria and became the Final Roadless Area Inventory. A wilderness evaluation based on availability, capability, and need was completed for each of the 14 Inventoried Roadless Areas.

Below is a summary of areas which did or did not meet the roadless area criteria:

FINAL RESULT – These 14 AREAS (138,541 acres) are the final roadless inventory that received further evaluation as potential wildernesses in the East.

- * Big Draft – 8,019 acres
- * Canaan Loop – 7,900 acres
- * Cheat Mountain - 12,779 acres
- * Cranberry Expansion – 12,166 Acres
- * Dolly Sods Expansion – 7,864 acres
- * East Fork Greenbrier – 10,065 acres
- * Middle Mountain – 12,197 acres
- * Roaring Plains West – 6,453 acres
- * Seneca Creek – 25,046 acres
- * Spice Run – 7,443 acres
- * Tea Creek – 8,289 acres
- * Turkey Mountain – 6,127 acres
- * Upper Shavers Fork East – 8,218 acres
- * Upper Shavers Fork West – 5,975 acres

The following 16 AREAS (86,897 acres) do not meet the criteria for roadless areas in the East:

- * Cranberry Addition – 5,127 acres
- * Cranberry Botanical – 784 acres
- * Dry Fork – 623 acres
- * Falls of Hills Creek – 6,920
- * Gauley Mountain – 13,276 acres
- * Glady Fork – 2,913
- * Laurel Fork – 1,172
- * Laurel Run – 3,032 acres
- * Little Allegheny – 6,154 acres
- * Little Mountain – 8,169 acres
- * Lower Laurel Fork – 3,183 acres
- * Marlin Mountain - 9,347 acres
- * McGowan Mountain – 10,605 acres
- * North Fork Mountain – 9,629 acres
- * Roaring Plains North – 3,104 acres
- * Roaring Plains East – 2,859 acres

Alternatives 1- 4

(To be completed in conjunction with the Draft Environmental Impact Statement that will be published November 2004)

The following table will display IRA disposition for each alternative in estimated acres rounded off to the nearest hundred. These values represent the potential, long-term outcomes of managing the IRA based solely upon its management prescription (mp).

IRA	Total Acres	Recommended Wilderness MP	Maintain Undeveloped Character MP	Potential Low levels of Development (mix of MPs)	Available for full range of development (mix of MPs)
Big Draft	8,019				
Canaan Loop	7,900				
Cheat Mountain	12,779				
Cranberry Expansion	12,166				
Dolly Sods Expansion	7,864				
East Fork Greenbrier	10,065				
Middle Mountain	12,197				
Roaring Plains West	6,453				
Seneca Creek	25,046				
Spice Run	7,443				
Tea Creek Mountain	8,289				
Turkey Mountain	6,127				
Upper Shavers Fork East	8,218				
Upper Shavers Fork West	5,975				

Recommended Wilderness – Acres recommended for wilderness designation, no activities that would disqualify these acres for wilderness are permitted.

Maintains Undeveloped Character – Acres managed for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation, no timber harvest is planned and no new road construction is permitted.

Potential Low Levels of Development – Acres managed for wildlife species requiring remote habitat and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation is a secondary goal. Commercial planned timber harvesting and minimal road construction (primarily level 1 and 2 roads) is permitted.

Available for full range of development – Acres managed primarily for commercial timber harvesting and/ or have a moderate to high potential for oil and gas or mineral exploration and development. Road construction is permitted.

Introduction

This section details the process used to conduct a roadless area inventory and wilderness evaluation and the results of that analysis. This document is divided into four parts.

Part One describes the inventory part of the process. It displays authorities and requirements, criteria used during inventory, and a detailed description of steps taken on the Monongahela National Forest to accomplish the roadless inventory. All areas inventoried during the RARE II process (Roadless Area Review and Evaluation of 1979), as well as all other Monongahela National Forest System lands were considered in the roadless inventory.

Part Two gives the results of the Roadless Area Inventory. It lists each area that met criteria during the inventory process and summarizes results of the inventory criteria measures. Fourteen areas continued into evaluation of Wilderness attributes. Ten of those are RARE II inventoried areas and were also mapped as roadless areas in the RACFS.

Part Three discusses wilderness evaluation, including an overview of the required process and specific criteria to be used to evaluate an area's capability, availability and need for wilderness.

Part Four presents the wilderness evaluation for each of the areas that met inventory requirements and that were displayed in Part Two. In the Draft Environmental Impact Statement this section will also include the results of the wilderness evaluation and summarize how each of the areas was allocated in the mix of alternatives. The range of management prescription allocations could include:

- Maintain current management prescription
- Designate as remote backcountry
- Recommend for wilderness
- Designate as other management prescription(s) that allows for activity

Part One: The Roadless Inventory Process

A. Direction for Conducting a Roadless Area Inventory and Wilderness Evaluation

Purpose

The Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Eastern Wilderness Act of 1975 provide the purpose of wilderness and the broad direction for managing wilderness.

Authority

The authority for studying and designating wilderness is contained in the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Eastern Wilderness Act of 1975 (see FSM 1923.01). The authority for conducting a Roadless Area Inventory and Wilderness Evaluation as part of the Monongahela National Forest Plan Revision is found in two separate acts of Congress:

- The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 directs the Secretary of Agriculture to develop regulations “specifying guidelines for land management plans developed to achieve the goals of the Program which, (A) ensure consideration of the economic and environmental aspects of various systems of silviculture and protection of forest resources, to provide for outdoor recreation (including Wilderness), range, timber, watershed, wildlife, and fish.” [Section 6 (f)(3)(A)]
- The Monongahela National Forest Wilderness Act of 1983, with regard to “National Forest System lands in the State of West Virginia which were reviewed by the Department of Agriculture in the second roadless area review and evaluation (RARE II) and those lands referred to in subsection (d) (National Forest System roadless lands in the State of West Virginia which are less than five thousand acres in size)”, directs the Department of Agriculture to “review the Wilderness option when the plans are revised, which revisions will ordinarily occur on a 10-year cycle, or at least every 15 years.” [Section 5 (b)(2)]

Requirements

The requirements for evaluation and designation of wilderness are found in the Code of Federal Regulations and the Forest Service Manual:

- 36 CFR 219.17 – (a) Unless otherwise provide by law, roadless areas within the National Forest System shall be evaluated and considered for recommendation as potential wilderness areas during the forest planning process. (1) During analysis of the management situation, the following areas shall be subject to evaluation:
 - i) Roadless areas including those previously inventoried in the second roadless area review and evaluation (RARE II), in a unit plan, or in a forest plan, which remain essentially roadless and undeveloped, and which have not yet been designated as wilderness or for non-wilderness uses by law. In addition, other essentially roadless areas may be subject to evaluation at the discretion of the Forest Supervisor.
 - ii) Areas contiguous to existing wilderness, primitive areas, or administratively proposed wildernesses, regardless of which agency has jurisdiction for the wilderness or proposed wilderness;
 - iii) Areas that are contiguous to roadless and undeveloped areas in other Federal ownership that have identified wilderness potential; and
 - iv) Areas designated by Congress for wilderness study, administrative proposals pending before Congress, and other legislative proposals pending which have been endorsed by the President.

- Forest Service Manual 1923 (Wilderness Evaluation) – Consideration of wilderness suitability is inherent in land and resource management planning ...Planning for potential wilderness designation may occur in the development of a forest plan or may require a separate study.
- FSM 1923.03(2) – A roadless area being evaluated and ultimately recommended for wilderness or wilderness study is not available for any use or activity that may reduce the area's wilderness potential. Activities currently permitted may continue, pending designation, if the activities do not compromise wilderness values of the roadless area.
- FSM 1923.04c – Forest Supervisor. The Forest Supervisor shall conduct necessary wilderness studies and prepare a study report/environmental impact statement, either as part of the forest plan or as a separate study
- Forest Service Manual 2320 (Wilderness Management) lists the specific laws affecting the administration of National Forest Wilderness areas, including the Wilderness Act of 1964; the Forest Management Acts of 1897, 1899 and 1901 (Organic Act); the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960; the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970; the Eastern Wilderness Act of 1975; the National Forest Management Act of 1976, and the Clean Air Act of 1977.

Details

The details for conducting the Roadless Area Inventory and Wilderness Evaluation as part of Forest Plan Revision are found in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 7 (Wilderness Evaluation).

B. The Description of Roadless Area Inventory Criteria

Primary Criteria

The Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 identifies three primary criteria an area must meet to be considered a “potential wilderness (or roadless area):

1. Must contain 5,000 acres or more,
2. It may contain less than 5,000 acres if:
 - a. Due to physiography or vegetation, it is manageable in its natural condition,
 - b. It is a self-contained ecosystem (such as an island)
 - c. It is contiguous to existing wilderness, primitive areas, administration endorsed wilderness, or roadless areas in Federal ownership, regardless of size.
3. It does not contain improved roads, maintained for travel by standard passenger type vehicles, except as permitted in areas east of the 100th meridian (in which case the area contains no more than ½ mile of improved road for each 1,000 acres, and the road is under Forest Service jurisdiction).

Exceptions

The Handbook notes some important exceptions to these basic criteria. For instance, a roadless area may qualify for inventory even though it includes the following types of areas or features:

1. Airstrips and heliports.
2. Plantations or plantings where use of mechanical equipment is not evident.
3. Electronic installations, such as television, radio, and telephone repeaters, “provided their impact is minimal.”
4. Evidence of historic mining (50+ years ago), or areas where the only evidence of prospecting is holes drilled without the use of access roads, or areas with mineral leases which require “no surface occupancy” or where lessee has not exercised development and occupancy rights.
5. National Grasslands.
6. Areas of less than 70% Federal Ownership, if it is realistic to manage the Federal lands as wilderness, independent of private land.
7. Minor structural range improvements (fence, water trough), or areas with burning projects, provided there is little or no evidence of the project.
8. Recreation improvements such as occupancy spots or minor hunting or outfitter camps; including developed sites only if they are minor and easily removed.
9. Timber harvest areas where logging and prior road construction is not evident.
10. Ground-return telephone lines, if a right-of-way has not been cleared.
11. Watershed treatment areas if the use of mechanical equipment is not evident.

The Forest Service Handbook also notes exceptions for roadless areas “east of the 100th meridian”:

1. The land is regaining a natural, untrammelled appearance
2. Improvements existing in the area are being affected by the forces of nature rather than humans, and they are disappearing or muted
3. The area has existing or attainable National Forest System ownership patterns, both surface and subsurface, that could ensure perpetuation of identified wilderness values
4. The location of the area is conducive to the perpetuation of wilderness values (consider the relationship of the area to sources of noise, air and water pollution; as well as unsightly conditions; and the amount and pattern of Federal ownership)
5. The area contains no more than a half mile of improved road for each 1,000 acres, and the road is under Forest Service jurisdiction
6. No more than 15 percent of the area is in non-native, planted vegetation
7. Twenty percent or less of the area has been harvested within the past 10 years

8. The area contains only a few dwellings on private lands and the location of these dwellings and their access insulate their effects on the natural conditions of Federal lands.

Interpretation

The Regional Forester, in his August 1997 letter to the R9 Forests, provides more specific interpretation of the FSH 1909.12 for application to the Eastern Region. Included in this interpretation is direction to “re-inventory” RARE II areas (as identified in the Nation-wide Environmental Impact Statement of January, 1979) to determine if they still qualify for inclusion in the inventory. If a portion of the RARE II area no longer qualifies, the boundary can be modified to “exclude only that portion that no longer qualifies.”

The direction to inventory potential roadless areas is not limited to RARE II areas, but extends to “all other National Forest System lands.” The Regional Forester also emphasizes that the inventory should be thorough and free of bias or “data filters.” The results of the inventory are documented in an Appendix to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Forest Plan Revision.

The Regional Forester’s letter provides clarification and specific direction for both the primary criteria and the exceptions listed in the FSH, including:

1. Identifying “core areas” of solitude which meet the “semi-primitive” criteria described in the 1986 Forest Service Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Book. Such core areas should contain approximately 2,500 acres (unless they are contiguous to an existing wilderness). The ROS Book further states that this core area must be “at least ½-mile but no further than 3 miles from all roads, railroads or trails with motorized use; can include the existence of primitive roads and trails if usually closed to motorized use.”
2. Non-native, planted vegetation includes wildlife openings, seeded roads, nonnative tree plantations, etc.
3. To determine how much of an area has been “harvested,” use regeneration cuts under even-aged management systems only, including seed-tree, shelterwood, or clearcuts. Thinnings or uneven-aged harvests (individual or group selection) are not counted as “harvest.”
4. Boundaries for potential roadless areas should follow natural or relatively permanent human-made features, including:
 - a) Natural features such as live streams, well-defined ridges or drainages.
 - b) Human-made features such as roads, trails, dams, power lines, pipelines, bridges, property lines, and State or Forest boundaries.
 - c) Boundaries should not cross power lines, state/county roads or major access roads.
 - d) Narrow, elongated, gerrymandered areas are not suitable; the boundary should provide an easily managed area.
 - e) Cherry-stemming boundaries around roads into or through roadless areas is not appropriate.
 - f) Roadless areas can contain less than 70 percent Federal ownership, but only if it is realistic to manage the Federal lands as wilderness, independent of the private land.
 - g) Locate boundaries to avoid conflict with important existing or potential public uses outside the boundary, which could result in non-conforming demands on the area if it were to become a wilderness.
5. Normally, roads under State, County, Townships, or other ownerships are not included in a roadless area since the Forest Service does not have authority to regulate use on those roads.
6. In addition to the improvements permitted in roadless areas (listed in the FSH), the Regional Forester identified improvements which are not permitted in a roadless area, including:
 - a) Significant current mineral activity.
 - b) Areas with prospecting with mechanical earth moving equipment.
 - c) Significant developed recreation sites judged difficult to obliterate and rehabilitate.
 - d) Active railroads and railroad beds that have cuts and fills, old trestles, abutments, and cinder surfacing.

- e) Pipelines, transmission lines, and utility corridors.
- f) High standard trails with surfaces, difficult to rehabilitate to primitive standards (should include paved and surfaced trails, and most year-round motorized trails).

Improved Roads

Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 7.11(b)(5) states that “Roadless Areas east of the 100th meridian” shall have “no more than a half mile of improved road for each 1,000 acres, and the road is under Forest Service jurisdiction.”

In August 1997, the Regional Office provided two definitions of an “improved road:”

“An improved road is any constructed or existing feature or facility created on the land for the purpose of travel by passenger vehicles (four wheeled, 2 wheel drive) which are legally allowed to operate on forest roads or public roads and highways, and vehicles are greater than 50 inches in width. Said facility will have an area for vehicles to travel on and will incorporate some manner for the disposal of surface runoff.” (Bill Rees, Regional Office Engineering, 3/26/97)

“An improved road has a definable, constructed cross-section, is properly drained, may or may not be surfaced, and is useable by most vehicle types. Some roads may be useable by high clearance vehicles. It is also stable for the predominant traffic during the normal use season. All roads assigned a Maintenance level of 3, 4 or 5 in the Forest Development Transportation Plan are improved roads maintained for travel by standard passenger cars. Maintenance Level 1 (roads closed to vehicle use for one year or longer) and Maintenance Level 2 (roads maintained for high clearance vehicles such as pick-ups, 4x4’s, etc.) are “improved roads” if they meet the above description.” (Region 8)

Since both definitions contained levels of ambiguity and interpretation, the Monongahela National Forest used the following working definition of an “unimproved road”. For Roadless Area Inventory, a road shall be considered “Unimproved” if it is a Traffic Service Level D, Maintenance Level 1 or 2 road, and:

- a. It does not have a constructed cross-section, defined as a crowned or outsloped travelway, with discernible ditches, and cuts or fills (including wetland crossings);
- b. It does not have placed surfacing, such as pit-run material, gravel, bituminous, oil, or concrete. Such surfacing would have been hauled and placed on the roadbed from some other location (including someplace along the road);
- c. It does not have drainage structures or improvements, such as culverts, constructed low-water crossings, or bridges;
- d. It does have any of these features, but:
 - The improvements are no longer functional (such as a rusted or collapsed culvert, or a ditch filled with silt);
 - The improvements have outlived their usefulness (such as a deteriorated corduroy wetland crossing or roads where brush impedes vehicle travel);
 - The investment in the road has deteriorated to the point where replacement is equivalent to new construction (such as a heavily deteriorated, thin cold-mix bituminous surface layer on a narrow, unreinforced road base; or a gravel or pitrun surface layer that has been pounded into the subsurface, pushed off the roadbed or been structurally diminished by sod encroachment);
 - The road is accessible or drivable only when frozen.

Core Area of Solitude

ROS Class Delineation (1986 ROS Book, USDA-Forest Service):

- ROS is Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
- Chapter IV, LM Planning, defines ROS Class Delineation as the inventory and mapping by ROS of the land and water areas of a Forest to “identify which areas are currently providing what kinds of recreation opportunities.”
- Three components are analyzed, the physical, social and managerial settings.

The characteristics of each “affect the kind of experience the recreationist most probably realizes from using the area.”

1. Criteria for Physical setting includes: Remoteness, Size and Evidence of Humans
2. Criteria for Social setting includes: User Density
3. Criteria for Managerial setting includes: Managerial Regimentation and Noticeability

Wilderness Delineation: The 1986 ROS Book notes that, “Although some designated wildernesses are composed largely of the Primitive type of recreation opportunity, many designated wildernesses also include Semi-Primitive or Roaded-Natural opportunities.” For the Monongahela National Forest, the criteria for a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS experience are used as the standard for Roadless Area Inventory and Wilderness Evaluation.

The following ROS Class Delineation criteria for Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized experience are found in the 1986 ROS Book, Chapter IV.

1) Remoteness: “An area designated at least ½-mile but not further than 3 miles from all roads, railroads or trails with motorized use; can include the existence of primitive roads and trails if usually closed to motorized use.” Application: The following corridors and geographical features were assigned a ½-mile buffer during mapping exercises to determine a core area of solitude:

- All Traffic Service Level 3 or better roads
- All OPEN Improved Roads within potential areas
- All roads, Improved or Unimproved, with special use permits providing motorized access across National Forest land
- All power lines, pipelines
- All developed campgrounds
- Any adjacent private ownership with development inconsistent with SPNM experience (for example: residential or seasonal structures)

2) Size: 2,500 acres (“Situations where an area identified on the remoteness overlay is slightly smaller than the size criteria for a Primitive or Semi-Primitive class – or the area is a unique entity for some other reason – may require individual consideration.”) Application: All settings with a core area of solitude less than 2,000 acres were not considered unless contiguous to an existing wilderness; settings with a core area between 2,000 and 2,500 acres received further consideration to determine if they had other roadless characteristics; settings over 2,500 acres met the basic qualification for the SPNM experience. RARE II areas with a total size of 5,000 acres or more of NFS land received further consideration, regardless of core area.

3) Evidence of Humans: “Natural-appearing setting may have subtle modifications that would be noticed but not draw the attention of an observer wandering through the area. Little or no evidence of primitive roads and the motorized use of trails and primitive roads.” Application: Settings with a density of improved roads (in accordance with the FSH and R9 direction) in excess of 0.5 mile/1,000 NF acres were disqualified from further consideration.

4) User Density: “Usually 6-15 parties per day encountered on trails and 6 or less visible at campsites.” Application: User density was not a key factor, since there is little data on use of dispersed recreation opportunities within the Monongahela National Forest. If a setting was known to have use on the scale listed in the criteria, it could then be taken into account.

5) Managerial: “On site regimentation and controls present but subtle. Controls can be physical (such as barriers) or regulatory (such as permits).” Application: Managerial setting was not a key factor, except perhaps where controls were not present. An example would be an area with few road closures or controlled access.

C. Description of Steps in Monongahela Roadless Area Inventory

STEP ONE – GIS Exercise (Geographic Information System) (Result: Identification of 30 potential areas)

Using GIS and the Forest Transportation Inventory, a Forest map was developed showing all Traffic Service Level 3, 4 and 5 roads, and highlighting all areas that provided 2,000 NF acres of land at least ½-mile from the nearest 3, 4 or 5 level road. This query was limited to 3 Level or better roads, since 1 and 2 Level roads would require field inspection or review of condition surveys to determine whether they were “improved.” There were seven areas that did not meet the size requirement but because they were in RARE II or Roadless Area Conservation Rule Areas (RACR), regardless of total area or potential core area, were also included in this exercise. The result of this exercise was the identification of 30 potential areas, including all RARE II and RACR Areas.

STEP TWO – Mapping Exercises

(No areas were eliminated but 4 areas were modified to exclude conditions 1-4 below)

Cross-reference GIS map of potential areas with Forest, Quad and Township maps to determine if any potential areas should be eliminated due to the following conditions:

1. Assess shape of potential areas: Eliminate or modify “narrow, elongated or gerrymandered” areas, or areas with “cherry-stemmed” boundaries
2. Determine presence of pipelines, transmission lines, and utility corridors; or if boundaries crossed power lines or state/county roads or major access roads.
3. Determine presence of interior roads under “State, Township, or other ownerships.”
4. Assess private ownership of lands within the boundaries of identified areas, and eliminate any areas with over 30% private ownership or unmanageable land ownership pattern.

STEP THREE –GIS Exercise to Determine Road Density & SPNM Core Area (Result: Elimination of 16 potential areas)

1. GIS query to map all known Traffic Service Level 3, 4 and 5 roads (0 areas eliminated).
2. Query land status atlas to determine presence of special use permits, oil and gas leases, transmission lines, private ownership and dwellings, timber harvesting within the past 10 years, and mineral rights. (3 areas eliminated).
3. Determine density of “improved travelways” within remaining potential areas (4 potential areas eliminated specifically for density of improved travelways greater than 0.50 mile/1,000 NF acres).
4. Apply SPNM buffering criteria (using GIS) to determine if remaining potential areas have adequate SPNM Core area (9 area eliminated).

STEP FOUR – Resource Activities Records Search

GIS provided information on 10-year timber harvest, percentage of non-native vegetation, minerals activities and subsurface rights within remaining potential areas, no areas were eliminated.

STEP FIVE – Forest Supervisor Review of Criteria and Their Application, Identify Exceptions:

The Forest Supervisor reviewed the criteria and no exemptions were identified. It should be noted that, although there is special interest support for evaluating Roaring Plains North and East, their size, core solitude and improvements eliminated these two areas from the final inventory list.

Part Two: Matrix Summary of Potential Roadless Inventoried Areas

A. Summary of Potential Inventoried Roadless Areas

The following 30 areas are either Rare II or Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR) Areas (bold) or other areas on the Forest identified through the GIS mapping process that may meet the inventory criteria for evaluation of potential wilderness areas. Portions of RACR areas that included cities, towns, private land, and federal, state, and county highways were excluded from the inventory.

- * 09040 – **Cheat Mountain**
- * 09041 – **Seneca Creek**
- * 09042 – **North Fork Mountain**
- * 09043 – **Canaan Loop**
- * 09047 – **Gauley Mountain**
- * 09048 – **Tea Creek Mountain**
- * 09049 – **Falls of Hills Creek**
- * 09050 – **Middle Mountain**
- * 09051 – **Little Allegheny/ Laurel Run (2 areas)**
- * 09052 – **Little Mountain**
- * 09326 – **East Fork Greenbrier**
- * 09327 – **Roaring Plains (3 areas)**
- * 09328 – **Turkey Mountain**
- * 09329 – **Spice Run**
- * 09330 – **Marlin Mountain**
- * 09331 – **Cranberry Addition**
- * 09332 – **McGowan Mountain**
- * 09333 – **Dry Fork**
- * 09334 – **Glady Fork**
- * Big Draft (Anthony Mountain Area)
- * **Cranberry Expansion**
- * **Cranberry Glades Botanical Area**
- * **Dolly Sods Expansion**
- * Laurel Fork
- * **Lower Laurel Fork**
- * Upper Shavers Fork East
- * Upper Shavers Fork west

There are eight criteria (FSH 1909.12) that areas in the Eastern United States must meet in order to satisfy the definitions of wilderness in section 2 (c) of the 1964 Wilderness Act. These criteria are described in detail in the “Exceptions” section, Part One, of this document. The following matrixes indicate whether the roadless areas meet the inventory criteria and should receive further evaluation for potential wilderness areas.

Matrix 1: Big Draft, Canaan Loop, Cheat Mountain, Cranberry Addition

Inventory Criteria	Potential Inventoried Roadless Area			
	Big Draft	Canaan Loop	Cheat Mountain	Cranberry Addition
Total Acres	8019	7,900	12,779	5,127
Acres Core Solitude	2558	3,165	10,121	1,063
1. Area regaining a natural, untrammeled appearance	Yes, Natural appearance rated moderate to high	Yes, Natural appearance is rated moderate to high	Yes, Area has a dominantly natural and wild appearance	No, Area has obvious roads with administrative motorized access, shelters, liming station
2. Improvements in area are affected primarily by forces of nature and are disappearing/muted	Yes, Some of the road system is fairly evident, lady slipper enclosure is muted	Yes, Improvements include extensive trail system, 2 shelters, and 28 acres in wildlife openings	Yes, Improvements include a few revegetated and disappearing roads, 7 acres in wildlife openings.	No, Area has developed sites, shelters, roads, liming station, fish management, 14 acres in wildlife openings
3. Area has existing or attainable NFS ownership patterns, surface/subsurface	Yes, 0 surface acres private land. 2,483 subsurface acres oil/ gas, 40% private mineral rights (not active)	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 0 subsurface acres oil/gas, 0% private mineral rights	Yes, 0 surface acres private land (can be excluded), 3,471 acres oil/gas (not active), 60% private mineral rights (not active)	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 0 subsurface acres oil/gas, 80% private minerals (not active)
4. Area location is conducive to wilderness values (Proximity to pollutions sources or obvious signs of development)	Yes, But area has road system, minor improvements, adjacent to Blue Bend Rec. Area and youth camp, private land and access to the southeast	No, Road system and pipe line surround area, private land to north, moderate-to-high mountain bike use, including permitted events. Adjacent to two heavily used and developed State parks.	Yes, Some private land to the northwest, and railroad line forms eastern boundary. Otherwise surrounded by NFS lands.	No, Heavy use by mountain bikes, administrative motorized access, shelters, and a constructed liming station. Adjacent to Cranberry Wilderness
5. No more than ½ mile improved road per 1,000 acres in FS jurisdiction	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres	No, 15 miles of FS roads, 2.9 miles per 1000 acres
6. 15% or less of area with non-native planted vegetation	Yes, Only 15 acres (0.2%) in wildlife openings	Yes, Only 28 acres (0.4%) in wildlife openings	Yes, Only 7 acres (0.1%) in wildlife openings	Yes, Only 14 acres (0.1%) in wildlife openings
7. 20% or less of area harvested in last 10 years	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested	Yes, Only 7 acres (0.1%) harvested
8. Only a few private dwellings or access needs to dwellings in area	Yes, Most developments are on or near boundaries, private land in SE could be excluded	Yes, There are 2 FS shelters located in the area, but no private dwellings	Yes, 0 private dwellings in area, no access needs	Yes, 0 private dwellings in area, no access needs
Area meets criteria for inventory	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Matrix 2: Cranberry Expansion & Botanical, Dolly Sods Expansion, Dry Fork

Inventory Criteria	Potential Inventoried Roadless Area			
	Cranberry Expansion	Cranberry Botanical	Dolly Sods Expansion	Dry Fork
Total Acres	12,166	784	7,864	623
Acres Core Solitude	8,866	403	6,032	0
1. Area regaining a natural, untrammelled appearance	Yes, Natural appearance is rated moderate to high	No, Perimeter roads, developed boardwalk and associated improvements	Yes, Area has a dominantly natural and wild appearance	No, Development on adjacent private lands and timber harvesting is evident
2. Improvements in area are affected primarily by forces of nature and are disappearing/muted	Yes, Improvements include a few revegetated and disappearing roads, and 38 acres in wildlife openings.	No, Boardwalk, signs, parking area, toilet are all actively managed	Yes, Improvements include a few old roads, 0 acres in wildlife openings.	No, Due to small size management activities adjacent to area are evident
3. Area has existing or attainable NFS ownership patterns, surface/subsurface	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, no acres subsurface acres oil/gas, 80% private mineral rights (not active)	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 0 subsurface acres oil/gas, 100 acres (13%) private mineral rights	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 900 acres oil/gas (not active), 100% private mineral rights (not active)	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 0 subsurface acres oil/gas, 50% private minerals (not active)
4. Area location is conducive to wilderness values (Proximity to pollutions sources or obvious signs of development)	Yes, Would expand the size of the Cranberry Wilderness	No, Small size of area, adjacent roads and noise evident	Yes, Would expand the size of the Dolly Sods Wilderness	No, Size of area and development on adjacent private land
5. No more than ½ mile improved road per 1,000 acres in FS jurisdiction	Yes, 0.1 miles per 1,000 acres	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres
6. 15% or less of area with non-native planted vegetation	Yes, Only 38 acres (<1%) in wildlife openings	Yes, 0 acres in wildlife openings	Yes, 0 acres in wildlife openings	Yes, 14 acres in wildlife openings
7. 20% or less of area harvested in last 10 years	Yes, 7 acres (<1%) harvested	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested
8. Only a few private dwellings or access needs to dwellings in area	Yes, WVDNR Liming Station would need to be excluded	Yes, 0 private dwellings	Yes, 0 private dwellings in area, no access needs	Yes, 0 private dwellings in area, no access needs
Area meets criteria for inventory	Yes	No	Yes	No

Matrix 3: East Fork Greenbrier, Falls of Hills Creek, Gauley Mountain, Glady Fork

Inventory Criteria	Potential Inventoried Roadless Area			
	East Fork Greenbrier	Falls of Hills Creek	Gauley Mountain	Glady Fork
Total Acres	10,065	6,920	13,276	2,913
Acres Core Solitude	4,574	1,533	4,355	723
1. Area regaining a natural, untrammelled appearance	Yes, Natural appearance is rated moderate some timber harvesting	No, trail development along river	No, 14 miles of road evident, evidence of logging still present, abandoned mines	No, Development on adjacent private lands, powerline and timber harvesting is evident
2. Improvements in area are affected primarily by forces of nature and are disappearing/muted	Yes, Although there is approximately 20 miles of low level roads that are healing but apparent	No, Trail developments include steel stairways and board-walking, accessible facilities	Yes, Improvements include a old roads	No, 7 miles of road system, research area, rights-of-ways private land
3. Area has existing or attainable NFS ownership patterns, surface/subsurface	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 10,050 acres subsurface acres oil/gas (not-active), no private mineral rights	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 643 subsurface acres oil/gas (not-active), 30% private mineral rights	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 10,770 acres oil/gas (not active), 100% private mineral rights (not active)	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 0 subsurface acres oil/gas, 30% private minerals (not active)
4. Area location is conducive to wilderness values (Proximity to pollutions sources or obvious signs of development)	Yes, Although land on NW,N, NE has potential for encroachment and non-conforming uses	Yes, Size, good ownership patterns	No, North- south road splits area, road easement, powerline	No, Size, development on adjacent private land. Management activities and noise from private lands is evident
5. No more than ½ mile improved road per 1,000 acres in FS jurisdiction	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres Does have 20 miles of level 1 & 2 road	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres	No, 1.0 miles per 1,000 acres	No 7 miles of road 2.3 miles per 1,000 acres
6. 15% or less of area with non-native planted vegetation	Yes, Only 37 acres (<1%) in wildlife openings	Yes, 24 acres (<1%)in wildlife openings	Yes, 11 acres (<1%) in wildlife openings	Yes, 57 acres in wildlife openings
7. 20% or less of area harvested in last 10 years	Yes, 405 acres (4%) harvested	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested	Yes 0 acres (0%) harvested	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested
8. Only a few private dwellings or access needs to dwellings in area	Yes, 1 weather station within the area	Yes, 0 private dwellings or private access needs	Yes, 0 private dwellings or private access needs	Yes 0 private dwellings or private access needs within but numerous adjacent
Area meets criteria for inventory	Yes	No	No	No

Matrix 4: Laurel Fork, Little Allegheny/Laurel Run, Little Mountain, Lower Laurel Fork

Inventory Criteria	Potential Inventoried Roadless Area			
	Laurel Fork	Little Allegheny/ Laurel Run	Little Mountain	Lower Laurel Fork
Total Acres	1,172	Little Allegheny – 6,154 Laurel Run – 3,032	8,169	3,183
Acres Core Solitude	33	Little Allegheny – 1,315 Laurel Run – 1,005	851	112
1. Area regaining a natural, untrammelled appearance	No, Woods roads and 454 acres of timber harvesting in last 10 years	No, Private land development and improvements are evident adjacent to the area, managed wildlife openings	No, 14 miles of road evident, evidence of logging still present	No, Railroad grade and tunnel
2. Improvements in area are affected primarily by forces of nature and are disappearing/muted	No, Management is evident	No, Management is evident	Yes, Improvements include old roads	Yes, Remote and inaccessible but development evident on adjacent private land
3. Area has existing or attainable NFS ownership patterns, surface/subsurface	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 0 acres subsurface acres oil/gas, no private mineral rights	Yes, 0 surface acres private land or subsurface acres oil/gas, 80% private mineral rights	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 10,770 acres oil/gas (not active), 100% private mineral rights (not active)	Yes Very limited access, 0 surface acres private land, 875 acres subsurface acres oil/gas, 30% private minerals (not active)
4. Area location is conducive to wilderness values (Proximity to pollution sources or obvious signs of development)	No, Small size of area and lack of core solitude, recent timber harvesting (454 acres)	No Rural development, farming adjacent to area, noise from roads and equipment is evident, high potential for encroachment	No, North-south road splits area, long/ narrow shape and surrounded by private land and development	No, Size, development on adjacent private land, access concerns
5. No more than ½ mile improved road per 1,000 acres in FS jurisdiction	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres	Yes, .12 miles per 1,000 acres	No, 1.0 miles per 1,000 acres	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres
6. 15% or less of area with non-native planted vegetation	Yes, 0 acres (0%) in wildlife openings	Yes, 45 acres (<1%) in wildlife openings	Yes, 11 acres (<1%) in wildlife openings	Yes, 0 acres in wildlife openings
7. 20% or less of area harvested in last 10 years	No, 454 acres (39%) harvested	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested	Yes 0 acres (0%) harvested	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested
8. Only a few private dwellings or access needs to dwellings in area	Yes, 0 private dwellings	Yes, 0 private dwellings or private access needs	Yes, 0 private dwellings or private access needs within but numerous adjacent	Yes, 0 private dwellings or private access needs within but numerous adjacent
Area meets criteria for inventory	No	No	No	No

Matrix 5: Marlin Mountain, McGowen Mountain, Middle Mountain, N. Fork Mountain

Inventory Criteria	Potential Inventoried Roadless Area			
	Marlin Mountain	McGowen Mountain	Middle Mountain	North Fork Mountain
Total Acres	9,347	10,605	12,197	9,629
Acres Core Solitude	4,502	2,239	6,189	1,811
1. Area regaining a natural, untrammeled appearance	No, Power-line, antenna, 13 miles of level 1 and 2 road, 132 acres timber harvest, 51 acres wildlife openings	No, 19 miles of level 1 and 2 roads	Yes, Evidence of management practices are still evident but most of the area is regaining it natural appearance	No, Most of the area is regaining it's natural appearance but there are 570 acres of private land within the interior of the area
2. Improvements in area are affected primarily by forces of nature and are disappearing/muted	No, Management is evident, 13 mile of level 1 and 2 roads	No, Management is evident	Yes, Improvements include some level 1 and 2 roads	No, Managed private land and structures within the area
3. Area has existing or attainable NFS ownership patterns, surface/subsurface	No, 12 surface acres private land, 0 acres subsurface acres oil/gas, no private mineral rights. Greenbrier state owned trail	No, 364 surface acres private land, 1,773 acres subsurface oil/gas (not active), 10% private mineral rights	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, no acres oil/gas, 60% private mineral rights (not active)	No, 570 surface acres private land, 404 acres subsurface acres oil/gas, 0% private minerals (not active)
4. Area location is conducive to wilderness values (Proximity to pollutions sources or obvious signs of development)	Yes, Some potential for development of adjacent private land	No, Roads, adjacent private land development, in-holdings,	Yes, Good solitude, Although there is significant development on private land along the eastern and western boundaries	No, Private land within core of area and long narrow shape affects visuals and noise within the area
5. No more than ½ mile improved road per 1,000 acres in FS jurisdiction	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres	Yes, .19 miles per 1,000 acres	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres
6. 15% or less of area with non-native planted vegetation	Yes, 51 acres (<1%) in wildlife openings	Yes, 198 acres (<2%) in wildlife openings	Yes, 48 acres (<1%) in wildlife openings	Yes, 0 acres in wildlife openings
7. 20% or less of area harvested in last 10 years	Yes, 132 acres (<2%) harvested	Yes, 229 acres (2%) harvested	Yes, 115 acres (<1%) harvested	Yes, 78 acres (<1%) harvested
8. Only a few private dwellings or access needs to dwellings in area	Yes, 0 private dwellings	No, Several dwellings on private land with access needs	Yes, 0 private dwellings or private access needs within but numerous adjacent	No, several improvements on private land within the area
Area meets criteria for inventory	No	No	Yes	No

Matrix 6: Roaring Plains North, Roaring Plans East, Roaring Plains West, Seneca Creek

Inventory Criteria	Potential Inventoried Roadless Area			
	Roaring Plains North	Roaring Plains East	Roaring Plains West	Seneca Creek
Total Acres	3,104	2,859	6,453	25,046
Acres Core Solitude	853	132	4,706	13,771
1. Area regaining a natural, untrammeled appearance	Yes, Area has a natural untrammeled appearance	Yes, Area has a natural untrammeled appearance	Yes, Evidence of management practices are still evident but most of the area is regaining it natural appearance	Yes, Most of the area has regained it's natural appearance, there are 10 miles of level 1 & 2 road within the area, most are healing
2. Improvements in area are affected primarily by forces of nature and are disappearing/muted	Yes, There are 2 miles of level 1 and 2 road within the area but are beginning to disappear	Yes, Management is not evident in area, most improvements have disappeared	Yes, Management is not evident in area, most improvements have disappeared	Yes, There are 10 miles of level 1 & 2 road within the area, most are healing
3. Area has existing or attainable NFS ownership patterns, surface/subsurface	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 0 acres subsurface acres oil/gas, 40% private mineral rights (not active).	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 0 acres subsurface oil/gas, 40% private mineral rights (not active)	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, no acres oil/gas, 40% private mineral rights (not active)	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 2,389 acres subsurface acres oil/gas, 10% private minerals (not active)
4. Area location is conducive to wilderness values (Proximity to pollutions sources or obvious signs of development)	No, The overall small size, of area, core solitude acres, adjacent improvements and potential for development of adjacent private land	No, The overall small size, of area, core solitude acres, adjacent improvements	Yes, Although the existing road system and pipeline dissect the Roaring Plains area into 3 distinct areas this area is sufficient is size and core solitude to be evaluated	Yes, Overall large size including 13,771 acres in core solitude, 100% FS ownership, moderate and established mountain bike use
5. No more than ½ mile improved road per 1,000 acres in FS jurisdiction	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres
6. 15% or less of area with non-native planted vegetation	Yes, 0 acres (0%) in wildlife openings	Yes, 0 acres (0%) in wildlife openings	Yes, 0 acres (0%) in wildlife openings	Yes, 31 acres (<1%) in wildlife openings
7. 20% or less of area harvested in last 10 years	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested	Yes, 446 acres (<2%) harvested
8. Only a few private dwellings or access needs to dwellings in area	Yes, 0 private dwellings or private access needs	Yes, 0 private dwellings or private access needs	Yes, 0 private dwellings or private access needs	Yes, 0 private dwellings or private access needs
Area meets criteria for inventory	No	No	Yes	Yes

Matrix 7: Spice Run, Tea Creek Mountain, Turkey Mountain, Upper Shavers Fork East

Inventory Criteria	Potential Inventoried Roadless Area			
	Spice Run	Tea Creek Mountain	Turkey Mountain	Upper Shavers Fork East
Total Acres	7,443	8,289	6,127	8,218
Acres Core Solitude	3,169	6,309	3,734	2,000
1. Area regaining a natural, untrammed appearance	Yes, Area has a natural untrammed appearance	Yes, Area has a natural untrammed appearance	Yes, Evidence of management practices are still evident but most of the area is regaining its natural appearance	Yes, Evidence of management activities but area is beginning to heal and regain its natural appearance
2. Improvements in area are affected primarily by forces of nature and are disappearing/muted	Yes, Management is noticeable but disappearing.	Yes, Management is not evident in most of area, most improvements have disappeared although extensive trail system is present	Yes, Past management activities are evident but are beginning to disappear	Yes, Past management activities are evident but are beginning to disappear
3. Area has existing or attainable NFS ownership patterns, surface/subsurface	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 0 acres subsurface acres oil/gas, 100% private mineral rights (not active)	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 0 acres subsurface oil/gas, 90% private mineral rights (not active)	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, no acres oil/gas, 90% private mineral rights (not active)	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 0 acres subsurface acres oil/gas, 100% private minerals (not active)
4. Area location is conducive to wilderness values (Proximity to pollutions sources or obvious signs of development)	Yes, Exclude private land and road easement,	Yes, Borders Cranberry Wilderness but would not expand size of the wilderness due to highly developed road between areas	Yes, Borders Cranberry Wilderness but would not expand size of the wilderness due to highly developed road between areas	Yes, Marginal due to size of area and existing railroad that splits Upper Shavers Fork East and West into two separate areas
5. No more than ½ mile improved road per 1,000 acres in FS jurisdiction	Yes, .43 miles per 1,000 acres	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres
6. 15% or less of area with non-native planted vegetation	Yes, 8 acres (<1%) in wildlife openings	Yes, 32 acres (<1%) in wildlife openings	Yes, 9 acres (<1%) in wildlife openings	Yes, 0 acres (0%) in wildlife openings
7. 20% or less of area harvested in last 10 years	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested
8. Only a few private dwellings or access needs to dwellings in area	Yes, 0 private dwellings or private access needs if private land and easement are excluded	Yes, 0 private dwellings or private access needs	Yes, 0 private dwellings or private access needs	Yes, 0 private dwellings or private access needs
Area meets criteria for inventory	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Matrix 8: Upper Shavers Fork West

Inventory Criteria	Potential Inventoried Roadless Area			
	Upper Shavers Fork West			
Total Acres	5,975			
Acres Core Solitude	3,519			
1. Area regaining a natural, untrammeled appearance	Yes, Evidence of management activities but area is beginning to heal and regain its natural appearance			
2. Improvements in area are affected primarily by forces of nature and are disappearing/muted	Yes, Past management activities are evident but are beginning to disappear			
3. Area has existing or attainable NFS ownership patterns, surface/subsurface	Yes, 0 surface acres private land, 0 acres subsurface acres oil/gas, 100% private minerals (not active)			
4. Area location is conducive to wilderness values (Proximity to pollutions sources or obvious signs of development)	Yes, Marginal due to size of area and existing railroad that splits Upper Shavers Fork East and West into two separate areas			
5. No more than ½ mile improved road per 1,000 acres in FS jurisdiction	Yes, 0 miles per 1,000 acres			
6. 15% or less of area with non-native planted vegetation	Yes, 0 acres (0%) in wildlife openings			
7. 20% or less of area harvested in last 10 years	Yes, 0 acres (0%) harvested			
8. Only a few private dwellings or access needs to dwellings in area	Yes, 0 private dwellings or private access needs			
Area meets criteria for inventory	Yes			

Final List of Areas that Do and Do Not Meet the Roadless Area Inventory Criteria

The following 16 AREAS (86,897 acres) do not meet the criteria for roadless areas in the east:

- * Cranberry Addition – 5,127 acres
- * Cranberry Botanical – 784 acres
- * Dry Fork – 623 acres
- * Falls of Hills Creek – 6,920
- * Gauley Mountain – 13,276 acres
- * Gladly Fork – 2,913
- * Laurel Fork – 1,172
- * Laurel Run – 3,032 acres
- * Little Allegheny – 6,154 acres
- * Little Mountain – 8,169 acres
- * Lower Laurel Fork – 3,183 acres
- * Marlin Mountain - 9,347 acres
- * McGowan Mountain – 10,605 acres
- * North Fork Mountain – 9,629 acres
- * Roaring Plains North – 3,104 acres
- * Roaring Plains East – 2,859 acres

FINAL RESULT – There are 14 AREAS (138,541 acres) which will become the final inventory and receive further evaluation as potential wildernesses in the east, they are as follows: .

- * Big Draft – 8,019 acres
- * Canaan Loop – 7,900 acres
- * Cheat Mountain - 12,779 acres
- * Cranberry Expansion – 12,166 Acres
- * Dolly Sods Expansion – 7,864 acres
- * East Fork Greenbrier – 10,065 acres
- * Middle Mountain – 12,197 acres
- * Roaring Plains West – 6,453 acres
- * Seneca Creek – 25,046 acres
- * Spice Run – 7,443 acres
- * Tea Creek – 8,289 acres
- * Turkey Mountain – 6,127 acres
- * Upper Shavers Fork East – 8,218 acres
- * Upper Shavers Fork West – 5,975 acres

Part Three. The Wilderness Evaluation Process

A. Overview of Wilderness Evaluation Process

Minimum standards for Wilderness Evaluation of Roadless Areas may be found in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 (Land and Resource Management Planning Handbook), WO Amendment 1909.12-92-1, Chapter 4.19c. This chapter divides Wilderness Evaluation into 5 separate steps:

Step 1 – Overview

Provide an overview that includes basic information about each Roadless Area

Step 2 – Wilderness Capability

Indicate each Roadless Area's capability for Wilderness by describing the basic characteristics that make the area appropriate and valuable for Wilderness, regardless of the area's availability or need.

Step 3 – Availability for Wilderness

Indicate availability of the Roadless Area by describing other resource potential and by summarizing pertinent quantitative and qualitative information. Include current use, outputs, trends, and potential future use and/or outputs.

Step 4 – Need for Wilderness

Summarize the factors considered and the process used in assessing the need for each area. Include the public involvement process (both past and present), assumptions made, the social and economic factors considered, and interest expressed by proponents, including Congress. Discuss nearby wildernesses and their uses, nearby roadless areas, distance from population centers, and use trends.

Step 5 – Wilderness Evaluation Summary

This section includes a capability summary, determination of availability or unavailability, values foregone with wilderness designation, and description of biological and social need.

Step 6 – Alternatives and Environmental Consequences

Describe the potential environmental consequences of a wilderness and a non-wilderness recommendation.

- a. Include a table displaying the acreage assignment of prescriptions by alternative.
- b. Discuss the impact on the roadless area of a wilderness designation and the impact of each non-wilderness prescription. Show the social and economic effects in each case. Include mitigation, if any, for the loss of wilderness characteristics and the effects on plant and animal communities.
- c. Track roadless areas through each alternative considered in detail in the environmental impact statement.

Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 7.2 provides the direction for Evaluation of Potential Wilderness.

B. Specific Criteria Required to Determine an Area's Capability for Wilderness Designation:

Solitude

Degree to which an area provides visitors with the opportunity to gain a wide range of experiential benefits such as a feeling of solitude and serenity, a spirit of adventure and awareness, and a sense of self-reliance. (FSH 1909.12)

High, but not extremely high, probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance through the application of woodsman and outdoor skills in an environment that offers challenge and risk. (1986 ROS Book, SPNM Delineation)

Solitude may be defined by stating gross acres and describing the topography of the roadless area; stating gross area, shape, and percent of core area to entire roadless area; describing amount of existing travel patterns and degree of use within the core area; and describing other factors such as noise. (1997 R9 Guidelines)

Degree of Disturbance

Degree to which an area is natural or appears to be natural and free from disturbance so that the normal interplay between biotic species inhabiting the area continues. (FSH 1909.12)

Degree of Disturbance may be described by stating the percent of the area harvested within the past 10 years; percent of the area in non-native, planted vegetation; improvements in the area and whether they are regaining natural character; and stating if management activities are occurring on a widespread basis. (1997 R9 Guidelines)

Geological Strata

Describe unique geological features or distinctive landscape (gorges, caves, waterfalls, cliffs, etc.). (1997 R9 Guidelines)

Biological Strata

Describe by identifying the current National Forest conditions found in each Roadless Area. A coarse/fine filter approach is used to identify broad forest cover types, successional classes, rare communities, and special species (and grouping these species according to ecological units or community types). (1997 R9 Guidelines)

Biotic Species Requiring Primitive Surroundings

The ability of certain biotic species to compete with increasing public use and developmental projects that affect their habitats. Consider means available, other than wilderness designation, for meeting this need. The need to provide a sanctuary for those biotic species that have demonstrated an inability to survive in less than primitive surroundings or the need for a protected area for other unique scientific values or phenomena. (FSH 1909.12)

Determine relationship of roadless areas to habitat availability needs for plant and animal species. This includes determining the proportion of the acreage of suitable habitat or species occurrences contained within the Roadless Areas as compared to the National Forest as a whole; and documenting the species habitat conditions or individual species which are dependent on or benefit from wilderness designation. (1997 R9 Guidelines)

Ecological Strata

An area's ability to provide for preservation of identifiable landform types and ecosystems. Consideration of this factor may include utilization of Edwin A. Hammond's subdivision of landform types and the Bailey-Kuchler ecosystem classification. This approach is helpful from the standpoint of rounding out a National Wilderness Preservation System and may be further subdivided to suit local, subregional, and regional needs. (FSH 1909.12)

Using Edwin A. Hammond's subdivision of landform types and the Bailey-Kuchler ecosystems classification, state the number of and acres of ecoregional Sections and Subsections present, and state if a Roadless Area includes an ecosystem section and/or subsection that currently has no representation in Wilderness. (1997 R9 Guidelines)

Scientific/Educational Values

Describe the Roadless Area's capability to provide outdoor education and scientific study, both formal and informal, in a manner that is compatible with wilderness. (FSH 1909.12)

Describe the presence of designated Research Natural Areas, Experimental Forests, and potential for study of ecosystem sections and subsections not represented in wilderness. (1997 R9 Guidelines)

Historical/Social/Cultural Values

State presence of designated Cultural, Heritage, Paleontological Areas, and/or the presence of old grave sites, cemeteries, historic cabins, etc. (i.e. a sense of place) (1997 R9 Guidelines).

Challenge

Challenge is the degree to which the area offers visitors the opportunity to experience adventure, excitement, challenge, initiative, or self-reliance. Most desirable area offers many outstanding opportunities for adventure & challenge. (FSH 1909.12) Describe opportunity to experience a level of risk; state the probability of having the feeling of being the first one in the area; state if there is an opportunity to get off the travelway and away from human influences in the area; describe the probability of being dependent on use of outdoor skills; state if there are signs of trails, travel corridors, blazes; describe the extent that physical elements and natural forces interact with the individual use of the area (i.e. terrain, high volume stream flow, etc.). (1997 R9 Guidelines).

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Determine an area's capability of providing primitive and unconfined types of recreation such as camping, hunting, fishing, mountain climbing, ski touring, canoeing, boating, river rafting, backpacking, hiking, riding, photography, and other outdoor activities. (FSH 1909.12)

State the range and uniqueness to the recreation activities available; describe what characteristics of the area create the opportunities for the different activities. (1997 R9 Guidelines)

Special Features

Abundant and varied wildlife may enhance an area's wilderness capability. If the primary objective should be the protection or management of one or more wildlife species, analyze the relative values of wilderness and wildlife management. In some instances, particularly where nonconforming structures or activities are necessary for management of the wildlife or its habitat, wilderness designation may not be appropriate. Special scenic features contribute to an area's wilderness capability. (FSH 1909.12) Describe any special features that have not been described in any other section; state presence of designated Scenic Areas, features, focal points, or distinctive landscapes. (1997 R9 Guidelines)

Manageability

The Forest Service' ability to manage an area as an enduring resource of wilderness, untrammled by man, retaining its primeval character, and to protect and manage its natural character are all factors to consider. Also consider such factors as size, shape, and juxtaposition to external influences. (FSH 1909.12)

State size of area; describe amount of and character of private land within the area; describe presence of and character of special use permits in area; describe adjacent area and state if privately owned or Forest Service ownership; state if there are any outstanding mineral rights within the area. (1997 R9 Guidelines)

Additional Capability Characteristics for Areas in the East (FSH 1909.12, 7.21a)

National Forests east of the 100th meridian may contain limited nonconforming uses and/or nonconforming structures and improvements while retaining capability for wilderness designation. Standards for desirable capability characteristics east of the 100th meridian are:

1. Nonconforming uses are of such a nature that they can be effectively mitigated or terminated. Examples include a variety of uses, such as logging, special-use facilities, vegetation treatment, fences, log or frame cabins, or corrals that can be terminated and the improvements easily removed or ignored because they are rapidly disappearing through natural deterioration.
2. Nonconforming structures and improvements, except range improvements, are generally lacking. If present, they are rapidly disappearing through natural processes, or it would be practical to remove them and permit the site to return to a near-natural condition. Examples include buildings, power lines, dams, borrow pits, and lower standard roads that, if closed, would recover naturally.

C. Specific Criteria Required to Determine an Area's Availability for Wilderness Designation

Availability

The determination of availability is conditioned by the value of and need for the wilderness resource compared to the value of and need for other resources. To be available for wilderness, the values of the wilderness resources, both tangible and intangible, should offset the value of resources that formal wilderness designation would forego. (FSH 1909.12)

Describe and discuss non-wilderness resources, current uses, outputs and potential uses available within a Roadless Area that may affect its availability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. (1997 R9 Guidelines)

Note that additional criteria for Wilderness Evaluation address demand and capacity of existing wilderness areas. These criteria include: Existing Demand, Recreation Capacity, Practical Maximum Capacity, Existing Condition Capacity, Accessibility, Visitor Pressure, and Other Un-confined Recreation Opportunities/Experiences. These are all quantitative and objective values generated from use and acreage figures.

Lands Generally Unavailable for Wilderness (FSH 1909.12, 7.22a)

Following are examples of lands that are generally best suited for development and intensive management for sustained yield production of resources other than wilderness. Depending on the seriousness of the resource needs, these lands may be considered unavailable for Wilderness:

- Areas where the need for increased water production and/or additional onsite storage is so vital that the installation or maintenance of improvements that would be incompatible with Wilderness is an obvious and inevitable public necessity

- Areas where designation would seriously restrict or prevent the application of wildlife management measures of considerable magnitude and importance
- Highly mineralized areas that are of such strategic or economic importance and extent that restrictions or controls necessary to maintain the wilderness character of the land would not be in the public interest.
- Areas containing natural phenomena of such unique or outstanding nature that general public access and special development to facilitate public enjoyment should be available.
- Land needed to meet clearly documented resource demands such as for timber or mineral production or for developed recreation areas such as winter sports sites.
- Lands committed through contractual agreements for use, purposes, or activities not in concert with the requirements of the Wilderness Act of 1964.

Limitations on Roadless Area Recommendations in the East (FSH 1909.12, 7.24)

Evaluation of roadless areas east of the 100th meridian as part of the forest planning process yields one of the two following decisions:

1. Manage the area for multiple uses other than wilderness
2. Recommend the area to Congress as a Wilderness Study Area.

D. Specific Criteria Required to Determine the Need for Additional Wilderness:

The need for additional wilderness is addressed in two primary locations:

- FSH 1909.12, Chapter 7 addresses the formal criteria for determining need
- The Forest Plan Revision Analysis of the Management Situation for Wilderness and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Areas identifies the need to adjust management direction regarding SPNM and Wilderness

Wilderness Evaluation - FSH 1909.12, Chapter 7:

7.23 – Need.

Determine the need for an area to be designated as wilderness through an analysis of the degree to which it contributes to the local and national distribution of wilderness. There should be clear evidence of current or future public need for additional designated wilderness in general area under consideration. Demonstrate this need through the public involvement process, including public input to environmental analysis and its resultant documentation. Deal with “need” on a national basis and evaluate such factors as the geographic distribution of areas, representations of landforms and ecosystems, and the presence of wildlife expected to be visible in a Wilderness environment.

It is not possible to consider the need for the wilderness resource wholly apart from the demand for other uses of the land that might be compatible with wilderness. Nevertheless, considering that the purpose of wilderness designation is to provide an enduring resource of wilderness for the American people, it is essential to analyze the need for wilderness in order to establish its relative value.

7.23a – Assumptions.

In evaluating the need for wilderness, planners can make certain assumptions with reasonable assurance, specifically:

1. Wilderness demand increases with both increasing population and growing awareness of wilderness.
2. Some undeveloped lands provide many opportunities for a primitive type of recreation outside wilderness. These lands are going to decrease in acreage as the demands on public lands increase.
3. Some visitor use that occurs in wildernesses is not dependent upon the wilderness resource.
4. Within social and biological limits, management may increase the capacity of establishing wildernesses to support human use without unacceptable depreciation of the wilderness resource.
5. To survive, some biotic species and/or associations may require the environment found only in a wilderness.

7.23b – Factors.

In determining whether there is a need to designate a roadless area as wilderness, consider:

1. The location, size, and type of other wildernesses in the general vicinity and their distance from the proposed areas. Consider accessibility of areas to population centers and user groups.
2. Present visitor pressure on other wildernesses, the trends in use, changing patterns of use, population expansion figures, trends and changes in transportation, and Nation-wide travel patterns.
3. Extent to which non-wilderness lands on National Forest, other Federal lands, State lands, & private lands other than wildernesses are likely to provide opportunities for unconfined outdoor recreation experiences.

As the remainder of the country becomes increasingly populated, it is reasonable to assume that the relatively un-crowded State of West Virginia will become more attractive for both recreationists and others seeking areas to relocate away from the crowds.

In West Virginia, the National Forests, and to a lesser extent the State lands, are almost the exclusive providers of public primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. The Monongahela National Forest (MNF) contains five wildernesses totaling over 78,000 acres or about 9% of the Forest. There are also over 324,400 acres of the Forest in Management Area 6.1 and approximately 125,000 acres in Management Area 6.2. Both of these areas emphasize semi-primitive non-motorized (SPNM) recreation opportunities areas and represent almost 50% of the Monongahela National Forest land base.

The following situations or conditions support the need for SPNM & wilderness within the Monongahela National Forest:

- Long term increase in demand for primitive recreation opportunities, coupled with increasing development of private land base in West Virginia and surrounding states.
- There is a lack of opportunities for solitude in a Forest setting. A common complaint is the intrusion of motorized sound in Wilderness and SPNM areas.
- In both wilderness and SPNM Areas of the Monongahela National Forest there is generally a lack of quality primitive experience from both ecological and recreational perspectives.
- There is a need to provide habitat for species that require isolation (areas of low human impact).
- In addition to the needs listed above, there is a growing recognition of the need to maintain and enhance biological diversity and ecosystem representation, as well as address the issues of forest continuity and landscape structure.

Forest-wide Wilderness Need Summary

Since passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964, the National Wilderness Preservation System has grown from about 9 million acres to 628 areas totaling 105.6 million acres in 2000. The National Park Service manages 43 million wilderness acres (45%), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages 21 million acres (20%), the U.S. Forest Service manages 35 million acres (29%) and the Bureau of Land Management manages 5 million acres (5%). About 63 percent of the wilderness in the lower 48 states is managed by the Forest Service, with almost 400 of the 628 units in the system. One acre in six of the National Forest System is now in the National Wilderness Preservation System. An estimated 4.7% of all lands in the United States are federally designated wilderness, with less than 10% occurring in the east.

Recreation is one of the many values associated with wilderness areas. Other values include the importance of natural environments for people and the protection of biological diversity/ecological units. Below is a discussion of wilderness need based on the above.

Recreation Use

The National Forest Visitor Use Monitoring results for 2002 indicate that nationally there are about 12.7 million recreation visits to National Forest managed wilderness annually, with 889,000 (7%) visiting wildernesses in the Eastern Region. In 2001 visitor use monitoring for the George Washington National Forest indicated that there were about 69,400 visits to their 17 wildernesses (2% of total recreation use) and in 2002 the Allegheny National Forest's visits to their two wildernesses was 38,815 visits or 3% of their total recreation use. Although wilderness use estimates for the Monongahela National Forest will not be available until summer or fall 2004 we anticipate that the number of recreation visits to the five wildernesses on the Forest will be within the 2-3% of the total recreation use, which is consistent with the Allegheny and George Washington/ Jefferson National Forests.

As the remainder of the country becomes increasingly populated, it is reasonable to assume that the relatively un-crowded State of West Virginia will become more attractive for both recreationists and others seeking areas to relocate away from the crowds. In West Virginia, the National Forests, and to a lesser extent the State lands, are almost the exclusive providers of public semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. The Monongahela National Forest (MNF) contains five wildernesses totaling over 78,000 acres or about 9% of the Forest. In addition, there are 2,721 acres of the Mountain Lake Wilderness managed by the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest which is located in West Virginia. Within the local geographical Allegheny Mountain Range (Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia) there are 25 federally designated wildernesses totaling 266,827 acres.

There are also over 324,400 acres of the Monongahela National Forest in Management Area 6.1 (remote wildlife habitat emphasis) and approximately 125,000 acres in Management Area 6.2 (semi-primitive non-motorized recreation emphasis). Although some timber harvest has occurred in the 6.1 areas since 1986, both of these areas offer semi-primitive non-motorized (SPNM) recreation opportunities, and together they represent almost 50% of the Forest land base.

Natural Environments

In addition to recreation use in wilderness, there are non-users that value wilderness, and this fact is important to consider when analyzing roadless areas, allocations and the need for additional wilderness. Studies have shown that a large portion of the non-visiting public values the knowledge that natural environments exist and are protected. This perception can be considered an existence benefit. These wilderness advocates also have the off-site benefit of knowing that protection today will provide wilderness for future generations to enjoy. These

values are reflected in the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (2001) finding that 69.8% of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed to the question, “How do you feel about designating more federal lands in your state as wilderness?” Over 96% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I enjoy knowing that future generations will be able to visit and experience wilderness areas.”

Biological Diversity/ Ecological Units

The context for determining the need for ecosystem representation in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) is based upon the eco-region descriptions developed by Robert G. Bailey in Descriptions of the Ecoregions of the United States (Bailey 1995). Nationwide, 261 different ecosystem types have been identified based on biophysical factors. Of these, an estimated 157 eco-regions, also referred to as provinces, are now represented in the NWPS. The goal of ecosystem representation is to represent different ecosystem types in a preservation-oriented system such as the NWPS, to meet biological (landform representation and biodiversity conservation) and social needs (outdoor recreation opportunities).

The Monongahela National Forest Inventoried Roadless Areas are all located in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221) and more specifically the Allegheny Mountains Section (M221B), which includes 14 areas with a total of 138,541 acres. The five existing wildernesses on the Forest, totalling about 78,000 acres, are also located in this ecological unit.

The Forest Service defines adequate wilderness representation of an ecosystem to include two or more distinct examples of at least 1,000 acres (Loomis et al. 1999). However, there are no absolute “minimums” for representation. The M221 Ecoregion is adequately represented with wilderness, with an estimated 306,693 acres included in the NWPS, including 25 separate examples of at least 1000 acres.

The 14 IRA’s and 5 wildernesses on the Forest are located within three Ecological Unit Subsections. The Northern High Allegheny Mountain Subsection (M221Ba) includes the Dolly Sods, Otter Creek, and Laurel Fork North and South Wildernesses and Canaan Loop, Cheat Mountain, Dolly Sods Expansion, East Fork Greenbrier, Roaring Plains, Seneca Creek, Upper Shavers Fork East and West IRA’s (12 areas totaling 116,167 acres). The Southern (Middle) High Allegheny Subsection (M221 Bc) includes the Cranberry Wilderness and the Cranberry Expansion, Tea Creek Mountain and Turkey Mountain IRA’s (4 areas totaling 62,446 acres), and the Eastern Allegheny Mountain and Valley subsection (M221Bd) includes the Big Draft, Middle Mountain, and Spice Run IRA’s (3 areas totaling 28,349 acres)

Part Four: Wilderness Evaluation of Inventoried Roadless Areas

FINAL RESULT – There are 14 areas (138,541 acres) which are the final roadless inventory. These areas were evaluated in this section for potential wildernesses in the east, they are as follows:

- * Big Draft – 8,019 acres
- * Canaan Loop – 7,900 acres
- * Cheat Mountain - 12,779 acres
- * Cranberry Expansion – 12,166 Acres
- * Dolly Sods Expansion – 7,864 acres
- * East Fork Greenbrier – 10,065 acres
- * Middle Mountain – 12,197 acres
- * Roaring Plains West – 6,453 acres
- * Seneca Creek – 25,046 acres
- * Spice Run – 7,443 acres
- * Tea Creek – 8,289 acres
- * Turkey Mountain – 6,127 acres
- * Upper Shavers Fork East – 8,218 acres
- * Upper Shavers Fork West – 5,975 acres

IRA Allocation by Alternative: The following table displays IRA allocation for each alternative in estimated acres rounded off to the nearest hundred. These values represent the potential, long-term outcomes of managing the IRA based solely upon its management prescription (MP).

Alternative 1-4 This table will be completed for each alternative in conjunction with Draft Environmental Impact Statement to be published in November 2004.)

IRA	Total Acres	Recommended Wilderness MP	Maintain Undeveloped Character MP	Potential Low levels of Development (mix of MPs)	Available for full range of development (mix of MPs)
Big Draft	8,019				
Canaan Loop	7,900				
Cheat Mountain	12,779				
Cranberry Expansion	12,166				
Dolly Sods Expansion	7,864				
East Fork Greenbrier	10,065				
Middle Mountain	12,197				
Roaring Plains West	6,453				
Seneca Creek	25,046				
Spice Run	7,443				
Tea Creek Mountain	8,289				
Turkey Mountain	6,127				
Upper Shavers Fork East	8,218				
Upper Shavers Fork West	5,975				

Big Draft

Inventoried Roadless Area

8,019 Acres

DESCRIPTION

Location, Vicinity, and Access: The Big Draft Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) is located on the Monongahela National Forest, White Sulphur Springs Ranger District, Greenbrier County, West Virginia. The entire area is located on National Forest System lands. The area is located at the southern tip of the Forest, just south of Blue Bend Recreation area and about 5 miles north of White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. State Roads 16 and 36, Forest Road 296, and County Roads 21/2 and 36/1 provide the primary access to the area. Nearby communities include; Anthony, 1 mile west, White Sulphur Springs, about 5 miles to the south, and Lewisburg, 15 miles to the southwest. The area is about 3 miles long and 1.5 miles wide and is found within portions of United States Geological Survey (USGS) quadrangle maps for Anthony and White Sulphur Springs. There are no improved roads and 14 miles of designated trail within the IRA.

Topography, Geology, and Vegetation: The Big Draft IRA ranges in elevation from 1,800 feet along the Greenbrier River to over 3,100 feet on interior portions of the area. Slopes within the area range from 10 to 60% and are typically long ridges with narrow summits and mountain slopes. The geologic formations within the area vary and include Mississippi sandstone, Devonian sandstone and shale with a surface geology consisting of sandy silty colluvium. The primary vegetative type is oak and hickory, with pockets of hemlock and white pine. There is an understory of rhododendron, mixed shrubs, grasses, and ferns.

Current Uses: This area is currently managed under Management Prescription 6.2. Prescription 6.2 emphasizes semi-primitive non-motorized recreation, and commercial timber harvesting is not permitted. The area is primarily used for undeveloped recreation activities such as hiking, hunting, fishing and some seasonal paddling in the Greenbrier River and Anthony Creek. There are 14 miles of trail open to hiking, mountain biking and equestrian use within the IRA. The Blue Bend Recreation Area, just north of the IRA, is a very popular camping, picnicking and swimming destination. Recreation use within the IRA is considered moderate to high.

Key Attractions: The Blue Bend Recreation Area, 14-mile trail system, and the Greenbrier River and Anthony Creek paddling opportunities are the key attractions within or adjacent to the IRA.

CAPABILITY

Natural Integrity and Appearance: The area is minimally affected by outside forces. Most of the Big Draft IRA is regaining its natural untrammelled appearance, and natural ecological processes are the primary factors affecting the area. The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) manages 15 acres of wildlife openings within the IRA. There has not been any timber harvesting in the area since prior to 1986. Therefore, natural integrity and appearance are rated moderate to high.

Opportunities for Solitude and Challenging Primitive Recreation: Big Draft IRA is 8,019 acres in size and provides 2,558 acres of core solitude (32% of the area). It is located entirely on National Forest System lands. National Forest borders most of the area to the north and east. Private land borders the entire southern and most of the western perimeters of the area.

Visitor use within the IRA is considered moderate to high most of the year and is limited primarily to hikers, hunters and anglers. The 14-mile trail system is open to hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians and provides numerous scenic views. The Blue Bend Trail is on the National Register of Historic Places Register and, along with the Anthony Creek Trail, is heavily used by anglers. Mountain bike use within the area is considered low but is well-established. Equestrian use is very low. The likelihood of encountering other visitors within the area is low to moderate, and the opportunity to experience remoteness is moderate. Due to the relatively small size

of the core solitude area, there is potential to hear noise from adjacent roads, the Blue Bend Recreation Area and Camp Woods, and activities on private lands to the south.

Special Features: The Pink Lady Slipper Area (1 acre enclosure) and the Big Draft Shale Barron Botanical Area are located within the IRA.

Manageability and Boundaries: The relatively small size and shape of the Big Draft IRA, combined with the amount of private bordering the area to the south and west, increase the potential for encroachment and non-conforming uses. These factors, along with wildlife management activities within the area, make the preservation potential marginal to average.

AVAILABILITY

Recreation: Use within the IRA is considered moderate to high most of the year and is limited primarily to hikers, hunters and anglers. The 14-mile trail system is open to hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians and provides numerous scenic views. The Blue Bend Trail is on the National Register of Historic Places Register and, along with the Anthony Creek Trail, is heavily used by anglers. Mountain bike use within the area is considered low but is well-established. Equestrian use is very low. There is a trail shelter along the Blue Bend Trail that receives moderate use. Anthony Creek and the Greenbrier River provide seasonal paddling opportunities. Blue Bend visitors and students from Camp Wood also use the IRA for hiking and fishing.

Fisheries: The IRA is located along the lower reaches of Anthony Creek at its confluence with the Greenbrier River. Fisheries resources within Anthony Creek include warm water game fish (small-mouth bass, rock bass and green sunfish) and numerous native non-game species (WVDNR Fish Sampling database). Fisheries data is limited for the major tributaries, Laurel Creek and Big Draft, in the IRA. Big Draft was sampled in 1992 and only black-nose dace and creek chub were collected. Fish were observed in Laurel Creek during a habitat survey in 1991, but no fish sampling data are available (Stream Survey data on file at the S.O.). Species of concern collected in Anthony Creek, within the IRA, include candy darter, bigmouth chub and blue-head chub. The candy darter is on the Regional Forester's sensitive species list, and bigmouth chub and blue-head chub are ranked by the state as S3/S4 and S3 respectively.

Wildlife: The area provides habitat for a diversity of wildlife species. Species within the area include whitetail deer, black bear, grouse, cottontail rabbit, wild turkey and a variety of birds and reptiles. The area provides habitat for the federally listed West Virginia northern flying squirrel. The WVDNR currently maintains 15 acres of wildlife openings in the area.

Water: This IRA contains portions of 5 cold water streams. The Greenbrier River is a navigable river and flows through a small portion of the area. No water storage needs or existing water-related special use permits are identified at this time. Streams in the area are highly acidic.

Range: The area has no livestock grazing permits or range allotments. There are no capable grazing lands identified within the area.

Timber: Timber harvesting is not currently permitted except for dispersed recreation objectives, public safety, insect and disease control, timber salvage, or restoration of areas severely damaged by hurricanes, ice storms, etc. There has not been any significant timber harvesting in the area since the early 1980s. The IRA contains an estimated 142,275 hundred cubic feet (CCF) of merchantable timber. An estimated 8,019 acres (100 percent) are considered tentatively suited timberlands, including an estimated 3,238 (40%) acres that are considered to be prime timberland.

Minerals: There are no active private or federal gas leases or coal operations within the IRA. However, there are 2,483 acres in federal gas leases. Lands within the IRA are estimated to have a 12.5% chance of natural gas production at 1.56 million cubic feet per acre. Forty percent of the mineral rights within the area are privately

owned. Based on available information, mineable coal is not present within the IRA. The potential conflict between mineral exploration/development and roadless area values is moderate based on the potential for some natural gas discovery coincident with private ownership.

Cultural Resources: This IRA is located in an overall high probability cultural resource zone. There are seven known historical or archaeological sites that have been identified within the area. An estimated 2% of the area has been surveyed.

Landownership and Special Uses: The Monongahela administers all lands in the IRA. There are no non-federal lands, permanently encumbered land titles, or cost-share agreements of record within the IRA. There are no special use permits issued in the area.

Disturbances: Fire regimes are classified based on the average number of years between fires, combined with the severity of the fire on the dominant overstory vegetation. The Spice Run Area is located within Fire Regimes I, III and V. Fire Regime I has a 0-35 year frequency of low (surface fire most common) and mixed severity (less than 75% of the dominant overstory vegetation replaced). Fire Regime III has a 35–100+ year frequency and a mixed (less than 75% of the dominant overstory replaced) severity. Fire Regime V has a 200+ year frequency and high (stand replacement) severity.

The fire regime condition class (FRCC) is a classification based on the relative degree of departure the area has from its natural fire regime. The IRA is located in Condition Classes 1 and 2. Condition Class 1 is within the natural or historical range of variability, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is low. Condition Class 2 has a moderate departure from the natural range, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is moderate.

Botanical Characteristics: There is one sensitive plant and one threatened plant known to occur in the area. The showy lady's slipper is on the Regional Forester Sensitive Species list and the small whorled pagonia is threatened. Although there are no inventoried locations of non-native invasive species within the IRA, it is likely that abandoned road corridors and other disturbed areas have a variety of non-native invasive species.

NEED

Proximity to Designated Wildernesses and Population Centers: The Otter Creek and Dolly Sods Wildernesses are 80-90 air miles northeast of the IRA. The Laurel Fork Wildernesses are about 60 air miles to the northeast, and the Cranberry Wilderness is 20 air miles north of the area. The area is 5 air miles north of White Sulphur Springs and 23 air miles southwest of Marlinton. The IRA is within a 3 hour drive of Charleston, and a 4-5 hour drive Pittsburgh and Washington D.C. As a designated wilderness, the area would serve the local communities of White Sulphur Springs, Lewiston, Covington, Marlinton, and Richwood, and population centers such as Morgantown, Charleston, Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C.

Biological: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221) and more specifically the Eastern Allegheny Mountain and Valley Section (M221Bd), which is represented regionally, nationally, and within existing wilderness on the Monongahela National Forest.

Public Interest: There has been public interest in this area becoming wilderness. Environmental organizations—including the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Highlands Conservancy, and The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition—have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation. This IRA was not recommended for wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act or 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act or 1983 West Virginia Wilderness Act.

WILDERNESS EVALUATION SUMMARY

Capability Summary:

Apparent Naturalness	Moderate to High
Natural Integrity	Moderate to High
Opportunity for Solitude	Low to Moderate
Opportunities for Challenge and Adventure	Low to Moderate
Special Features	Present

Determination of Availability or Unavailability: The IRA does not meet any of the criteria listed in FSH 1909.12.7.22a. Therefore, it is available for wilderness designation.

Values Foregone with Wilderness Designation: If this area were designated wilderness mountain bike use would be eliminated; this use is currently low but well-established. The trail shelter on the Blue Bend Trail would need to be removed. Trail maintenance, construction, and reconstruction would be limited to non-mechanical equipment.

The creation or maintenance of wildlife openings would be discontinued. This may result in reduced foraging habitat for species like deer and turkey that use early successional stages for foraging.

Wilderness designation would affect the ability to add lime to streams to help maintain or improve water quality and fish habitat. Liming stations and mechanized transport would be considered non-conforming uses unless they were allowed in the area-specific legislation.

Current fire control techniques would be altered significantly. Mechanized ground equipment is an important tool in this area, especially considering the private land to the north and west. Wilderness designation may also limit options for fire suppression on adjacent private lands.

Although there is a potential 142,275 CCF on 8,019 tentatively suited acres that could be foregone with wilderness designation, the current 6.2 Management Prescription does not include programmed timber harvest, and only allows harvest activities under certain circumstances. The values from future development of the Federal mineral estate, which might include natural gas, would likely be foregone. However, there could be values received from future development of the private mineral estate because 40% of the area has privately owned mineral rights. These rights remain valid and could be exercised regardless of wilderness designation.

Biological and Social Need: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221) and more specifically the Eastern Allegheny Mountain and Valley Section (M221Bd), which represented regionally in existing wildernesses. There has been some interest in this area becoming wilderness. Environmental organizations have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation. This IRA was not recommended for wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act or 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act or 1983 West Virginia Wilderness Act.

ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

NOTE: Tables will be filled-out after the alternatives have been developed.

IRA Disposition by Alternative: The following table will display IRA disposition for each alternative in estimated acres rounded off to the nearest hundred. These values represent the potential, long-term outcomes of managing the IRA based solely upon its management prescription.

IRA Management Disposition	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Recommended Wilderness				
Maintain undeveloped character				
Potential low levels of development				
Available for full range of development				

Potential Future Development: Potential future development is represented by combinations of management prescriptions and existing conditions that are likely to become priority areas for development activities over the course of the next two or three decades. The development activities chosen for this estimation are timber harvest, oil/gas leases, and private mineral rights. Development potential is expressed in acres in the table below.

Potential Development	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Timber activities				
Oil/Gas Leases				
Private Mineral Rights				

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics: The following table displays the effects on wilderness characteristics for each alternative. The effects on wilderness characteristics are based on the estimation of potential future development.

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4

N = No change; slight change or less than 1 percent of the area potentially affected.

L = Light impact; 1-5 percent of the area potentially affected.

M = Moderate impact; 5-20 percent of the area potentially affected.

H = High impact; greater than 20 percent of the area potentially affected.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In this section, we will state if the preferred alternative does or does not recommend this IRA for wilderness. This recommendation will be published in the Draft Plan, November of 2004. If it is not recommended, this section will briefly describe the potential for development in this area.

Please Note:

This document, the Roadless Area Evaluation, is the first step of the review process in which each area is evaluated for its potential as wilderness. Identifying if an area should or should not be recommended is the second step of the process, which will be disclosed in the Draft Plan.

Canaan Loop

Inventoried Roadless Area No. 09043

7,900 Acres

DESCRIPTION

Location, Vicinity, and Access: The Canaan Loop IRA is located on the Cheat-Potomac Ranger District, Tucker County, West Virginia. The entire area is on National Forest System lands. The area is located west of State Road 32. Forest Road (FR) 13 circles the area. Blackwater Falls State Park borders the area to the north, and the Canaan Valley State Park is about ½ mile to the south. Nearby communities include Davis, Canaan Heights, and Hendricks, West Virginia. The area is about 3 miles in length and 1 mile wide and is found within portions of the Mozark Mountain and Blackwater Falls USGS quadrangle maps. Primary vehicle access is provided by FR 13. Visitors also access the area from the Blackwater Falls and Canaan Valley State Parks. There are no improved or unimproved roads within the area. Five trails, totaling 16 miles, are located within and immediately adjacent to the Canaan Loop area.

Topography, Geology, and Vegetation: The Canaan Loop area is a high plateau ranging in elevation from 4,145 feet at Pointy Knob to 3,100 feet near Blackwater Falls State Park. Much of the area is relatively flat, and there are many seasonally wet places. The geology of this area is predominately Pottsville Rock, with Conemaugh Allegheny Rocks located on the higher knobs on the west and north side of Canaan Mountain. Vegetation consists of red spruce, hemlock, and hardwood stands with an understory of rhododendron, mountain laurel, and shrubs. The vegetative makeup of the area is 65% hardwood, 25% softwood, and 10% upland brush.

Current Uses: This area is currently managed under Management Prescription 6.2, which emphasizes semi-primitive non-motorized recreation. The area is primarily used for undeveloped recreation activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, and dispersed camping (estimated 17 sites along FR 13). There are five recreation special use permits in the area. These permitted activities include mountain biking, hiking, backpacking, and cross-country skiing. Forest Road 13 is heavily used from September to December by hunters. There are two trail shelters within the area that are used on a first-come basis.

Key Attractions: The 16-mile trail system (open to all non-motorized uses) and two trail shelters are the primary key attractions in the area. Hunting, fishing, the American Discovery Trail, and the connecting trail access to the Blackwater Falls and Canaan Valley State Parks also attract visitors to this area.

CAPABILITY

Natural Integrity and Appearance: There are no roads within the area, although there is an extensive trail system within and adjacent to the area. Most of the area appears to be natural, but there are signs of human-induced disturbance and presence, primarily 28 acres of wildlife openings, two trail shelters, an old rock quarry, and the well-used trail system. Overall, natural integrity is intact and the natural appearance is moderate to high.

Opportunities for Solitude and Challenging Primitive Recreation: The IRA is 7,900 acres in size, provides over 3,100 acres of contiguous core solitude (39% of the area), and is located entirely on National Forest System lands. The area is bordered to the north and east by Black Water Falls State Park and private commercial forest land. The western and southern boundaries are National Forest. A gas pipeline forms the eastern boundary of the area. Visitor use is considered moderate most of the year and high during hunting season. The 16-mile trail system (1.33 miles/square mile) receives moderate to high hiker and mountain bike use. Equestrian use is low. The trail system provides connecting access to the two state parks bordering the area. The likelihood of encountering other visitors along trails is moderate to high. Existing vegetation, combined with the high-elevation plateau, provides good visual screening from outside activities and

opportunities to experience solitude and the feeling of remoteness. However, because of the area's narrow width, the road circling the area, and the private commercial land and state park bordering to the north, it is likely that human-produced sounds—traffic, chainsaws, large groups— would occasionally be heard within much of the IRA. Thus, opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation are both considered low to moderate.

Special Features: Federally listed wildlife species that may use the area include the Cheat Mountain salamander and the West Virginia northern flying squirrel. The area is very scenic, although there are few existing vistas. The mixture of hardwoods and conifers, an understory of ferns and rhododendron, and rock forms combine to give the area an outstanding visual variety. Red Run and other streams that originate in this area tumble over rocks in waterfalls and steep gradients, and are very attractive.

Manageability and Boundaries: Forest Service Road 13 completely circles the Canaan Loop area and would serve as an excellent boundary. However, the size and shape (only 1 mile wide) of the IRA makes its preservation potential marginal. FR 13 circles the area and has numerous established uses. Road traffic and uses, and commercial forest land and the state park bordering on the north, increase the risk of encroachment and non-conforming uses within the area, including development and timber harvest adjacent to the northern border. Well-established mountain bike use on the trail system within the area will be difficult to eliminate. Although the area does have over 3,100 acres of core solitude, this area is long and narrow, so noise from outside sources even within the core area can be expected.

AVAILABILITY

Recreation: There are two Forest Service trail shelters with the area. One is located along trail #110, the Railroad Grade Trail, and the other adjacent to trail #701, the Allegheny Trail. The American Discovery/Allegheny Trail is a multiple-use (non-motorized) trail within the area. The 16-mile trail system attracts a variety of visitors, including many from the Blackwater Falls and Canaan Valley State Parks. Mountain biking is very popular in the area, and recreation special use permits are authorized annually for special mountain bike events. Most of the trails were originally constructed as fire lanes, and some resource damage is occurring from heavy trail use in wet areas. Hiking, hunting, fishing, nature watching, cross-country skiing and disperse camping are also popular activities within the area. Recreation use is expected to increase substantially over the next 10-15 years in this general area with the completion of Corridor H, which will provide interstate access from Washington D.C., Maryland, and Virginia to the north-central counties in West Virginia.

Fisheries: The Canaan Loop IRA is situated on Canaan Mountain and drains to the Blackwater River to the north and Red Run to the south. The IRA is underlain by geologies that are sensitive to acid deposition and streams in the area are susceptible to acidic conditions. Laurel Run, which heads in the IRA, is on the EPA 303d list of impaired streams due to acid rain. Red Run is also considered acidic, but the addition of limestone sand to the channel has mitigated the effects of acid deposition. Brook trout, black-nose dace and mottled sculpin have re-established in the stream following the limestone treatment. No additional fisheries data are available for the IRA.

Wildlife: The area provides habitat for a diversity of wildlife species. Species within the area include whitetail deer, black bear, grouse, snowshoe hare, wild turkey and a variety of birds and reptiles. Threatened, endangered and Regional sensitive (TE&S) species that may be found within or adjacent to the area include the Cheat Mountain salamander, and the West Virginia northern flying squirrel, and the northern water shrew. The WVDNR currently maintains 28 acres of wildlife openings.

Water: This IRA contains the headwaters for six cold water streams. There are no major rivers or navigable waters within the area. No water storage needs or existing water-related special use permits are identified at this time. Most streams in the area are highly acidic.

Range: The area has no livestock grazing permits or range allotments. There are no capable grazing lands within the area.

Timber: Timber harvesting is not currently permitted except for achieving recreation objectives, public safety, insect and disease control, timber salvage, or restoration of areas severely damaged by hurricanes, ice storms, etc. There has not been any timber harvest in this area since the early 1980s.

This area contains an estimated 161,774 hundred cubic feet (CCF) of merchantable timber. An estimated 7,742 acres (98 percent) are considered tentatively suited timberlands and 158 acres (2%) are considered not suited for timber harvest. There is an estimated 3,170 acres (41%) of prime timberland within the IRA.

Minerals: There are no active or inactive private or federal gas leases or coal operations within the IRA. Forty percent of the IRA is estimated to have a 25% chance, and 60% of the area has a 12.5% chance, of natural gas production at 1.56 million cubic feet per acre. There are no privately owned mineral rights within the area. Based on available information, mineable coal may be present in some areas, but the economic viability is unknown. The potential conflict between mineral exploration and development and roadless area values is low because of the combination of U.S. control over managing minerals and the relative uncertainty regarding the occurrence of valuable minerals.

Cultural Resources: This IRA is located in an overall moderate probability cultural resource zone. There are two known historical or archaeological sites that have been identified within the area. None of the area has been surveyed.

Landownership and Special Uses: The Monongahela National Forest administers all lands in the IRA. There are no non-federal lands, permanently encumbered land titles, or cost-share agreements of record within the IRA. There are five recreation and no non-recreation special use permits issued for activities within the IRA.

Disturbances: The Canaan Loop IRA is within Fire Regime V. Fire Regime V has a 200+ year frequency and high (stand replacement) severity. This area's fire regime is in Condition Class 1. This Condition Class is within its historical range of variability, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is low.

Botanical Characteristics: No populations of threatened, endangered or sensitive plants are known to occur within the area, but only a few botanical surveys have been done. Although there are no inventoried locations of non-native invasive species within this IRA, it is likely that existing road and trail corridors and other disturbed areas have a variety of non-native invasive species.

NEED

Proximity to Designated Wildernesses and Population Centers: The Otter Creek and Dolly Sods Wildernesses are within 5-10 miles of the IRA. The Laurel Fork North and South Wildernesses are about 15-20 miles to the southwest. The area is 6 air miles from Parsons, 17 miles from Elkins, and is within a 3-hour drive of Charleston, Pittsburgh and Washington D.C. As a designated wilderness, the area would serve the local communities of Parsons, Davis and Elkins, and population centers such as Morgantown, Charleston, Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C.

Biological: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221) and more specifically the Northern High Allegheny Mountain Section (M221Ba), which is represented regionally, nationally, and within existing wildernesses on the Monongahela National Forest.

Public Interest: There has been little public interest in this area becoming wilderness. No organizations or individuals have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping. This IRA was not recommended for wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act or 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act or 1983 West Virginia Wilderness Act.

WILDERNESS EVALUATION SUMMARY

Capability Summary:

Apparent Naturalness	Moderate to High
Natural Integrity	Moderate to High
Opportunity for Solitude	Low to Moderate
Opportunities for Challenge and Adventure	Low to Moderate
Special Features	Present

Determination of Availability or Unavailability: The IRA does not meet any of the criteria listed in FSH 1909.12.7.22a. Therefore, it is available for wilderness designation.

Values Foregone with Wilderness Designation: Mountain bike use within the area is moderate to high and well-established; designation would eliminate this use within wilderness. Special use permits would need to be modified to exclude any trail segments within the designated area where mountain biking is permitted. Elimination of this use would be very controversial. In addition, two existing trail shelters would have to be removed, and trail maintenance, construction, and reconstruction would be limited to non-mechanical equipment.

The creation or maintenance of wildlife openings would be discontinued. This may result in 28 acres of reduced foraging habitat for species like deer and turkey.

Wilderness designation would affect the ability to add lime to streams to help maintain or improve water quality and fish habitat. Liming stations and mechanized transport would be considered non-conforming uses unless they were allowed in the area-specific legislation.

Current fire control techniques would be altered significantly. Mechanized ground equipment is an important tool in this area, especially considering the private land and state park developments bordering this area. Wilderness designation may also limit options for fire suppression on adjacent private and state lands.

Although there is a potential 161,744 CCF on 7,900 tentatively suited acres that could be foregone with wilderness designation, the current 6.2 Management Prescription does not include programmed timber harvest, and only allows harvest activities under certain circumstances. The values from future mineral development, which might include natural gas or coal, would likely be foregone.

Biological and Social Need: The M22Ba Ecological Unit is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wildernesses. There has been relatively low public interest in this area becoming wilderness. No organizations have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping.

ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

NOTE: Tables will be filled-out after the alternatives have been developed.

IRA Disposition by Alternative: The following table displays IRA disposition for each alternative in acres rounded off to the nearest hundred. These values represent the potential, long-term outcomes of managing the IRA based solely upon its management prescription.

IRA Management Disposition	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Recommended Wilderness				
Maintain undeveloped character				
Potential low levels of development				
Available for full range of development				

Potential Future Development: Potential future development is represented by combinations of management prescriptions and existing conditions that are likely to become priority areas for development activities over the course of the next two or three decades. The development activities chosen for this estimation are timber harvest, oil/gas leases, and private mineral rights. Development potential is expressed in acres in the table below.

Potential Development	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Timber activities				
Oil/Gas Leases				
Private Mineral Rights				

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics: The following table displays the effects on wilderness characteristics for each alternative. The effects on wilderness characteristics are based on the estimation of potential future development.

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4

N = No change; slight change or less than 1 percent of the area potentially affected.

L = Light impact; 1-5 percent of the area potentially affected.

M = Moderate impact; 5-20 percent of the area potentially affected.

H = High impact; greater than 20 percent of the area potentially affected.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In this section, we will state if the preferred alternative does or does not recommend this IRA for wilderness. This recommendation will be published in the Draft Plan, November of 2004. If it is not recommended, this section will briefly describe the potential for development in this area.

Please Note:

This document, the Roadless Area Evaluation, is the first step of the review process in which each area is evaluated for its potential as wilderness. Identifying if an area should or should not be recommended is the second step of the process, which will be disclosed in the Draft Plan.

Cheat Mountain

Inventoried Roadless Area No. 09040

12,779 Acres

DESCRIPTION

Location, Vicinity, and Access: The Cheat Mountain IRA is located on the Monongahela National Forest, Greenbrier Ranger District, Randolph County, West Virginia. The area is located south of Bemis, West Virginia. A railroad borders the area to the east, and private land makes up the northwestern boundary. National Forest System lands border the area to the north, south and southwest. Nearby communities include Bemis (1 mile north), Daily (5 miles west), and Glady (2 miles east), West Virginia. The area is approximately 8 miles long and 2.5 mile wide and is found primarily within portions of the Beverly East USGS quadrangle map. Primary vehicle access is provided by State Road 30 and 22 from the north, and Forest Road 92 from the west. The scenic train provides visitor access along the eastern boundary of the area and stops at the High Falls of Cheat. Visitors can also access the area from the pipeline on the northern border. There are 5 miles of improved road and 5 miles of unimproved road within the area. A system trail accesses the High Falls of Cheat from Forest Road 44 adjacent to the area.

There are no system trails within the Cheat Mountain IRA. The 5 miles of unimproved road are currently serving as trails and travel east-west across the central and south central portion of the area. Two abandoned trails also access the area from the north and travel into the center of the area but are very difficult to follow.

Topography, Geology, and Vegetation: The Cheat Mountain IRA ranges in elevation from 3,000 feet at along the Shavers Fork to 3,800 feet at the top of Cheat Mountain. Slopes are generally steep along the Shavers Fork, with more gradual slopes toward the main ridge. The upper reaches of Red, Red Roaring, and Fish Hawk Runs are quite gentle with some swampy areas. Vegetation consists primarily of northern hardwood stands with some red spruce and an understory of rhododendron and shrubs.

Current Uses: The Cheat Mountain IRA is currently managed under Management Prescriptions 3.0, 6.1 and 6.2. Management Prescription 3.0 emphasizes large high quality hardwood trees for lumber, Prescription 6.1 is managed primarily for remote wildlife species habitat, and Prescription 6.2 is managed primarily for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. Because 3.0 is only a small portion of the IRA, the overall area is managed mainly for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. Although use is currently low, hunting and fishing are the primary activities. Some hiking and dispersed camping occurs, usually associated with hunting and fishing. Equestrian and mountain bike use is very low. The old roads currently receive very low recreation use, which is primarily foot travel. The Tygart Flyer railroad train travels from Elkins all the way to Highway 250 near the Cheat Bridge, providing visitors scenic views of the IRA.

Key Attractions: The key attractions of the Cheat Mountain IRA include it's inaccessibility by road and trail, and the High Falls along the Shavers Fork. This area also provides hunters and anglers the opportunity to experience their activities in a remote area with little chance of contacting other people except along the existing railroad.

CAPABILITY

Natural Integrity and Appearance: The area is minimally affected by outside forces. Most of the Cheat Mountain IRA is regaining it natural untrammled appearance, and natural ecological processes are the primary factors affecting the area. Therefore, natural integrity and appearance are rated moderate to high.

Opportunities for Solitude and Challenging Primitive Recreation: Cheat Mountain IRA is 12,779 acres in size and provides over 10,000 acres of core solitude (80% of the area). It is located entirely on National Forest System lands. The railroad borders the area to the east and private land makes up the northwestern boundary. National Forest System lands border the area to the north, south and southwest.

Visitor use of the area is considered low most of the year and is limited primarily to hunters and anglers. There are no system trails that access the area, although a closed level 3 road does provide east-west access across the central portion of the area. The likelihood of encountering other visitors within the area is low, and the opportunity to experience remoteness is high. The rhododendron understory is very thick in places and provides for social screening within the area. There is the potential to hear noise from the nearby town of Bemis, West Virginia and from the railroad trains that travel along the eastern boundary of the area.

Special Features: The area is very scenic. The primary mature northern hardwood stands provide for an older forest setting and a feeling of remoteness. Numerous small tributaries to the Shavers Fork flow through the area and provide a variety of scenic qualities. The area provides potential and known habitat for several threatened, endangered, or sensitive species.

Manageability and Boundaries: The size and shape (8 miles long, 2.5 mile wide) of the Cheat Mountain IRA, combined with ownership patterns and lack of access, give the area good preservation potential. The eastern boundary, along the railroad, has low potential for development. The northern, southern, and southwestern boundaries are National Forest system lands, and the central and northwestern boundaries are bordered by private land. There is potential for encroachment and non-conforming uses from adjacent private land.

AVAILABILITY

Recreation: The Cheat Mountain IRA provides an exceptional setting within the Monongahela National Forest for visitors to experience semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. Recreation use within the area is low to very low primarily due to the limited road access and no trail development. The primary recreation activities within the area are hunting and fishing. Due to the overall even-aged characteristics of timber in the area, topography, and heavy concentrations of rhododendron, vistas are not prominent.

Fisheries: The Cheat Mountain IRA lies primarily in the Shavers Fork watershed, and portions of the Files Creek watershed where the western boundary dips below the Cheat Mountain ridgeline. It is bounded on the north by Fishing Hawk Creek and to the south by McGee Creek. The underlying geology is sensitive to acid deposition, and streams in the IRA are susceptible to acidic conditions. Fishing Hawk and McGee Creeks are currently treated with limestone sand to mitigate the effects of acid deposition. The Shavers Fork main stem is on the EPA 303d list of impaired streams due to acid rain and is treated with limestone sand higher in the watershed south of the IRA. Brook trout can be found in most of the streams within the IRA, and trout are stocked within the Shavers Fork main stem. No sensitive species have been reported in the IRA, but Regional Forester sensitive species Cheat minnow and mountain red-belly dace have been collected in the Shavers Fork upstream of the IRA and may occur within the IRA (WVDNR Fish Sampling database).

Wildlife: Species within the area include whitetail deer, black bear, grouse, snowshoe hare, wild turkey, and a variety of birds and reptiles. TE&S species that may be found within or adjacent to the area include the Cheat Mountain salamander, Virginia big-eared, Indiana, and eastern small-footed bats, and the West Virginia northern flying squirrel. Currently the WVDNR manages 7 acres of wildlife openings within the IRA.

Water: This area contains the headwaters for seven cold water streams that all flow into the Shavers Fork of the Cheat River, which forms the eastern boundary of the area, or Files Creek where the area dips below Cheat Mountain on the western boundary. No water storage needs or existing water-related special use permits are identified at this time. Most streams in the area are highly acidic.

Range: There are no existing or potential range allotments located within the Cheat Mountain IRA.

Timber: Timber harvest is not currently permitted in the portions of the IRA under Management Prescription 6.2 except for dispersed recreation objectives, public safety, insect and disease control, timber salvage, or restoration of areas severely damaged by hurricanes, ice storms, etc. Portions of the IRA within MA 3.0 and 6.1 do permit commercial timber harvest, although there has not been any significant timber harvesting in this area since the early 1980s.

This area contains an estimated 317,679 hundred cubic feet (CCF) of merchantable timber. An estimated 11,884 acres (93 percent) are considered tentatively suited timberlands and 895 acres (7%) are considered not suited for timber harvest. There is an estimated 10,018 acres (78%) of prime timberland within the IRA.

Minerals: There are no active private or federal gas leases or coal operations within the IRA. However, there are 3,471 acres in Federal gas leases. Lands within the IRA are estimated to have a 25% chance of natural gas production at 1.56 million cubic feet per acre. Sixty percent of the mineral rights within the area are privately owned. Based on available information; thirty percent of the IRA has mineable coal identified and documented with acres and tons estimated, 20% of the area has mineable coal indicated, 20% of the area indicated that mineable coal may be present, and 30% of the area where mineable coal is not present. The potential conflict between mineral exploration and development and roadless area values is considered high because of the potential for mineable coal and natural gas coincident with privately owned mineral rights.

Cultural Resources: This IRA is located in an overall moderate probability cultural resource zone. There are 14 known historical or archaeological sites that have been identified within the area. An estimated 50% of the area has been surveyed.

Landownership and Special Uses: The Monongahela National Forest administers all lands in the IRA. There are no non-federal lands, permanently encumbered land titles, or cost-share agreements of record within the IRA. There are no special use permits issued for activities within the area.

Disturbances: The Cheat Mountain IRA is within Fire Regime V. This regime has a 200+ year frequency and high (stand replacement) severity. This area's fire regime is in Condition Class 1. This Condition Class is within its historical range of variability, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is low.

Botanical Characteristics: There are two plants on the Regional Forester Sensitive Species list that are known to occur in the area, long-stalked holly and large-flowered Barbara's buttons. Although there are no inventoried locations of non-native invasive species within the IRA, it is likely that existing road corridors and disturbed areas have a variety of non-native invasive species.

NEED

Proximity to Designated Wildernesses and Population Centers: The Otter Creek and Laurel Fork Wildernesses are within 4-10 air miles of the IRA. The Dolly Sods and Cranberry Wilderness are about 15-25 air miles to the northeast and southwest respectively. The area is 10 air miles southeast of Elkins and is within a 3-4 hour drive of Charleston, Pittsburgh and Washington D.C. As a designated wilderness, the area would serve the local communities of Bemis, Dailey, and Elkins, and population centers such as Morgantown, Charleston, Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C.

Biological: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221) and more specifically the Northern High Allegheny Mountain Section (M221Ba), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wildernesses.

Public Interest: There has been relatively high public interest in this area becoming wilderness. Individuals and environmental organizations—including the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Highlands Conservancy, and The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition—have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation

in response to public scoping. This IRA was not recommended for wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act or 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act or 1983 West Virginia Wilderness Act.

WILDERNESS EVALUATION SUMMARY

Capability Summary:

Apparent Naturalness	High
Natural Integrity	Moderate to High
Opportunity for Solitude	High
Opportunities for Challenge and Adventure	High
Special Features	Present

Determination of Availability or Unavailability: The IRA does not meet any of the criteria listed in FSH 1909.12.7.22a. Therefore, it is available for wilderness designation.

Values Foregone with Wilderness Designation: There are no established recreation uses or special use permits that would be discontinued if this area were designated wilderness. If any trails were constructed in the area, maintenance, construction, and reconstruction would be limited to non-mechanical equipment.

The creation or maintenance of wildlife openings would be discontinued. This may result in 7 acres of reduced habitat for species like deer and turkey that use these areas for foraging.

Wilderness designation would affect the ability to add lime to streams to help maintain or improve water quality and fish habitat. Liming stations and mechanized transport would be considered non-conforming uses unless they were allowed in the area-specific legislation.

Current fire control techniques would be altered significantly. Mechanized ground equipment is an important tool in this area, especially considering the private land to the north and west. Wilderness designation may also limit options for fire suppression on adjacent private lands.

The economic values associated with 5,252 (Management Prescriptions 3.0 and 6.1) acres of tentatively suited timberlands containing 130,248 CCF would be foregone. Although there is an additional 187,431 CCF on 6,632 tentatively suited acres that could be foregone with wilderness designation, the current 6.2 Management Prescription does not include programmed timber harvest, and only allows harvest activities under certain circumstances.

The values from future development of the Federal mineral estate, which might include natural gas or coal would likely be foregone. However, there could be values received from future development of the private mineral estate because 60% of the area has privately owned mineral rights. These rights remain valid and could be exercised regardless of wilderness designation.

Biological and Social Need: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221), which is represented nationally and regionally in existing wildernesses. There has been relatively high public interest in this area becoming wilderness. Individuals and environmental organizations—including the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Highlands Conservancy, and The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition—have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation.

ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

NOTE: Tables will be filled-out after the alternatives have been developed.

IRA Disposition by Alternative: The following table displays IRA disposition for each alternative in estimated acres rounded off to the nearest hundred. These values represent the potential, long-term outcomes of managing the IRA based solely upon its management prescriptions.

IRA Management Disposition	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Recommended Wilderness				
Maintain undeveloped character				
Potential low levels of development				
Available for full range of development				

Potential Future Development: Potential future development is represented by combinations of management prescriptions and existing conditions that are likely to become priority areas for development activities over the course of the next two or three decades. The development activities chosen for this estimation are timber harvest, oil/gas leases, and private mineral rights. Development potential is expressed in acres in the table below.

Potential Development	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Timber activities				
Oil/Gas Leases				
Private Mineral Rights				

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics: The following table displays the effects on wilderness characteristics for each alternative. The effects on wilderness characteristics are based on the estimation of potential future development.

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4

N = No change; slight change or less than 1 percent of the area potentially affected.

L = Light impact; 1-5 percent of the area potentially affected.

M = Moderate impact; 5-20 percent of the area potentially affected.

H = High impact; greater than 20 percent of the area potentially affected.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In this section, we will state if the preferred alternative does or does not recommend this IRA for wilderness. This recommendation will be published in the Draft Plan, November of 2004. If it is not recommended, this section will briefly describe the potential for development in this area.

Please Note:

This document, the Roadless Area Evaluation, is the first step of the review process in which each area is evaluated for its potential as wilderness. Identifying if an area should or should not be recommended is the second step of the process, which will be disclosed in the Draft Plan.

Cranberry Expansion

Inventoried Roadless Area No. 09331

12,166 Acres

DESCRIPTION

Location, Vicinity, and Access: The Cranberry Expansion IRA is located on the Monongahela National Forest, Gauley Ranger District, Pocahontas and Webster Counties, West Virginia. The area borders the Cranberry Wilderness to the east. National Forest System lands border the entire area, except for a small parcel of private land on the northeastern perimeter. Nearby communities include Marlinton (15 air miles southeast), Webster Springs (9 air miles north), and Richwood (7 air miles southwest), West Virginia. The area is approximately 7 miles long and 4 miles wide, and is found within portions of the Webster Springs USGS quadrangle map. Primary vehicle access is provided by Forest Road 76 from the west and the Williams River Road from the north. There is 1 mile of improved road, 4 miles of unimproved road, and 19 miles of trail within the IRA. All trails are open to hiker, equestrian, and mountain bike use.

Topography, Geology, and Vegetation: The Cranberry Expansion IRA ranges in elevation from an estimated 2900 feet along the Cranberry River to over 4,400 feet along the ridges. The area is a deeply dissected high plateau with sharp valleys and many peaks. The topography is characterized by steep mountain slopes, broad benches and moderately wide to narrow valleys. The geology ranges from Kanawha and New River formations of the Pottsville Group on the ridge tops to Mauch Chunk on the lower slopes. The vegetation consists of red spruce, hemlock, and intermingled fire cherry, mountain ash and aspen at the highest elevations to a northern hardwood mixture of maple, beech and birch throughout the rest of the area. The understory consists of a variety of small trees and shrubs.

Current Uses: The Cranberry Expansion IRA is currently managed under Management Prescriptions 2.0, 6.1 and 6.2. Prescription 2.0 emphasizes shade-tolerant hardwood trees for lumber, Prescription 6.1 is managed primarily for remote wildlife species habitat, and Prescription 6.2 is managed primarily for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. There are an estimated 38 acres of wildlife openings currently maintained by the WVDNR. The Dog-way Liming Station, which receives daily truck loads of lime, is located within the IRA. There are 4 trails totaling 19 miles located within the IRA. Mountain bike use on these trails is moderate to high and well-established. Hunting is very popular in the IRA, and many groups use wagons and carts to haul their supplies in and out during the season. Equestrian use is currently low but increasing. Cranberry Campground is located northwest of the IRA, and the Williams River Road borders the area to the north. Recreation use within and adjacent to the IRA is considered moderate to high. The primary recreation occurring in the area includes camping, backpacking, fishing, hiking and hunting.

Key Attractions: The Cranberry Backcountry and Cranberry Wilderness are destinations for individuals looking for a more remote recreation experience. The IRA and adjacent wilderness provide a wide variety of recreation opportunities, including camping, fishing, hunting, backpacking, equestrian use, and mountain biking. Numerous trails and a variety of exceptional trout fishing opportunities exist within these areas. There are numerous shelters (located outside of the IRA) available on a first-come first-serve basis within the backcountry.

CAPABILITY

Natural Integrity and Appearance: Although no timber harvesting has occurred within the IRA within the past 10 years, there is still some evidence of management actions. There are 38 acres of wildlife openings maintained by the WVDNR, 4 miles of unimproved and 1 mile of improved roads, a liming station, and a 19-mile trail system. The area does provide good opportunities for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation, but encounters with other users can be moderate to high, especially along trail corridors and streams during hunting and peak fishing seasons.

Opportunities for Solitude and Challenging Primitive Recreation: The Cranberry Expansion IRA is 12,166 acres including 8,866 acres of core solitude (73% of the area). The entire area is located on, and bordered by, National Forest System lands, except for a small private parcel along the northeastern perimeter. Overall recreation use is moderate to high, and the opportunity for solitude is low to moderate. Based on the size of the area and the amount of recreation use, the opportunity for challenging primitive recreation opportunities is moderate to high.

Special Features: The Cranberry Wilderness, Cranberry Backcountry and Cranberry Expansion IRA provide the largest expanse (over 50,000 acres) of semi-primitive non-motorized recreation setting in West Virginia. The area also provides known or potential habitat for several TE&S species.

Manageability and Boundaries: The size and shape (7 miles long and 4 miles wide) of the IRA, combined with the 35,000-acre Cranberry Wilderness and virtually no private land bordering the area, provide excellent boundary conditions to manage this area as wilderness. The established use by mountain bikers, wagons and carts within the IRA would be difficult to eliminate if the area is designated wilderness.

AVAILABILITY

Recreation: Hiking, backpacking, hunting, and fishing are popular recreation activities within the IRA. Mountain bike use is considered moderate to high. The use of wagons and carts is very popular during hunting season. Equestrian use is low but increasing.

Fisheries: The IRA is located west of the Cranberry Wilderness between the Williams River to the north and Cranberry River to the south. Fisheries resources within the IRA are limited due to acidic conditions. The geology underlying the IRA is highly sensitive to acid deposition, and Lick Branch (Cranberry drainage), Rough Run, Cold Run and Birchlog Run are on the EPA 303d list due to acid rain. Limestone drums in the Cranberry River drainage mitigate the effects of acid rain in the Cranberry River main stem. Fishing opportunities are primarily in the main stem Cranberry and Williams Rivers. Game fish collected include trout, bass and pan-fish as well as numerous native non-game species. Species of concern that have been reported in or adjacent to the IRA include Regional Forester sensitive species candy darter and Appalachia darter in the Williams River and mountain red-belly dace in the Cranberry River (WVDNR Fish Sampling database). Bigmouth chub, ranked S3/S4 by the state, have also been collected in the Williams River within and adjacent to the IRA.

Wildlife: The area provides habitat for a diversity of wildlife species. At the present time black bear and whitetail deer are abundant and are increasing in numbers. This area is within a black bear sanctuary. The area also provides habitat for the West Virginia northern flying squirrel, northern goshawk, and the green and Cheat Mountain salamander. The WVDNR currently manages 38 acres of wildlife openings within the IRA.

Water: This IRA contains the headwaters of 12 cold water streams. There are no major rivers or navigable waters within the area. No water storage needs or existing water-related special use permits are identified at this time. Streams in the area are highly acidic.

Range: The area has no livestock grazing permits or range allotments. There are no capable grazing lands identified within the area.

Timber: Timber harvesting is not currently permitted in the portions of the IRA within Management Prescription 6.2 except for recreation objectives, public safety, insect and disease control, timber salvage, or restoration of areas severely damaged by hurricanes, ice storms, etc. Portions of the IRA within Management Prescriptions 2.0 and 6.1 do permit commercial timber harvesting, although there has not been any significant timber harvesting in the past decade. The IRA contains an estimated 301,436 hundred cubic feet (CCF) of merchantable timber. An estimated 12,044 acres (99 percent) are considered tentatively suited timberlands and

122 acres (1%) are considered unsuitable. An estimated 10,611 acres (87%) are considered to be prime timberland.

Minerals: There are no active or inactive private or federal gas leases or coal operations within the IRA. An estimate of the gas resource cannot be made on sixty percent of the IRA due to a lack of information about production, trapping mechanisms, or the lateral discontinuity of gas zones. The remaining 40% of the IRA is estimated to have a 12.5% chance of natural gas production at 1.56 million cubic feet per acre. Eighty percent of the mineral rights within the area are privately owned. Based on available information, mineable coal is present within the IRA. The potential conflict between mineral exploration and development and roadless area values is high because of the potential for mineable coal and natural gas coincident with privately owned mineral rights.

Cultural Resources: This IRA is located in an overall high probability cultural resource zone. There are 20 known historical or archaeological sites that have been identified within the area. An estimated 40% of the area has been surveyed.

Landownership and Special Uses: The Monongahela National Forest administers all lands in the IRA. There are no non-federal lands, permanently encumbered land titles, or cost-share agreements of record within the IRA. Private land borders a small portion of the IRA boundary on the northeastern perimeter. There are 2 recreation and 0 non-recreation special use permits issued within the IRA.

Disturbances: The Cranberry Expansion Area is located within Fire Regime V. Fire Regime V has a 200+ year frequency and high (stand replacement) severity. This area's fire regime is in Condition Class 1. Condition Class 1 is within the historical range of variability, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is low.

Botanical Characteristics: The Canada anemone, a State listed rare species, and the long-stocked holly, a Regional Forester sensitive species, are known to occur in the area. Although there are no inventoried locations of non-native invasive species within the IRA, it is likely that existing road corridors and disturbed areas have a variety of non-native invasive species.

NEED

Proximity to Designated Wildernesses and Population Centers: The Otter Creek and Dolly Sods Wildernesses are 55-60 air miles northeast of the IRA. The Laurel Fork Wildernesses are about 30 air miles to the northeast, and the Cranberry Wilderness adjoins the IRA eastern perimeter. The area is 7 air miles northeast of Richwood and 8 air miles northwest of Marlinton. The IRA is within a 3 hour drive of Charleston, and a 4-5 hour drive of Pittsburgh and Washington D.C. As a designated wilderness, the area would serve the local communities of Marlinton, Richwood, Webster Springs, and Summersville, and population centers like Morgantown, Charleston, Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C.

Biological: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221) and more specifically the Southern Middle High Allegheny Subsection (M221Bc), which is represented regionally, nationally and on the Forest in existing wilderness.

Public Interest: There has been relatively high public interest in this area becoming wilderness. Individuals and environmental organizations—including the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Highlands Conservancy, and The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition—have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping. This IRA was not recommended for wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act or 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act or 1983 West Virginia Wilderness Act.

WILDERNESS EVALUATION SUMMARY

Capability Summary:

Apparent Naturalness	Moderate to High
Natural Integrity	Moderate to High
Opportunity for Solitude	Moderate to High
Opportunities for Challenge and Adventure	Moderate to High
Special Features	Present

Determination of Availability or Unavailability: The IRA does not meet any of the criteria listed in FSH 1909.12.7.22a. Therefore, it is available for wilderness designation.

Values Foregone with Wilderness Designation: Mountain bike, wagon, and cart use within the area is moderate to high and well-established; designation would eliminate these uses within wilderness. Eliminating this use would be very controversial. In addition, trail maintenance, construction, and reconstruction would be limited to non-mechanical equipment.

The creation or maintenance of wildlife openings would be discontinued. This may result in 38 acres of reduced foraging habitat for species like deer and turkey.

Wilderness designation would affect the ability to add lime to streams to help maintain or improve water quality and fish habitat. Liming stations and mechanized transport would be considered non-conforming uses unless they were allowed in the area-specific legislation.

Current fire control techniques would be altered significantly, although mechanized ground equipment is relatively unimportant tool in this area due to existing wilderness boundaries and river locations.

The economic values associated with 7,890 (Management Prescriptions 2.0 and 6.1) acres of tentatively suited timberlands containing 195,933 CCF would be foregone. Although there is an additional 105,503 CCF on 4,154 tentatively suited acres that could be foregone with wilderness designation, the current 6.2 Management Prescription does not include programmed timber harvest, and only allows harvest activities under certain circumstances.

The values from future development of the Federal mineral estate, which might include natural gas or coal would likely be foregone. However, there could be values received from future development of the private mineral estate because 80% of the area has privately owned mineral rights. These rights remain valid and could be exercised regardless of wilderness designation.

Biological and Social Need: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221), which is represented on the Forest in existing wilderness. Individuals and environmental organizations have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping.

ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

NOTE: Tables will be filled-out after the alternatives have been developed.

IRA Disposition by Alternative: The following table displays IRA disposition for each alternative in estimated acres rounded off to the nearest hundred. These values represent the potential, long-term outcomes of managing the IRA based solely upon its management prescription.

IRA Management Disposition	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Recommended Wilderness				
Maintain undeveloped character				
Potential low levels of development				
Available for full range of development				

Potential Future Development: Potential future development is represented by combinations of management prescriptions and existing conditions that are likely to become priority areas for development activities over the course of the next two or three decades. The development activities chosen for this estimation are timber harvest and oil/gas leases, and private mineral rights. Development potential is expressed in acres in the table below.

Potential Development	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Timber activities				
Oil/Gas Leases				
Private Mineral Rights				

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics: The following table displays the effects on wilderness characteristics for each alternative. The effects on wilderness characteristics are based on the estimation of potential future development.

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4

N = No change; slight change or less than 1 percent of the area potentially affected.

L = Light impact; 1-5 percent of the area potentially affected.

M = Moderate impact; 5-20 percent of the area potentially affected.

H = High impact; greater than 20 percent of the area potentially affected.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In this section, we will state if the preferred alternative does or does not recommend this IRA for wilderness. This recommendation will be published in the Draft Plan, November of 2004. If it is not recommended, this section will briefly describe the potential for development in this area.

Please Note:

This document, the Roadless Area Evaluation, is the first step of the review process in which each area is evaluated for its potential as wilderness. Identifying if an area should or should not be recommended is the second step of the process, which will be disclosed in the Draft Plan.

Dolly Sods Expansion

Inventoried Roadless Area

7,864 Acres

DESCRIPTION

Location, Vicinity, and Access: The Dolly Sods Expansion IRA is located on the Monongahela National Forest, Potomac Ranger District, Tucker County, West Virginia. The area is located north of the Dolly Sods Wilderness. Private land borders the area to the north and west and National Forest System lands to the east. Nearby communities include Petersburg (about 15 miles east), and Cortland (about 5 miles west), West Virginia. The area is an estimated 3.5 miles in length and 3.5 mile wide and is found within portions of the Blackbird Knob and Blackwater Falls USGS quadrangle maps. Primary vehicle access is provided by Forest Road 75. Visitors also access the area from State Road 35 from the west. There are no improved roads within the area, although there is evidence of numerous woods roads and ATV trails created prior to Federal ownership in 1993. There are numerous trails totaling 22 miles within the Dolly Sods Expansion Area and 48 miles adjoining the area to the south within the Dolly Sods Wilderness.

Topography, Geology, and Vegetation: The Dolly Sods Expansion area is a high-elevation plateau, ranging in elevation from 3,800 feet along the northern segment of Red Creek to 3,950 feet at Blackbird Knob. Since the Dolly Sods Expansion has relatively flat and rolling terrain, there are many seasonally wet places. Vegetation consists primarily of a sub-alpine community including large areas of open heath and bog areas. Red spruce and alder, although limited, are the main tree species. The understory consists primarily of blueberry, azalea and mosses.

Current Uses: Although not specifically designated in the Forest Plan, this area has been managed as Management Prescription 6.2 since its acquisition by the Forest Service in 1993. Prescription 6.2 is managed primarily for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation. The area is used mainly for undeveloped recreation activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, and dispersed camping. Recreation special use permits have been issued for mountain biking, outfitter and guide, special events that occur annually. Illegal ATV use is common.

Key Attractions: The key attractions of the Dolly Sods Expansion IRA include hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding, combined with good opportunities for primitive camping in a remote and very scenic setting. The area is also used by hunters and anglers in the Red Creek drainage. The high-elevation rolling terrain, along with the heath and bog eco-types, provides a feeling of remoteness in a New England or Canadian environment. The area is heavily used by mountain bikers who can enjoy a similar setting as those visiting the Dolly Sods Wilderness where mountain biking is not permitted.

CAPABILITY

Natural Integrity and Appearance: Natural processes are operating within the area and the area is minimally affected by outside forces. Most of the Dolly Sods Expansion IRA appears to be natural but there are signs of disturbance including numerous woods roads and some user-created ATV trails. These woods roads and ATV trails are healing and are currently serving as the trail system for the area. Unexploded ordnances from military operations in the 1940s are still present in the area.

Opportunities for Solitude and Challenging Primitive Recreation: The Dolly Sods Expansion Area is 7,864 acres in size and includes 6,032 acres of core solitude (84% of the area). When combined with the Dolly Sods Wilderness, the area increases to a total of 17,437 acres with approximately 13,700 acres of core solitude. The area is located entirely on National Forest System lands. The area is bordered by relatively undeveloped private land on the north and west. National Forest System lands border the area on the east and the Dolly Sods

Wilderness borders to the south.

Recreation use of the area is considered to be high from late spring through the fall color season, moderate during fall hunting season, and low the remainder of the year. Unplowed roads usually limit access during the winter months. There are 22 miles of designed trail within the area, and numerous woods roads and ATV routes developed prior to Federal ownership in 1993 provide a relatively extensive trail system. Hiker and mountain bike use within the area is high, and equestrian use is low to moderate but increasing annually. Illegal ATV use within the area is common. The likelihood of encountering other visitors along trails is moderate to high.

Special Features: Within the Dolly Sods Expansion area the high-elevation rolling terrain, along with the heath and bog eco-types provide a feeling of remoteness. Many of the eco-types are more typical of what one would expect to find in Canada rather than West Virginia. The upper tributaries of Red Creek have sphagnum bogs including rare sundew and reindeer moss. TE&S species that may be found within the area are the Cheat Mountain salamander, West Virginia northern flying squirrel, and northern water shrew.

Manageability and Boundaries: The size and shape (3.5 miles long, 3.5 mile wide) of the Dolly Sods Expansion area, along with its ability to expand the size of the current Dolly Sods Wilderness from 10,215 acres to 17,439 acres, including 13,700 acres of core solitude, makes its preservation potential very good. The potential for development and non-conforming uses from private land bordering the area on the north and west is currently low but likely to increase as more large areas of private land are sold off and developments and rural/urban sprawl increase. Well-established and heavy mountain bike use throughout the trail system within the area would be difficult to eliminate. Forest Service Road 75 would serve as the eastern boundary, Dolly Sods Wilderness borders to the south, and the Forest Service property line borders on the west and north. Forest Service Road 75 is well defined, and the southern boundary expands an existing wilderness. The northern and western boundaries adjacent to private land increase the potential risk of encroachment and non-conforming uses if the area were designated wilderness.

AVAILABILITY

Recreation: Mountain biking is very popular in the area and recreation special use permits are authorized annually for events including mountain biking and horseback riding. Hiking, hunting, fishing, nature watching, cross-country skiing and dispersed camping are also popular activities within the area. Recreation use is expected to increase substantially over the next 10-15 years in this general area with the completion of Corridor H, which will provide interstate access from Washington D.C., Maryland, and Virginia to the north-central counties in West Virginia.

Fisheries: The Dolly Sod Expansion IRA is located in the headwaters of Red Creek and includes major tributaries Left Fork Red Creek and Alder Run. Only non-game species have been reported within the IRA including pearl dace, a Regional Forester's sensitive species (WVDNR Fish Sampling database). Acid deposition effects water quality in the IRA, and Red Creek is on the EPA 303d list of impaired waters due to acid rain.

Wildlife: Wildlife species within the area include whitetail deer, black bear, grouse, snowshoe hare, cottontail rabbit, wild turkey, bobcat and a variety of birds and reptiles. TE&S species that may be found within or adjacent to the area include Cheat Mountain salamander, West Virginia northern flying squirrel, and northern water shrew.

Water: This IRA contains the upper reaches and some tributaries of Red Creek. There are no major rivers or navigable waters within the area. No water storage needs or existing water-related special use permits are identified at this time. Most streams in the area are highly acidic.

Range: There are no existing or proposed range allotments located within or immediately adjacent to the area.

Timber: Timber harvesting is not permitted except for achieving dispersed recreation objectives, public safety, insect and disease control, timber salvage and restoration areas severely damaged by hurricanes, ice storms, etc. No timber-related activities have occurred in this area since it was purchased by the Forest Service in 1993, and no major logging has occurred since the early 1920s.

The IRA contains an estimated 37,627 hundred cubic feet (CCF) of merchantable timber. An estimated 1,022 acres (13 percent) are considered tentatively suited timberlands and 6,842 acres (87%) are considered not suited for timber harvest. There are no acres of prime timberland within the IRA.

Minerals: There are no active private or federal gas leases or coal operations within the IRA. However, there are 900 acres in Federal gas leases. Ninety percent of the lands within the IRA are estimated to have a 12.5% chance of natural gas production at 1.56 million cubic feet per acre, and 10% are estimated to have a 25% chance of gas production at 1.56 million cubic feet per acre. All of the oil and gas mineral rights within the area are privately owned. Based on available information, mineable coal is not present in 93% of the IRA. Seven percent of the area has mineable coal identified and documented with acres and tons estimated. The potential conflict between mineral exploration and development and roadless area values is high because of the potential for natural gas discovery coincident with private gas ownership.

Cultural Resources: This IRA is located in an overall moderate probability cultural resource zone. There are five known historical or archaeological sites that have been identified within the area. An estimated 75% of the area has been surveyed.

Landownership and Special Uses: The Monongahela National Forest administers all lands in the IRA. There are no non-federal lands, permanently encumbered land titles, or cost-share agreements of record within the IRA. There are eight recreation and no non-recreation special use permits issued within the IRA. Permit activities include hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, mountain biking, and recreation events.

Disturbances: The Dolly Sods Expansion Area is in Fire Regimes III and V. Fire Regime III has a 35–100+ year frequency and a mixed (less than 75% of the dominant overstory replaced) severity, and Fire Regime V has a 200+ year frequency and high (stand replacement) severity. This area's fire regimes are in Condition Classes 1 and 2. Condition Class 1 is within its historical range of variability, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is low. Condition Class 2 has a moderate departure from its historical range, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is moderate.

Botanical Characteristics: No populations of threatened, endangered or sensitive plants are known to occur in the IRA. Few botanical surveys have been done in the area. There are no inventoried locations of non-native invasive species within this IRA.

NEED

Proximity to Designated Wildernesses and Population Centers: The Dolly Sods Wilderness borders this IRA to the south and the Otter Creek Wilderness is within 10 miles. The Laurel Fork North and South Wildernesses are about 15-20 air miles to the southwest and the Cranberry Wilderness is an estimated 72 air miles to the southwest. The area is 15 air miles from Parsons, 30 miles from Elkins, and is within a 3 hour drive of Charleston, Pittsburgh and Washington D.C. As a designated wilderness, the area would expand the existing Dolly Sods Wilderness and serve the local communities of Petersburg, Parsons and Elkins, and population centers such as Morgantown, Charleston, Pittsburgh, and Washington.

Biological: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221) and more specifically the Northern High Allegheny Mountain Section (M221Ba), which is represented regionally, nationally, and within existing wildernesses on the Monongahela National Forest.

Public Interest: There has been little public interest in this area becoming wilderness. No organizations have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping. This IRA was not

recommended for wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act or 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act or 1983 West Virginia Wilderness Act.

WILDERNESS EVALUATION SUMMARY

Capability Summary:

Apparent Naturalness	High
Natural Integrity	Moderate to High
Opportunity for Solitude	Moderate
Opportunities for Challenge and Adventure	Moderate
Special Features	Present

Determination of Availability or Unavailability: The IRA does not meet any of the criteria listed in FSH 1909.12.7.22a. Therefore, it is available for wilderness designation.

Values Foregone with Wilderness Designation: Mountain bike use within the area is moderate to high and well-established; designation would eliminate this use within wilderness. Special use permits would need to be modified to exclude any non-conforming uses within the designated area. Eliminating these uses would be very controversial. In addition, trail maintenance, construction, and reconstruction would be limited to non-mechanical equipment.

Wilderness designation would affect the ability to add lime to streams to help maintain or improve water quality and fish habitat. Liming stations and mechanized transport would be considered non-conforming uses unless they were allowed in the area-specific legislation.

Current fire control techniques would be altered significantly. Due to the unexploded ordnances within the area, most suppression actions need to occur on trails and the perimeters adjacent to private lands. The use of chainsaws, mechanized ground equipment and aerial suppression would be restricted within the area, which could also affect suppression activities on adjacent private lands.

Although there is a potential 37,627 CCF on 917 tentatively suited acres that could be foregone with wilderness designation, the current 6.2 Management Prescription does not include programmed timber harvest, and only allows harvest activities under certain circumstances. The values from future development of the Federal mineral estate, which might include natural gas, would likely be foregone. However, there could be values received from future development of the private mineral estate because 100% of the area has privately owned oil and gas mineral rights. These rights remain valid and could be exercised regardless of wilderness designation.

Biological and Social Need: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wildernesses. There has been low public interest in this area becoming wilderness.

ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

NOTE: Tables will be filled-out after the alternatives have been developed.

IRA Disposition by Alternative: The following table displays IRA disposition for each alternative in acres rounded off to the nearest hundred. These values represent the potential, long-term outcomes of managing the IRA based solely upon its management prescription assignments.

IRA Management Disposition	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Recommended Wilderness				
Maintain undeveloped character				
Potential low levels of development				
Available for full range of development				

Potential Future Development: Potential future development is represented by combinations of management prescriptions and existing conditions that are likely to become priority areas for development activities over the course of the next two or three decades. The development activities chosen for this estimation are timber harvest, oil/gas leases, and private mineral rights. Development potential is expressed in acres in the table below.

Potential Development	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Timber activities				
Oil/Gas Leases				
Private Mineral Rights				

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics: The following table displays the effects on wilderness characteristics for each alternative. The effects on wilderness characteristics are based on the estimation of potential future development.

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4

N = No change; slight change or less than 1 percent of the area potentially affected.

L = Light impact; 1-5 percent of the area potentially affected.

M = Moderate impact; 5-20 percent of the area potentially affected.

H = High impact; greater than 20 percent of the area potentially affected.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In this section, we will state if the preferred alternative does or does not recommend this IRA for wilderness. This recommendation will be published in the Draft Plan, November of 2004. If it is not recommended, this section will briefly describe the potential for development in this area.

Please Note:

This document, the Roadless Area Evaluation, is the first step of the review process in which each area is evaluated for its potential as wilderness. Identifying if an area should or should not be recommended is the second step of the process, which will be disclosed in the Draft Plan.

East Fork Greenbrier

Inventoried Roadless Area No. 09326

10,065 Acres

DESCRIPTION

Location, Vicinity, and Access: The East Fork Greenbrier IRA is located on the Monongahela National Forest, Greenbrier Ranger District, Pocahontas County, West Virginia. National Forest System lands border an estimated 90% of the IRA perimeter, with intermingled private lands along the northwest, north, and northeast boundaries. Island Campground borders the IRA at the southern tip of the area. Nearby communities include Bartow (5 air miles south), Daily (16 air miles west), and Gladys (15 air miles west), West Virginia. The area is about 5 miles in length and 2 mile wide and is found primarily within portions of the Thornwood and Sinks of Gandy USGS quadrangle maps. Primary vehicle access is provided by State Road 28 from the southeast and Forest Road 14 from the west and Forest Road 51 to the east. Visitors can also access the area from Forest Road 112 from the north. There are 9 miles of system trails and 20 miles of unimproved roads located within the East Fork Greenbrier IRA. The 20 miles of unimproved road currently provide motorized access for administrative use and special use permittee access to an existing weather station. These roads also provide non-motorized access for hunters and hikers in the IRA.

Topography, Geology, and Vegetation: The East Fork Greenbrier IRA ranges from an estimated 3,000 feet just north of Island Campground to about 4,000 feet throughout interior portions of the area. Slopes within the area range from 10-50%. The geologic formations are primarily those of the Mississippian and Pennsylvanian systems. The soils series associations include the Dekalb and Calvin series. Vegetation consists of northern hardwoods and red spruce with an understory of rhododendron, mixed shrubs, and grasses.

Current Uses: This IRA is currently managed under Management Prescriptions 6.1 and 6.2. Management prescription 6.1 is managed primarily for remote wildlife species habitat, and Prescription 6.2 is managed primarily for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. The WVDNR manages 37 acres of wildlife openings within the IRA. Recreation use is considered low, and hunting and fishing are the primary activities. Some hiking and dispersed camping occurs, usually associated with hunting and fishing. Equestrian and mountain bike use is low. There is an active special use permit for a weather station, and 4 recreation special use permits issued within the IRA.

Key Attractions: The key attraction in the IRA is the 9-mile Greenbrier Trail that travels north-south through the interior of the area.

CAPABILITY

Natural Integrity and Appearance: Management within the East Fork Greenbrier IRA is evident. There have been 405 acres of timber harvested in the area over the past 10 years and most of the 20 miles of unimproved roads are evident on the landscape. The WVDNR manages 37 acres of wildlife openings within the IRA.

Opportunities for Solitude and Challenging Primitive Recreation: The East Fork Greenbrier IRA is 10,065 acres including 4,574 acres of core solitude (46% of the area). National Forest System lands border an estimated 90% of the IRA perimeter, with intermingled private lands along the northwest, north, and northeast boundaries. Overall recreation use is low, with a moderate to high potential for solitude. Based on the size of the area and the amount of recreation use, the opportunity for challenging primitive recreation opportunities is moderate to high.

Special Features: The area provides known or potential habitat for one endangered and several sensitive species.

Manageability and Boundaries: The size and shape (about 5 miles long and 2 miles wide) of the East Fork Greenbrier IRA, combined with the relatively small percentage of private land bordering the area, provide adequate boundary conditions to manage this area as wilderness. Although mountain bikes are currently permitted, use is low and should not be difficult to eliminate if wilderness designation occurs. The existing weather station would need to be removed, and the accompanying special use permit would need to be terminated.

AVAILABILITY

Recreation: There is one system trail (Greenbrier Trail) totaling 9 miles within the IRA. The trail begins at Island Campground on the southern boundary of the IRA and travels north through the entire IRA before ending just north of the IRA boundary on Forest Road 874. The trail receives relatively low hiker use and very low equestrian and mountain bike use. Dispersed camping is low to moderate and occurs primarily during hunting season. The primary recreation activities within the area are hiking, hunting, and fishing.

Fisheries: The East Fork Greenbrier IRA includes the upper East Fork Greenbrier River main stem and tributaries between Five-mile Hollow and Bennett Run. The fish community is diverse within the IRA and is dominated by native non-game species. Twenty species of fish have been reported in or adjacent to the IRA (WVDNR Fish Sampling database). Native brook trout are found throughout the IRA and non-native brown and rainbow trout have also been collected there. Species of concern within or adjacent to the IRA include candy darter, Kanawha minnow and Appalachia darter that are Regional Forester sensitive species. Mountain red-belly dace, considered S3 by the state, has also been collected within the IRA. Geologies sensitive to acid deposition are limited in the IRA, and water chemistry is generally considered to be good.

Wildlife: The area provides diversity for a variety of wildlife species. Ruffed grouse, black bear, wild turkey and white-tailed deer are common within the entire IRA, and gray squirrel, cottontail rabbit, and raccoon inhabit the lower slopes. Beaver populations are increasing and most are commonly found at the headwaters of streams. The higher elevations provide habitat for snowshoe hare and the West Virginia northern flying squirrel. There is an estimated 37 acres in wildlife openings currently maintained by the WVDNR.

Water: This IRA contains the headwaters for 8 cold water streams. There are no major rivers or navigable waters within the area. No water storage needs or existing water-related special use permits are identified at this time. Streams in the area are only mildly acidic.

Range: The area has no livestock grazing permits or range allotments. There are no capable grazing lands identified within the area.

Timber: Timber harvesting is not currently permitted in the portions of the IRA within Management Prescription 6.2 except for dispersed recreation objectives, public safety, insect and disease control, timber salvage, or restoration of areas severely damaged by hurricanes, ice storms, etc. Portions of the IRA within Management Prescription 6.1 do permit timber harvesting, and an estimated 405 acres have been harvested in the last decade.

This area contains an estimated 244,028 hundred cubic feet (CCF) of merchantable timber. An estimated 10,065 acres (100 percent) of the IRA are considered tentatively suited timberlands and an estimated 7,928 acres (79%) are considered to be prime timberland.

Minerals: There are no active private or federal gas leases or coal operations within the IRA. However, there are 10,050 acres in Federal gas leases. Ninety percent of the lands within the IRA are estimated to have a 25% chance of natural gas production at 1.56 million cubic feet per acre, and 10% have a 12.5% chance of gas production at 1.56 million cubic feet per acre. None of the mineral rights within the area are privately owned. Based on known information, mineable coal is not present within the IRA. Potential conflict between mineral

exploration and development and roadless area values is low because of the combination of U.S. control over managing minerals (existing leases are subject to a no surface occupancy stipulation) and the relative uncertainty regarding the occurrence of valuable natural gas.

Cultural Resources: This IRA is located in an overall high probability cultural resource zone. There are 12 known historical or archaeological sites that have been identified within the area. An estimated 10% of the area has been surveyed.

Landownership and Special Uses: The Monongahela National Forest administers all lands within the IRA. There are no non-federal lands, permanently encumbered land titles, or cost-share agreements of record within the IRA. There are 5 recreation and 1 non-recreation special use permits issued within the IRA. Permit activities include hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, fishing, recreation events, and a weather station.

Disturbances: The East Fork Greenbrier IRA is located within Fire Regimes III and V. Fire Regime III has a 35-100+ year frequency and mixed severity (less than 75% of the dominant overstory vegetation replaced), and Fire Regime V has a 200+ year frequency and high severity (greater than 75% of dominant overstory vegetation replacement). The area’s fire regimes are in Condition Classes 1 and 2. Condition Class 1 is within its historical range of variability, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is low. Condition Class 2 has a moderate departure from its historic range, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is moderate.

Botanical Characteristics: The white monkshood and the lance-leaf grapefern, which are on the Regional Forester Sensitive Species List, are located within the IRA. Although there are no inventoried locations of non-native invasive species within the IRA, it is likely that existing road corridors and disturbed areas have a variety of non-native invasive species.

NEED

The Otter Creek and Dolly Sods Wildernesses are 20-30 air miles north and northeast of the IRA. The Laurel Fork Wildernesses are within 2-6 air miles north of the IRA, and the Cranberry Wilderness is about 35 air miles to the southwest. The area is 4 air miles northeast of Bartow, 20 air miles southeast of Elkins and is within a 3-4 hour drive of Charleston, Pittsburgh and Washington D.C. As a designated wilderness, the area would serve the local communities of Bartow, Durbin, Dailey, and Elkins, and population centers such as Morgantown, Charleston, Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C.

Biological: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221) and more specifically the Northern High Allegheny Mountain Subsection (M221Ba), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wildernesses.

Public Interest: There has been public interest in this area becoming wilderness. Environmental organizations—such as the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Highlands Conservancy, and The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition—have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping. This IRA was not recommended for wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act or the 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act or 1983 West Virginia Wilderness Act.

WILDERNESS EVALUATION SUMMARY

Capability Summary:

Apparent Naturalness	Moderate
Natural Integrity	Moderate
Opportunity for Solitude	Moderate
Opportunities for Challenge and Adventure	Moderate
Special Features	None

Determination of Availability or Unavailability: The IRA does not meet any of the criteria listed in FSH 1909.12.7.22a. Therefore, it is available for wilderness designation.

Values Foregone with Wilderness Designation: If this area were designated wilderness, the Greenbrier Trail would be closed to mountain bike use; current use is low. In addition, trail maintenance, construction, and reconstruction would be limited to non-mechanical equipment. Non-conforming special use permits would be terminated.

The creation or maintenance of wildlife openings would be discontinued. This may result in 37 acres of reduced foraging habitat for species like deer and turkey.

Wilderness designation would affect the ability to add lime to streams to help maintain or improve water quality and fish habitat. Liming stations and mechanized transport would be considered non-conforming uses unless they were allowed in the area-specific legislation.

Current fire control techniques would be altered significantly. Mechanized ground equipment is an important tool in this area, especially considering the private land and developments/ improvements bordering this area to the northeast, north and northwest. Wilderness designation may also limit options for fire suppression on adjacent private lands.

The economic values associated with 2,428 (Management Prescription 6.1) acres of tentatively suited timberlands containing 58,566 CCF would be foregone. Although there is a potential 185,462 CCF on 7,637 tentatively suited acres that could be foregone with wilderness designation, the current 6.2 Management Prescription does not include programmed timber harvest, and only allows harvest activities under certain circumstances.

The values from future mineral development, which might include natural gas, would likely be foregone.

Biological and Social Need: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wildernesses. Environmental organizations have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping.

ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

NOTE: Tables will be filled-out after the alternatives have been developed.

IRA Disposition by Alternative: The following table displays IRA disposition for each alternative in estimated acres rounded off to the nearest hundred. These values represent the potential, long-term outcomes of managing the IRA based solely upon its management prescription.

IRA Management Disposition	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Recommended Wilderness				
Maintain undeveloped character				
Potential low levels of development				
Available for full range of development				

Potential Future Development: Potential future development is represented by combinations of management prescriptions and existing conditions that are likely to become priority areas for development activities over the course of the next two or three decades. The development activities chosen for this estimation are timber harvest, oil/gas leases, and private mineral rights. Development potential is expressed in acres in the table below.

Potential Development	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Timber activities				
Oil/Gas Leases				
Private Mineral Rights				

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics: The following table displays the effects on wilderness characteristics for each alternative. The effects on wilderness characteristics are based on the estimation of potential future development.

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4

N = No change; slight change or less than 1 percent of the area potentially affected.

L = Light impact; 1-5 percent of the area potentially affected.

M = Moderate impact; 5-20 percent of the area potentially affected.

H = High impact; greater than 20 percent of the area potentially affected.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In this section, we will state if the preferred alternative does or does not recommend this IRA for wilderness. This recommendation will be published in the Draft Plan, November of 2004. If it is not recommended, this section will briefly describe the potential for development in this area.

Please Note:

This document, the Roadless Area Evaluation, is the first step of the review process in which each area is evaluated for its potential as wilderness. Identifying if an area should or should not be recommended is the second step of the process, which will be disclosed in the Draft Plan.

Middle Mountain

Inventoried Roadless Area No. 09050

12,197 Acres

DESCRIPTION

Location, Vicinity, and Access: The Middle Mountain IRA is located on the Monongahela National Forest, Marlinton and White Sulphur Ranger District, Greenbrier and Pocahontas Counties, West Virginia. This area is located west of State Road 92 between Rimel and Neola, and east of State Road 23 and Forest Road 96. Private land borders the entire eastern and portions of the western boundaries of the IRA, the remainder of the area is bordered by National Forest System lands. The area is an estimated 10 air miles southeast of Marlinton and 16 air miles northeast of White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. Primary access includes State Roads 23 and 96. Access on the eastern boundary is limited due to private ownership. This area is an estimated 9 miles long and 2.5 miles wide and is found within portions of the Alvon, Denmar, and Lake Sherwood USGS quadrangle maps. There are 6 miles of level 1 and 2 (unimproved) roads and 14 miles of trail within the IRA. Forest Road 790 is currently used as a Class Q road for disabled hunters.

Topography, Geology, and Vegetation: The Middle Mountain IRA ranges in elevation from 2,400 feet in the valley bottoms to 3,300 feet along the ridges. The geology is a series of steep, parallel, uninterrupted ridges and narrow valleys with moderately deep to shallow soils that formed in material weathered largely by shale. Surface rock is Devonian origin and consists of red beds, shale, sandstone, limestone, and chert. Vegetation consists primarily of mixed oak/hickory on the moister slopes and a mixture of pine and hardwoods on the drier slopes, with an understory of rhododendron, mountain laurel, blueberries, huckleberries and a variety of shrubs.

Current Uses: This area is currently managed under Management Prescriptions 6.1 and 6.2. Prescription 6.1 is managed primarily for remote wildlife species habitat. Prescription 6.2 is managed primarily for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation. There are an estimated 21 areas totaling 48 acres in wildlife openings currently maintained by the WVDNR. There are 14 miles of trail within the area that are open to hikers, equestrians, and mountain bikers. The Middle Mountain Trail currently provides motorized access for management of the existing wildlife openings. Recreation use is considered low except for the area around “The Dock” which receives moderate use during hunting season. There are numerous streams within the area that support trout, but fishing pressure is low

Key Attractions: There are no key attractions identified in the Middle Mountain IRA.

CAPABILITY

Natural Integrity and Appearance: Management within the Middle Mountain IRA is evident. Maintained wildlife openings, low-level developed roads for administrative use and disabled hunter access are present. Evidence of timber harvesting and illegal ATV use is noticeable within the area.

Opportunities for Solitude and Challenging Primitive Recreation: The Middle Mountain IRA is 12,197 acres including 6,189 acres of core solitude (51% of the area). It is located entirely on National Forest System lands. Private land/rural development make up the entire eastern boundary of the area, and intermingled private lands are also along the western perimeter. Management activities, including timber harvesting in Prescription 6.1, is noticable, and maintenance of wildlife openings is evident, especially along the Middle Mountain Trail. Overall recreation use of the area is considered low, therefore the potential of encountering other recreation users is low. The potential to hear and see evidence of human use from adjacent private lands and roads is moderate.

Special Features: There are no identified special features associated with the Middle Mountain IRA.

Manageability and Boundaries: The size and shape (an estimated 9 miles long and 2.5 miles wide) of the Middle Mountain area, combined with the amount of private land and development on the eastern and western boundaries, increase the potential for encroachment and non-conforming uses. These factors, along with wildlife management activities within the area, make the preservation potential marginal to average.

AVAILABILITY

Recreation: There are 2 trails totaling 14 miles within the IRA. The Middle Mountain Trail travels north-south through the middle of the area, and the Allegheny Mountain Trail traverses the area from northwest to southeast, from trailheads at State Roads 23 and 92. These trails receive relatively low hiker use and very low equestrian and mountain bike use. Dispersed camping is primarily around “The Dock” area, and is moderate to high during hunting season. The primary recreation activities within the area are hiking and hunting.

Fisheries: The Middle Mountain IRA straddles Middle Mountain between the North Fork of Anthony Creek to the northwest and Anthony Creek to the southeast. Streams in the IRA are typically small, high gradient systems with limited stream flows (Stream Survey data on file at the S.O.). No fisheries data is available within the IRA, but native brook trout were observed in the headwaters of Douthat Creek, which flows out the north side of the IRA.

Wildlife: This area provides habitat for a diversity of wildlife species. There are historic records of large populations of wild turkey and gray squirrel. Wild turkeys have been reintroduced and populations are increasing. This area is considered to be one of the better squirrel areas in West Virginia due to the consistently large amount of mast. Major game species include whitetail deer, gray squirrel, wild turkey and black bear. Lesser game species include grouse, raccoon, red fox, and groundhogs. Beaver populations are increasing along rivers and streams. There are an estimated 21 areas totaling 48 acres in wildlife openings currently maintained by the WVDNR.

Water: This IRA contains the headwaters for 15 cold water streams. There are no major rivers or navigable waters within the area. No water storage needs or existing water-related special use permits are identified at this time. Streams in the area are mildly acidic.

Range: The area has no livestock grazing permits or range allotments. There are no capable grazing lands identified within the area.

Timber: Timber harvesting is not currently permitted in the portions of the IRA within Management Prescription 6.2 except for dispersed recreation objectives, public safety, insect and disease control, timber salvage, or restoration of areas severely damaged by hurricanes, ice storms, etc. Portions of the IRA within Prescription 6.1 do permit commercial timber harvesting, and an estimated 115 acres have been harvested in the last decade. The IRA contains an estimated 203,912 hundred cubic feet (CCF) of merchantable timber. An estimated 11,953 acres (98 percent) of the IRA are considered tentatively suited timberlands and 244 acres (2%) are considered unsuitable. An estimated 4,003 acres (33%) are considered to be prime timberland.

Minerals: There are no active private or federal gas leases or coal operations within the IRA and there are no acres in Federal gas leases. Lands within the IRA are estimated to have a 12.5% chance of natural gas production at 1.56 million cubic feet per acre. Sixty percent of the mineral rights within the area are privately owned. Based on available information, mineable coal is not present within the IRA. The potential conflict between mineral exploration and development and roadless area values is moderate because of the potential for some natural gas discovery coincident with private gas ownership.

Cultural Resources: This IRA is located in an overall high probability cultural resource zone. There are three known historical or archaeological sites that have been identified within the area. An estimated 5% of the area has been surveyed.

Landownership and Special Uses: The Monongahela National Forest administers all lands within the IRA. There are no non-federal lands, permanently encumbered land titles, or cost-share agreements of record within the IRA. There is one recreation (outfitter and guide hunting) and one non-recreation special use permit issued within the IRA.

Disturbances: The Middle Mountain IRA is located within Fire Regimes I and IV. Fire Regime I has a 0-35 year frequency of low (surface fire most common) to mixed (less than 75% of the dominant over-story replaced) severity and Fire Regime IV has a 35-100+ year frequency and high (greater than 75% of dominant over-story vegetation replacement) severity. The area’s fire regimes are in Condition Class 2, which has a moderate departure from its historic range, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is moderate.

Botanical Characteristics: There are no threatened, endangered, or sensitive plants that are known to occur in the IRA. Although there are no inventoried locations of non-native invasive species within the IRA, it is likely that existing road corridors and disturbed areas have a variety of non-native invasive species.

NEED

Proximity to Designated Wildernesses and Population Centers: The Otter Creek and Dolly Sods Wildernesses are 75-80 air miles northeast of the IRA. The Laurel Fork Wildernesses are about 50 air miles to the northeast and the Cranberry Wilderness is 10 air miles northwest of the area. The area is 16 air miles northeast of White Sulphur Springs and 8 air miles southeast of Marlinton. The IRA is within a 3 hour drive of Charleston, and a 4-5 drive Pittsburgh and Washington D.C. As a designated wilderness, the area would serve the local communities of White Sulphur Springs, Marlinton, Richwood, and Summersville, and population centers such as Morgantown, Charleston, Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C.

Biological: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wilderness, and the Eastern Allegheny Mountain and Valley Section (M221Bd), which is not represented on the Forest in existing wilderness but is represented in other IRAs.

Public Interest: There has been public interest in this area becoming wilderness. Individuals and environmental organizations—such as the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society Highlands Conservancy, and The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition—have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping. This IRA was not recommended for wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act or the 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act or 1983 West Virginia Wilderness Act.

WILDERNESS EVALUATION SUMMARY

Capability Summary:

Apparent Naturalness	Moderate
Natural Integrity	Moderate
Opportunity for Solitude	Moderate
Opportunities for Challenge and Adventure	Low to Moderate
Special Features	None

Determination of Availability or Unavailability: The IRA does not meet any of the criteria listed in FSH 1909.12.7.22a. Therefore, it is available for wilderness designation.

Values Foregone with Wilderness Designation: Established recreation uses that would be discontinued if this area were designated wilderness include closing trails and areas to mountain bike use. Current use is very low. In addition, trail maintenance, construction, and reconstruction would be limited to non-mechanical equipment. The Class Q roads providing access for disabled hunters would be eliminated.

The creation or maintenance of wildlife openings would be discontinued. This may result in 48 acres of reduced foraging habitat for species like deer and turkey.

Wilderness designation would affect the ability to add lime to streams to help maintain or improve water quality and fish habitat. Liming stations and mechanized transport would be considered non-conforming uses unless they were allowed in the area-specific legislation.

Current fire control techniques would be altered significantly. Mechanized ground equipment is an important tool in this area, especially considering the private land and developments/ improvements bordering this area to the east and west. Wilderness designation may also limit options for fire suppression on adjacent private lands.

The economic values associated with 4,020 acres (Management Prescription 6.1) of tentatively suited timberlands containing 65,251 CCF would be foregone. Although there is a potential 138,661 CCF on 7,933 tentatively suited acres that could be foregone with wilderness designation, the current 6.2 Management Prescription does not include programmed timber harvest, and only allows harvest activities under certain circumstances.

The values from future development of the Federal mineral estate, which might include natural gas, would likely be foregone. However, there could be values received from future development of the private mineral estate because 60% of the area has privately owned mineral rights. These rights remain valid and could be exercised regardless of wilderness designation.

Biological and Social Need: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wildernesses. Individuals and environmental organizations have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping.

ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

NOTE: Tables will be filled-out after the alternatives have been developed.

IRA Disposition by Alternative: The following table displays IRA disposition for each alternative in estimated acres rounded off to the nearest hundred. These values represent the potential, long-term outcomes of managing the IRA based solely upon its management prescription.

IRA Management Disposition	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Recommended Wilderness				
Maintain undeveloped character				
Potential low levels of development				
Available for full range of development				

Potential Future Development: Potential future development is represented by combinations of management prescriptions and existing conditions that are likely to become priority areas for development activities over the course of the next two or three decades. The development activities chosen for this estimation are timber harvest, oil/gas leases, and private mineral rights. Development potential is expressed in acres in the table below.

Potential Development	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Timber activities				
Oil/Gas Leases				
Private Mineral Rights				

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics: The following table displays the effects on wilderness characteristics for each alternative. The effects on wilderness characteristics are based on the estimation of potential future development.

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4

N = No change; slight change or less than 1 percent of the area potentially affected.

L = Light impact; 1-5 percent of the area potentially affected.

M = Moderate impact; 5-20 percent of the area potentially affected.

H = High impact; greater than 20 percent of the area potentially affected.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In this section, we will state if the preferred alternative does or does not recommend this IRA for wilderness. This recommendation will be published in the Draft Plan, November of 2004. If it is not recommended, this section will briefly describe the potential for development in this area.

Please Note:

This document, the Roadless Area Evaluation, is the first step of the review process in which each area is evaluated for its potential as wilderness. Identifying if an area should or should not be recommended is the second step of the process, which will be disclosed in the Draft Plan.

Roaring Plains West

Inventoried Roadless Area No. 09327

6,453 Acres

DESCRIPTION

Location, Vicinity, and Access: The Roaring Plains West IRA is located on the Monongahela National Forest, Potomac Ranger District, Pendleton and Randolph Counties, West Virginia. The area is located an estimated 3 miles southwest of the Dolly Sods Wilderness. Private land borders the area to the south, east and west, and National Forest System lands lie to the north. Nearby communities include Seneca Rocks (about 5 air miles southeast), and Harman (about 4 air miles west), West Virginia. Canaan Valley State Park is about 2 miles north of the IRA. The area is an estimated 4 miles in length and 3 miles wide and is found within portions of the Laneville U.S.G.S Quadrangle. Primary access is from the Flat-rock Run Trail and Forest Road 70 (gated, but open during hunting season). There are 2 miles of unimproved roads within the area, and 4 miles of system trail.

Topography, Geology, and Vegetation: The Roaring Plains West IRA ranges in elevation from 3,700 feet along the southern perimeter of the area to over 4,700 feet at the top of Mt. Porte Crayon. Slopes within the area range from 10-60%. Geologic formations are diverse and include portions of the Devonian, Hampshire, Mississippian, Pennsylvanian systems. Soils are primarily in the Calvin and Dekalb series. The vegetation is diverse and consists of mixed hardwoods, red spruce and brush, with an under-story of bogs, grasses and rhododendron.

Current Uses: The Roaring Plains IRA is currently managed under Management Prescriptions 6.1 and 6.2. Management Prescription 6.1 emphasizes remote habitat for wildlife species intolerant of disturbance, semi-primitive non-motorized recreation and a mix of forest products. Prescription 6.2 is managed primarily for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. There are 3 segments of trail totaling 4 miles in the IRA. Hiking and backpacking within the area are considered moderate. Hunting and fishing are other popular recreation activities within the area. Mountain biking and equestrian use is low but established. A microwave tower and a heli-spot are located within the northeastern perimeter of the area.

Key Attractions: Key attractions include the high-elevation plains, numerous scenic views, and an alternate and adjacent area to the highly visited Dolly Sods Wilderness that offers a remote recreation experience.

CAPABILITY

Natural Integrity and Appearance: The Roaring Plains IRA is relatively small in size, encompassing 6,453 acres; however, the area is minimally affected by outside forces. Most of the IRA is regaining its natural untrammelled appearance, and natural ecological processes are the primary factors affecting the area. Therefore, natural integrity and appearance are rated moderate to high.

Opportunities for Solitude and Challenging Primitive Recreation: This IRA is 6,453 acres in size and provides an estimated 4,706 acres of core solitude (73% of the area). It is located entirely on National Forest System lands. Private land makes up the entire east, west, and southern boundaries of the area. A natural gas pipe line defines the northern boundary, and Forest Road 70 is the eastern perimeter of the area. There are two other areas that make up the Roaring Plains area that did not meet the inventory criteria and are not being evaluated for potential wilderness. Combined with the IRA, however, these areas comprise over 15,000 acres of relatively remote backcountry that provide a good opportunity to experience solitude. Overall recreation use of the area is considered low to moderate within the IRA, and the likelihood of encountering other recreation users is also low to moderate. The potential to hear and see evidence of human use from adjacent private lands is moderate.

Special Features: Mt. Porte Crayon, exceptional views, topography, and the plains ecosystem are special features identified within this IRA. The area also provides known or potential habitat for several TE&S species.

Manageability and Boundaries: The size and shape (about 4 miles long and 3 miles wide) of the Roaring Plains IRA is marginal for manageability as wilderness. The relatively small size, combined with the high percentage of private land bordering the area and the associated potential for encroachment and non-conforming uses, provides marginal to average boundary conditions to manage this area as wilderness. Although mountain bikes are currently permitted, use is low and should not be difficult to eliminate if wilderness designation occurs.

AVAILABILITY

Recreation: There are segments of 3 trails totaling 4 miles within the IRA. These trails connect with other portions of the Roaring Plains area, as well as the Dolly Sods Wilderness. Hiking, hunting, fishing, nature watching, cross-country skiing and dispersed camping are popular activities within the area. Mountain biking and equestrian use are considered low but are established. Recreation use is expected to increase substantially over the next 10-15 years in the vicinity with the completion of Corridor H, which will provide interstate access from Washington D.C., Maryland, and Virginia to the north-central counties in West Virginia.

Fisheries: The Roaring Plains West IRA is located on the divide between the Cheat River and Potomac River drainages. The South Fork of Red Creek and Flatrock Run flow north into the Dry Fork of the Cheat River. Long Run is formed by the confluence of the North Fork and South Fork of Long Run and flows south into the North Fork of the South Branch of the Potomac River. Native brook trout are reported in Flatrock Run, South Fork Red Creek and Long Run. Geologies sensitive to acid deposition occur in parts of the IRA, and the South Fork of Red Creek is currently on the EPA 303d list of impaired streams due to acid rain.

Wildlife: Wildlife species within the area include whitetail deer, black bear, grouse, snowshoe hare, cottontail rabbit, wild turkey, bobcat and a variety of birds and reptiles. TE&S species that may be found within or adjacent to the area include the Cheat Mountain salamander, West Virginia northern flying squirrel, and northern water shrew.

Water: This IRA contains the headwaters for 8 cold water streams. There are no major rivers or navigable waters within the area. No water storage needs or existing water-related special use permits are identified at this time. Some streams in the area are highly acidic.

Range: The area has no livestock grazing permits or range allotments. There are no capable grazing lands identified within the area.

Timber: Timber harvesting is not currently permitted in the portions of the IRA within Management Prescription 6.2 except for dispersed recreation objectives, public safety, insect and disease control, timber salvage, or restoration of areas severely damaged by hurricanes, ice storms, etc. Portions of the IRA within Management Prescription 6.1 permit commercial timber harvesting, although no harvest has occurred over the past decade. The IRA contains an estimated 107,585 hundred cubic feet (CCF) of merchantable timber. All of the lands within the IRA are considered tentatively suited timberlands. An estimated 2,424 acres (37%) are considered to be prime timberland.

Minerals: There are no active private or federal gas leases or coal operations within the IRA, and there are no acres in Federal gas leases. Ninety five percent of the lands within the IRA are estimated to have a 12.5% chance of natural gas production at 1.56 million cubic feet per acre, and 5% have a 25% chance of gas production of 1.56 million cubic feet per acre. Forty percent of the mineral rights within the area are privately owned. Based on available information; 50% of the area may have mineable coal present in some areas but the economic viability is unknown, 30% does not have mineable coal present, and 20% has mineable coal present.

The potential conflict between mineral exploration/development and roadless area values is moderate based on the potential for some natural gas discovery coincident with private ownership and most of the mineable coal potential is not coincident with private coal rights.

Cultural Resources: This IRA is located in an overall high probability cultural resource zone. There are four known historical or archaeological sites that have been identified within the area. An estimated 15% of the area has been surveyed.

Landownership and Special Uses: The Monongahela National Forest administers all lands within the IRA. There are no non-federal lands, permanently encumbered land titles, or cost-share agreements of record within the IRA. There are four recreation and one non-recreation special use permits issued within the IRA. Permit activities include hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, recreation events and a microwave tower site.

Disturbances: The Roaring Plains West IRA is located within Fire Regimes III and V. Fire Regime III has a 35–100+ year frequency and a mixed (less than 75% of the dominant overstory replaced) severity, and Fire Regime V has a 200+ year frequency and high stand replacement severity. The area’s fire regimes are in Condition Classes 1 and 2. Condition Class 1 is within the historical range of variability, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is low. Condition Class 2 has a moderate departure from its historical range, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is moderate.

Botanical Characteristics: The white monkshood, a Regional Forester’s sensitive species, is known to occur in the area. Portions of the area are within a Candidate Research Natural Area. Although there are no inventoried locations of non-native invasive species within the IRA, it is likely that existing road corridors and disturbed areas have a variety of non-native invasive species.

NEED

Proximity to Designated Wildernesses and Population Centers: The Dolly Sods Wilderness is about 2 air miles north of the IRA, and the Otter Creek Wilderness is within 10 air miles to the west. The Laurel Fork North and South Wildernesses are 17-22 miles to the southwest, and the Cranberry Wilderness is an estimated 63 air miles to the southwest. The IRA is 14 air miles west of Petersburg, 15 air miles southeast of Parsons, 20 air miles east of Elkins, and is within a 3 hour drive of Charleston, Pittsburgh and Washington D.C. As a designated wilderness, the area would serve the local communities of Petersburg, Parsons and Elkins, and population centers such as Morgantown, Charleston, Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C.

Biological: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221) and more specifically the Northern High Allegheny Mountain Section (M221Ba), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wildernesses.

Public Interest: There has been public interest in this area becoming wilderness. Environmental organizations, including the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Highlands Conservancy, and The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition, have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping. This IRA was not recommended for wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act or 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act or 1983 West Virginia Wilderness Act.

WILDERNESS EVALUATION SUMMARY

Capability Summary:

Apparent Naturalness	Moderate-High
Natural Integrity	Moderate-High
Opportunity for Solitude	Moderate
Opportunities for Challenge and Adventure	Moderate
Special Features	Present

Determination of Availability or Unavailability: The IRA does not meet any of the criteria listed in FSH 1909.12.7.22a. Therefore, it is available for wilderness designation.

Values Foregone with Wilderness Designation: Mountain bike use within the area is low to moderate and established; designation would eliminate this use within wilderness. Mountain biking, special event, and microwave tower site special use permits would be terminated. Eliminating these uses use would be controversial. In addition, trail maintenance, construction, and reconstruction would be limited to non-mechanical equipment.

Wilderness designation would affect the ability to add lime to streams to help maintain or improve water quality and fish habitat. Liming stations and mechanized transport would be considered non-conforming uses unless they were allowed in the area-specific legislation.

Making and maintaining wildlife openings by mechanical means would be prohibited.

Current fire control techniques would be altered significantly. Mechanized ground equipment is an important tool in this area, especially with the private land to the north, west and south. Wilderness designation may also limit options for fire suppression on adjacent private lands.

The economic values associated with 300 acres (Management Prescription 6.1) of tentatively suited timberlands containing 5,379 CCF would be foregone. Although there is a potential 102,206 CCF on 6,153 tentatively suited acres that could be foregone with wilderness designation, the current 6.2 Management Prescription does not include programmed timber harvest, and only allows harvest activities under certain circumstances.

The values from future development of the Federal mineral estate, which might include natural gas or coal, would likely be foregone. However, there could be values received from future development of the private mineral estate because 40% of the area has privately owned mineral rights. These rights remain valid and could be exercised regardless of wilderness designation.

Biological and Social Need: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wildernesses. Environmental organizations, including the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Highlands Conservancy, and The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition, have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping.

ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

NOTE: Tables will be filled-out after the alternatives have been developed.

IRA Disposition by Alternative: The following table displays IRA disposition for each alternative in estimated acres rounded off to the nearest hundred. These values represent the potential, long-term outcomes of managing the IRA based solely upon its management prescription.

IRA Management Disposition	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Recommended Wilderness				
Maintain undeveloped character				
Potential low levels of development				
Available for full range of development				

Potential Future Development: Potential future development is represented by combinations of management prescriptions and existing conditions that are likely to become priority areas for development activities over the course of the next two or three decades. The development activities chosen for this estimation are timber harvest, oil/gas leases, and private mineral rights. Development potential is expressed in acres in the table below.

Potential Development	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Timber activities				
Oil/Gas Leases				
Private Mineral Rights				

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics: The following table displays the effects on wilderness characteristics for each alternative. The effects on wilderness characteristics are based on the estimation of potential future development.

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4

N = No change; slight change or less than 1 percent of the area potentially affected.

L = Light impact; 1-5 percent of the area potentially affected.

M = Moderate impact; 5-20 percent of the area potentially affected.

H = High impact; greater than 20 percent of the area potentially affected.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In this section, we will state if the preferred alternative does or does not recommend this IRA for wilderness. This recommendation will be published in the Draft Plan, November of 2004. If it is not recommended, this section will briefly describe the potential for development in this area.

Please Note:

This document, the Roadless Area Evaluation, is the first step of the review process in which each area is evaluated for its potential as wilderness. Identifying if an area should or should not be recommended is the second step of the process, which will be disclosed in the Draft Plan.

Seneca Creek

Inventoried Roadless Area No. 09041

25,046 Acres

DESCRIPTION

Location, Vicinity, and Access: Seneca Creek IRA is located on the Monongahela National Forest, Potomac Ranger District, Pendleton and Randolph Counties, West Virginia. The area is located southwest of Seneca Rocks, West Virginia. National Forest System lands border an estimated 50% of the area, with intermingled private land making up the other 50% of the perimeter. Nearby communities include Seneca Rocks (4 air miles northeast), Circleville (3 air miles southeast), and Elkins (18 air miles northwest), West Virginia. The area is about 8 miles in length and 5 mile wide and is found primarily within portions of the Circleville, Onego, Spruce Knob, and Whitmer USGS quadrangle maps. Primary vehicle access is provided by State Road 29 from the west, Forest Road 112 from the south, and Forest Road 274 from the east. A natural gas pipeline borders the area to the north. There are 10 miles of unimproved road within the area. There is also an extensive 57-mile trail system, located within the Seneca Creek IRA. The 10 miles of unimproved road are currently serving as recreation trails and administrative access in the area.

Topography, Geology, and Vegetation: The Seneca Creek IRA ranges in elevation from 2,500 feet along Gandy Creek to 4,600 feet along the ridges of Spruce Mountain. Slopes within the area range from 10-60%. The geologic formations are primarily those of the Devonian and Hampshire systems. Soils include the Calvin-Dekalb-Hazelton and the Mandy-Trussel-Gauley series. The vegetation is diverse and consists of mixed hardwoods, red spruce and balsam fir with an understory of blueberries, huckleberries, mosses, and rhododendron.

Current Uses: The Seneca Creek IRA is currently managed under Management Prescriptions 3.0 and 6.2. Management Prescription 3.0 emphasizes large high-quality hardwood trees for lumber, and Management Prescription 6.2 is managed primarily for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. There are an estimated 31 acres of wildlife openings currently maintained by the WVDNR. There are 15 trails totaling 57 miles located within the IRA. Mountain biking use on these trails is moderate and well-established. Equestrian use is currently low to moderate but is increasing. There are 13 recreation special use permits (mountain biking, hiking and backpacking, hunting, fishing, and recreation events) issued in the IRA. Spruce Knob Lake Recreation Area is located along the southern perimeter of the IRA, and Gandy Creek, a popular dispersed roadside camping area, borders the area to the west. Recreation use within and adjacent to the IRA is considered moderate to high. Other very popular recreation activities include camping, fishing, hiking, and hunting.

Key Attractions: The key attraction in this IRA is the Seneca Creek Backcountry, which provides excellent opportunities for hiking, backpacking, mountain biking and horseback riding combined with good opportunities for primitive camping in a remote and very scenic setting. This area is also very popular for hunters and anglers.

CAPABILITY

Natural Integrity and Appearance: There has been 446 acres of timber harvesting within Management Prescription 3.0 over the past 10 years, but no harvesting has occurred within the 19,644 acres managed in Management Prescription 6.2, which emphasizes semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. Evidence of the 10 miles of unimproved roads still remains, and many of these roads are used by the WVDNR to manage 31 acres of wildlife openings within the IRA. Most of the area appears natural, and the numerous streams, waterfalls, and vistas give this area an overall excellent appearance.

Opportunities for Solitude and Challenging Primitive Recreation: The Seneca Creek IRA is 25,046 acres including 13,771 acres of core solitude (55% of the area). The entire area is located on National Forest System lands. National Forest System lands border an estimated 50% of the area, with intermingled private land making up the other 50% of the perimeter. Based on the size of the area and the amount of recreation use, the opportunity for challenging primitive recreation opportunities is low to moderate, particularly along trail corridors and streams during hunting and peak fishing seasons where encounters can be high.

Special Features: Seneca Creek and many of its tributaries provide some of the best trout fishing in West Virginia. The IRA also provides known or potential habitat for several TE&S species.

Manageability and Boundaries: The size and shape (an estimated 8 miles long and 5 miles wide) of the Seneca Creek IRA provides excellent opportunities for management of the area as wilderness. The amount of intermingled private land and development along the perimeter of the area increases the potential for encroachment and non-conforming uses. These factors, along with current wildlife management activities within the area, combine to make the preservation potential good.

AVAILABILITY

Recreation: There are 15 trails totaling 57 miles located within the IRA. Mountain biking use on these trails is moderate and well-established. Equestrian use is currently low to moderate but is increasing. Spruce Knob Lake Recreation Area is located along the southern perimeter of the IRA, and Gandy Creek, a popular dispersed roadside camping area, borders the area to the west. The Gatewood Group Campground is located within the southern boundary of the IRA. Recreation use within and adjacent to the IRA is considered moderate to high. Other popular recreation activities include camping, fishing, hiking, and hunting.

Fisheries: The Seneca Creek IRA contains a wide range of fishery resources and fishing opportunities. The IRA is bisected by Seneca Creek which supports a number of native species. Game fish include native brook trout and nonnative rainbow trout. Seneca Creek was identified by Trout Unlimited as one of the top 100 trout fishing streams in America in 1999. The IRA is bordered on the west by Gandy Creek, which is also a popular fishing stream with easy road access. Gandy Creek supports a variety of native fish species, primarily non-game species, and native game fish include brook trout and small mouth bass. Nonnative game fish in Gandy Creek include rainbow trout and brown trout. Tributaries to Gandy Creek that originate in the IRA tend to have simpler fish communities indicative of coldwater systems. Species common in the tributaries include native brook trout, black-nose dace, long-nose dace and mottled sculpin (WVDNR Fish Sampling database). Water quality is considered to be good for the streams in the IRA and geologic conditions that are highly sensitive to acid deposition are relatively limited. No species of concern have been collected within the IRA, but pearl dace, a Regional Forester's sensitive species, have been collected in Gandy Creek upstream of the IRA, and American eel, listed by the WVDNR as S2, have been collected in Seneca Creek just downstream of the IRA.

Wildlife: Species within the area include whitetail deer, black bear, grouse, snowshoe hare, wild turkey, and a variety of birds and reptiles. Threatened or endangered species that may be found within or adjacent to the area include the Cheat Mountain salamander and the West Virginia northern flying squirrel. Currently there are 31 acres of wildlife openings managed by the WVDNR within the IRA.

Water: This IRA contains segments including the headwaters for 14 cold water streams within the the Seneca and Gandy watersheds. There are no major rivers or navigable waters within the area. No water storage needs or existing water-related special use permits are identified at this time. Streams in the area are acidic.

Range: There is one livestock range allotment located in the upper northwest corner of the IRA. There are no additional grazing lands identified within the area.

Timber: Timber harvesting is not currently permitted in the portions of the IRA within Management Prescription 6.2 except for dispersed recreation objectives, public safety, insect and disease control, timber

salvage, or restoration of areas severely damaged by hurricanes, ice storms, etc. Portions of the IRA within Prescription 3.0 do permit commercial timber harvesting and an estimated 446 acres have been harvested in the last decade. The IRA contains an estimated 497,801 hundred cubic feet (CCF) of merchantable timber. An estimated 24,044 acres (96 percent) of the IRA are considered tentatively suited timberlands and 1,002 acres (4%) are considered unsuitable. An estimated 7,720 acres (32%) are considered to be prime timberland.

Minerals: There are no active private or federal gas leases or coal operations within the IRA. However, there are 2,389 acres in Federal gas leases. Sixty percent of the lands within the IRA are estimated to have a 25% chance of natural gas production at 1.56 million cubic feet per acre, and 40% have a 12.5% chance of total gas production at 1.56 million cubic feet per acre. Ten percent of the mineral rights within the area are privately owned. Based on known information, mineable coal is not present within the IRA. The potential conflict between mineral exploration/development and roadless area values is low because of the combination of U.S. control over managing most of the minerals, existing leases are subject to a no surface occupancy stipulation, the relative uncertainty regarding the occurrence of valuable natural gas, and the location of private mineral rights near the outside boundaries of the IRA.

Cultural Resources: This IRA is located in an overall high probability cultural resource zone. There are 18 known historical or archaeological sites that have been identified within the area. An estimated 30% of the area has been surveyed.

Landownership and Special Uses: The Monongahela National Forest administers all lands within the IRA. There are no non-federal lands, permanently encumbered land titles, or cost-share agreements of record within the IRA. There are 13 recreation and 3 non-recreation special use permits issued within the IRA. Permit activities include hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, recreation events, and roads.

Disturbances: The Seneca Creek Area is located within Fire Regimes III and V. Fire Regime III has a 35–100+ year frequency and a mixed (less than 75% of the dominant overstory replaced) severity. Fire Regime V has a 200+ year frequency and high (stand replacement) severity. The area's fire regimes are in Condition Classes 1 and 2. Condition Class 1 is within the historical range of variability, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is low. Condition Class 2 has a moderate departure from its historical range, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is moderate.

Botanical Characteristics: Buffalo running clover, an endangered species, white monkshood, a Regional Foresters sensitive species, and blackgirdle bulrush, a State Rare plant, are known to occur in the area. Although there are no inventoried locations of non-native invasive species within the IRA, it is likely that existing road corridors and disturbed areas have a variety of non-native invasive species.

NEED

The Otter Creek Wilderness is 10 air miles northwest and the Dolly Sods Wilderness is 10 air miles north of the IRA. The Laurel Fork Wildernesses are within 3-4 air miles west of the IRA, and the Cranberry Wilderness is about 40 air miles to the southwest. The area is 4 air miles southwest of Seneca Rocks, 3 air miles northwest of Circleville and 18 air miles southeast of Elkins, and is within a 3-4 hour drive of Charleston, Pittsburgh and Washington D.C. As a designated wilderness, the area would serve the local communities of Seneca Rocks, Circleville, Whitmer, and Elkins, and population centers such as Morgantown, Charleston, Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C.

Biological: The area is in the Northern High Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221) and more specifically the Northern High Allegheny Subsection (M221Ba), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wildernesses.

Public Interest: There has been public interest in this area becoming wilderness. Environmental organizations, including the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Highlands Conservancy, and The West Virginia Wilderness

Coalition, have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping. This IRA was not recommended for wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act or 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act or 1983 West Virginia Wilderness Act.

WILDERNESS EVALUATION SUMMARY

Capability Summary:

Apparent Naturalness	Moderate-High
Natural Integrity	Moderate-High
Opportunity for Solitude	Moderate
Opportunities for Challenge and Adventure	Moderate
Special Features	Present

Determination of Availability or Unavailability: The IRA does not meet any of the criteria listed in FSH 1909.12.7.22a. Therefore, it is available for wilderness designation.

Values Foregone with Wilderness Designation: Mountain bike use within the area is moderate to high and well-established; designation would eliminate this use. Eliminating this use would be controversial. Four recreation and 3 non-recreation special use permits would have to be terminated or modified. In addition, trail maintenance, construction, and reconstruction would be limited to non-mechanical equipment.

The creation or maintenance of wildlife openings would be discontinued. This may result in 31 acres of reduced foraging habitat for species like deer and turkey.

Wilderness designation would affect the ability to add lime to streams to help maintain or improve water quality and fish habitat. Liming stations and mechanized transport would be considered non-conforming uses unless they were allowed in the area-specific legislation.

The grazing allotment special use permit, located in the upper northwestern corner of the IRA, would need to be closed or modified to exclude mechanized use.

Current fire control techniques would be altered significantly. Mechanized ground equipment is an important tool in this area, especially considering the private land to the northwest. Wilderness designation may also limit options for fire suppression on adjacent private lands.

The economic values associated with 5,402 acres (Management Prescription 3.0) of tentatively suited timberlands containing 109,516 CCF would be foregone. Although there is a potential 387,285 CCF on 18,642 tentatively suited acres that could be foregone with wilderness designation, the current 6.2 Management Prescription does not include programmed timber harvest, and only allows harvest activities under certain circumstances.

The values from future development of the Federal mineral estate, which might include natural gas, would likely be foregone. However, there could be values received from future development of the private mineral estate because 10% of the area has privately owned mineral rights. These rights remain valid and could be exercised regardless of wilderness designation.

Biological and Social Need: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wildernesses. Environmental organizations have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping.

ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

NOTE: Tables will be filled-out after the alternatives have been developed.

IRA Disposition by Alternative: The following table displays IRA disposition for each alternative in estimated acres rounded off to the nearest hundred. These values represent the potential, long-term outcomes of managing the IRA based solely upon its management prescription.

IRA Management Disposition	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Recommended Wilderness				
Maintain undeveloped character				
Potential low levels of development				
Available for full range of development				

Potential Future Development: Potential future development is represented by combinations of management prescriptions and existing conditions that are likely to become priority areas for development activities over the course of the next two or three decades. The development activities chosen for this estimation are timber harvest, oil/gas leases, and private mineral rights. Development potential is expressed in acres in the table below.

Potential Development	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Timber activities				
Oil/Gas Leases				
Private Mineral Rights				

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics: The following table displays the effects on wilderness characteristics for each alternative. The effects on wilderness characteristics are based on the estimation of potential future development.

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4

N = No change; slight change or less than 1 percent of the area potentially affected.

L = Light impact; 1-5 percent of the area potentially affected.

M = Moderate impact; 5-20 percent of the area potentially affected.

H = High impact; greater than 20 percent of the area potentially affected.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In this section, we will state if the preferred alternative does or does not recommend this IRA for wilderness. This recommendation will be published in the Draft Plan, November of 2004. If it is not recommended, this section will briefly describe the potential for development in this area.

Please Note:

This document, the Roadless Area Evaluation, is the first step of the review process in which each area is evaluated for its potential as wilderness. Identifying if an area should or should not be recommended is the second step of the process, which will be disclosed in the Draft Plan.

Spice Run

Inventoried Roadless Area No. 09329

7,443Acres

DESCRIPTION

Location, Vicinity, and Access: The Spice Run IRA is located on the Monongahela National Forest, White Sulphur Springs Ranger District, Greenbrier and Pocahontas Counties, West Virginia. The entire area is located on National Forest System lands. The area is located south of Calvin Price State Forest. State Road (SR) 16 borders the area to the east and SR31 is about ½ to 1 mile west of the area boundary. Nearby communities include Neola, about 8 miles to the southeast, and Droop, 7 miles to the northwest. The area is about 2 miles in length and 3.5 miles wide and is found within portions of the Alvon, Anthony, Denmar, and Droop USGS quadrangle maps. The primary vehicle access is from SR16 and Forest Road 720, which is gated but currently open during hunting season. Visitors can also access the area from the Calvin Price State Forest. There are no improved roads within the area. Forest Road 720, which forms portions of the southern boundary of the area, has a permanent easement for access by private landowners and is open to the general public during hunting season. There are no system trails within the area.

Topography, Geology, and Vegetation: The Spice Run IRA ranges in elevation from 2,000 feet along the Greenbrier River to over 2,800 feet throughout interior portions of the area. Slopes within the area range from 10-60%. The geologic formations within the area are variable and include Chemung group, Braillier Formations, Millboro Shade, Ridgely Sandstone, Huntersville Chert, Helderberg Group, Cayugan series, Clinton Groups and Tuscarora sandstone. Vegetation consists of oak, hickory, maple, and some pockets of hemlock with an understory of rhododendron, mixed shrubs, grasses, and ferns.

Current Uses: This area is currently managed under Management Prescription 6.2, which emphasizes semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. The area is primarily used for undeveloped recreation activities including hunting and fishing. There are several hunting camps on private and state land adjacent to the area. Spice and Davy Run and portions of the Greenbrier River within the IRA receive light to moderate fishing pressure. Hiking, mountain biking and equestrian use within the area are low but established.

Key Attractions: The key attractions of the Spice Run IRA include its inaccessibility by road and trail. This area also provides hunters and anglers the opportunity to experience their activity in a remote area with little chance of contacting other people.

CAPABILITY

Natural Integrity and Appearance: Natural processes are operating within the area and the area is minimally affected by outside forces. Most of the Spice Run IRA is regaining its natural untrammelled appearance; however, evidence of previously logging activity from the 1980s is still evident, with many stands of 20-year-old regeneration.

Opportunities for Solitude and Challenging Primitive Recreation: The Spice Run IRA is 7,443 acres in size and provides over 3,100 acres of core solitude (42% of the area). It is located entirely on National Forest System lands. The Calvin Price State Forest borders the Spice Run IRA to the north, private land makes up the western and southeastern boundaries, and the remaining boundaries are adjacent to National Forest System lands.

Visitor use of the area is considered low most of the year and is limited primarily to hunters and anglers accessing the area from adjacent private land and the Calvin Price State Forest. There are no system trails with the area. The likelihood of encountering other visitors within the area is low and the opportunity to experience

remoteness is high. There is potential to hear noise and or view development or management activities from the State Forest to the north and private land to the west.

Special Features: There are no identified special features associated with the Spice Run IRA. The opportunity to experience the feeling of remoteness due to limited encounters with other recreation visitors is the primary feature of this area.

Manageability and Boundaries: The size and shape (4 miles long and 3 miles wide) of the Spice Run IRA, combined with private ownership that make up the western boundary and private in-holdings along the southern boundary, increase the potential for encroachment and non-conforming uses. These factors, along with management activities from the State Forest to the north, including a “sliver” of state land that travels into the core of the area, make the preservation potential of the area marginal.

AVAILABILITY

Recreation: The Spice Run IRA provides a good setting within the Monongahela National Forest for visitors to experience semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. Recreation use within the area is low to very low, primarily due to the limited road access and no trail development. Primary recreation activities within the area are hunting and fishing.

Fisheries: Little information exists for the streams in the Spice Run IRA. The IRA is bordered on the west by the Greenbrier River, which runs along the western boundary, and the IRA is bisected by Spice Run, Davy Run and Kincaid Run. No fish sampling information is available, but unidentified fish were observed in each of the streams during habitat surveys in 1991 (Stream Survey data on file at the S.O.) No species of concern have been identified in the area and no streams are listed on the EPA 303d list of impaired streams, although much of the IRA is underlain by geology that is considered sensitive to acid deposition.

Wildlife: The area provides habitat for a diversity of wildlife species. Species within the area include whitetail deer, black bear, grouse, cottontail rabbit, wild turkey and a variety of birds and reptiles. There have been no threatened, endangered and regional sensitive species identified within or adjacent to the area. The WVDNR currently maintains 8 acres of wildlife openings in the area.

Water: This IRA contains the headwaters for two cold water streams. There are no major rivers or navigable waters within the area. No water storage needs or existing water-related special use permits are identified at this time. Streams in the area are highly acidic.

Range: The area has no livestock grazing permits or range allotments. There are no capable grazing lands identified within the area.

Timber: Timber harvesting is not currently permitted except for dispersed recreation objectives, public safety, insect and disease control, timber salvage, or restoration of areas severely damaged by hurricanes, ice storms, etc. There has not been any significant timber harvesting in this area since the early 1980s.

The IRA contains an estimated 135,119 hundred cubic feet (CCF) of merchantable timber. An estimated 7,443 acres (100 percent) are considered tentatively suited timberlands, including an estimated 4,662 (63%) acres that are considered to be prime timberland.

Minerals: There are no active private or federal gas leases or coal operations within the IRA and there are no acres in Federal gas leases. Lands within the IRA are estimated to have a 12.5% chance of natural gas production at 1.56 million cubic feet per acre. All of the mineral rights within the area are privately owned. Based on available information, mineable coal is not present within the IRA. The potential conflict between mineral exploration and development and roadless area values is moderate based on the potential for some natural gas discovery coincident with private gas ownership.

Cultural Resources: This IRA is located in an overall moderate probability cultural resource zone. There are five known historical or archaeological sites that have been identified within the area. None of the area has been surveyed.

Landownership and Special Uses: The Monongahela National Forest administers all lands in the IRA, although a “sliver” of state owned land penetrates into the core of the area from the north. It is recommended that this “sliver be excluded if the area is recommended for wilderness. There are no non-federal lands, permanently encumbered land titles, or cost-share agreements of record within the IRA. Private land in-holdings and road easements border the area to the south. There are currently no special use permits issued in the area.

Disturbances: The Spice Run IRA is located within Fire Regimes III and V. Fire Regime III has a 35–100+ year frequency and a mixed (less than 75% of the dominant overstory replaced) severity. Fire Regime V has a 200+ year frequency and high (stand replacement) severity. The area’s fire regimes are in Condition Classes 1 and 2. Condition Class 1 is within its historical range of variability, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is low. Condition Class 2 has a moderate departure from its historical range, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is moderate.

Botanical Characteristics: There are no threatened, endangered, or sensitive plants that are known to occur in the area. Although there are no inventoried locations of non-native invasive species within the IRA, it is likely that abandoned road corridors and other disturbed areas have a variety of non-native invasive species.

NEED

Proximity to Designated Wildernesses and Population Centers: The Otter Creek and Dolly Sods Wildernesses are 75-80 air miles northeast of the IRA. The Laurel Fork Wildernesses are approximately 50 air miles to the northeast and the Cranberry Wilderness is 10 air miles north of the area. The area is 16 air miles north of White Sulphur Springs and 12 air miles southwest of Marlinton. The IRA is within a 3 hour drive of Charleston, and a 4-5 drive Pittsburgh and Washington D.C. As a designated wilderness, the area would serve the local communities of White Sulphur Springs, Marlinton, Richwood, and Summersville, and population centers such as Morgantown, Charleston, Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C.

Biological: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wildernesses, and the Eastern Allegheny Mountain and Valley Section (M221Bd), which is not represented in existing wildernesses on the Forest but is represented in existing IRAs.

Public Interest: There has been public interest in this area becoming wilderness. Environmental organizations, including the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society Highlands Conservancy, and The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition, have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping. This IRA was not recommended for wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act or 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act or 1983 West Virginia Wilderness Act.

WILDERNESS EVALUATION SUMMARY

Capability Summary:

Apparent Naturalness	Moderate
Natural Integrity	Moderate
Opportunity for Solitude	Moderate to High
Opportunities for Challenge and Adventure	Moderate
Special Features	None

Determination of Availability or Unavailability: The IRA does not meet any of the criteria listed in FSH 1909.12.7.22a. Therefore, it is available for wilderness designation.

Values Foregone with Wilderness Designation: There are no established recreation uses or special use permits that would be discontinued if this area were designated wilderness. If any trails were constructed in the area maintenance, construction, and reconstruction would be limited to non-mechanical equipment.

The creation or maintenance of wildlife openings would be discontinued. This may result in 8 acres of reduced foraging habitat for species like deer and turkey.

Wilderness designation would affect the ability to add lime to streams to help maintain or improve water quality and fish habitat. Liming stations and mechanized transport would be considered non-conforming uses unless they were allowed in the area-specific legislation.

Current fire control techniques would be altered significantly. Mechanized ground equipment is an important tool in this area, especially considering the private and state land to the north and west. Wilderness designation may also limit options for fire suppression on adjacent private lands.

Although there is a potential 135,119 CCF on 7,443 tentatively suited acres that could be foregone with wilderness designation, the current 6.2 Management Prescription does not include programmed timber harvest, and only allows harvest activities under certain circumstances.

The values from future development of the Federal mineral estate, which might include natural gas, would likely be foregone. However, there could be values received from future development of the private mineral estate because 100% of the area has privately owned mineral rights. These rights remain valid and could be exercised regardless of wilderness designation.

Biological and Social Need: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in wilderness. Environmental organizations have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping.

ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

NOTE: Tables will be filled-out after the alternatives have been developed.

IRA Disposition by Alternative: The following table displays IRA disposition for each alternative in estimated acres rounded off to the nearest hundred. These values represent the potential, long-term outcomes of managing the IRA based solely upon its management prescription.

IRA Management Disposition	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Recommended Wilderness				
Maintain undeveloped character				
Potential low levels of development				
Available for full range of development				

Potential Future Development: Potential future development is represented by combinations of management prescriptions and existing conditions that are likely to become priority areas for development activities over the course of the next two or three decades. The development activities chosen for this estimation are timber harvest, oil/gas leases, and private mineral rights. Development potential is expressed in acres in the table below.

Potential Development	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Timber activities				
Oil/Gas Leases				
Private Mineral Rights				

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics: The following table displays the effects on wilderness characteristics for each alternative. The effects on wilderness characteristics are based on the estimation of potential future development.

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4

N = No change; slight change or less than 1 percent of the area potentially affected.

L = Light impact; 1-5 percent of the area potentially affected.

M = Moderate impact; 5-20 percent of the area potentially affected.

H = High impact; greater than 20 percent of the area potentially affected.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In this section, we will state if the preferred alternative does or does not recommend this IRA for wilderness. This recommendation will be published in the Draft Plan, November of 2004. If it is not recommended, this section will briefly describe the potential for development in this area.

Please Note:

This document, the Roadless Area Evaluation, is the first step of the review process in which each area is evaluated for its potential as wilderness. Identifying if an area should or should not be recommended is the second step of the process, which will be disclosed in the Draft Plan.

Tea Creek Mountain

Inventoried Roadless Area No. 09048

8,289 Acres

DESCRIPTION

Location, Vicinity, and Access: The Tea Creek Mountain IRA is located on the Monongahela National Forest, Marlinton Ranger District, Pocahontas County, West Virginia. The area is located north of the Williams River Road and the Cranberry Wilderness. Private land borders a small segment of the area on the northwest, National Forest system lands border the remainder of the area. Nearby communities include Marlinton (10 air miles southeast), Webster Springs (13 air miles northwest), and Richwood (18 air miles southwest), West Virginia. The area is about 4 miles long and 3 miles wide, and is found within portions of the Bergoo, Sharp Knob, Webster Springs, and Woodrow USGS quadrangle maps. Primary vehicle access is provided by the Highlands Scenic Highway and the Williams River Road from the south, and Forest Road 135 from the north.

Topography, Geology, and Vegetation: The Tea Creek area ranges in elevation from 2900 feet along the Williams River at Tea Creek Campground to over 4,400 feet along the ridge tops. The area is a deeply dissected high plateau with sharp valleys and many peaks. The topography is characterized by steep mountain slopes, broad benches and moderately wide to narrow valleys. The geology of the area ranges from Kanawha and New River formations of the Pottsville Group on the ridge tops to Mauch Chunk on the lower slopes. The vegetation consists of red spruce, hemlock, and intermingled cherry, mountain ash and aspen at the highest elevations to a northern hardwood mix of maple, beech and birch throughout the rest of the area. The understory consists of various small trees and shrubs.

Current Uses: The Tea Creek IRA is currently managed under Management Prescriptions 3.0, 6.1 and 6.2. Prescription 3.0 emphasizes large high-quality hardwood trees for lumber, Prescription 6.1 is managed primarily for remote wildlife species habitat, and Prescription 6.2 is managed for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. There are an estimated 32 acres of wildlife openings currently maintained by the WVDNR. There are 14 trails totaling 40 miles located within the IRA. Mountain biking use on these trails is heavy and well-established. Equestrian use is currently low but is increasing. Four recreation special use permits (mountain biking, horseback riding, hiking and backpacking, and hunting) are issued for use within the IRA. Tea Creek Campground is located just southwest of the IRA, and the Highlands Scenic Highway borders the area to the south. Recreation use within and adjacent to the IRA is considered moderate to high. Other very popular recreation activities include camping, fishing, hiking, and hunting.

Key Attractions: The Williams River and tributaries are very popular fishing destinations, and the area is identified as one of the premier mountain biking areas on the Monongahela National Forest. The Cranberry Wilderness, Forest Road 86 (Williams River) and the Highlands scenic Highway is south of the IRA.

CAPABILITY

Natural Integrity and Appearance: Although no timber harvesting has occurred within the Tea Creek IRA within the past 10 years, there is still some evidence of management actions. There are 32 acres of wildlife openings maintained by the WVDNR, along with an extensive 40-mile trail system. The area does provide good opportunities for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation, although encounters with other users can be moderate to high, especially along trail corridors and streams.

Opportunities for Solitude and Challenging Primitive Recreation: The Tea Creek IRA is 8,289 acres including 6,309 acres of core solitude (77% of the area). The entire area is located on National Forest System lands. An estimated 15% of the area is bordered by private land, with the remaining boundary being National Forest. Overall recreation use is moderate to high, and the opportunity for solitude is low to moderate. Based

on the size of the area and the amount of recreation use, the opportunity for challenging primitive recreation opportunities is low.

Special Features: The IRA provides known or potential habitat for several TE&S species.

Manageability and Boundaries: The size and shape (approximately 4 miles long and 3 miles wide) of the Tea Creek IRA, combined with the relatively small percentage of private land bordering the area, provide adequate boundary conditions to manage this area as wilderness. Established high use by mountain bikers and existing special use permits for mountain bike events and outfitting and guiding within the area will be difficult to eliminate if the area is designated wilderness.

AVAILABILITY

Recreation: Mountain biking is very popular in the area and recreation special use permits are authorized annually for recreation events including mountain biking. Hiking, hunting, fishing, nature watching, and dispersed camping are also popular activities within the area.

Fisheries: The Tea Creek Mountain IRA essentially encompasses the Tea Creek watershed. Tea Creek is a popular fishery, but acidic conditions have impaired its productivity. The main stem of Tea Creek is currently on the EPA 303d list of impaired streams due to acid rain. The WVDNR proposes to add limestone sand to the upper reaches of the main stem to mitigate these impacts and improve water chemistry. Red Run, a tributary to the Right Fork of Tea Creek is also acidic. Tea Creek supports a diverse fish community, including candy darter, a Regional Forester sensitive species, and bigmouth chub that are listed S3/S4 by the WVDNR. Native brook trout and nonnative brown trout are the primary game fish, but small mouth bass and rock bass have also been collected in the main stem of Tea Creek (WVDNR Fish Sampling database).

Wildlife: The area provides habitat for a diversity of wildlife species. At the present time black bear and whitetail deer are abundant and are increasing in numbers. The area also provides habitat for the West Virginia northern flying squirrel, snowshoe hare, eastern small-footed bat, and the Cheat Mountain salamander. The WVDNR currently manages 32 acres of wildlife openings within the IRA.

Water: This IRA contains the headwaters of five cold water streams. There are no major rivers or navigable waters within the area. No water storage needs or existing water-related special use permits are identified at this time. Streams in the area are highly acidic.

Range: The area has no livestock grazing permits or range allotments. There are no capable grazing lands identified within the area.

Timber: Timber harvesting is not currently permitted in the portions of the IRA within Management Prescription 6.2 except for dispersed recreation objectives, public safety, insect and disease control, timber salvage, or restoration of areas severely damaged by hurricanes, ice storms, etc. Portions of the IRA within Management Prescription 3.0 and 6.1 do permit commercial timber harvesting, although there has not been any significant timber harvesting in the past decade. The IRA contains an estimated 172,256 hundred cubic feet (CCF) of merchantable timber. An estimated 8,123 acres (98 percent) are considered tentatively suited timberlands and 166 acres (2%) are considered unsuitable. An estimated 4,523 acres (55%) are considered to be prime timberland.

Minerals: There are no active private or federal gas leases or coal operations within the IRA and there are no acres in Federal gas leases. All lands within the IRA are estimated to have virtually no potential for natural gas production. Ninety percent of the mineral rights within the area are privately owned. Based on available information, sixty percent of the IRA has mineable coal that may be present in some areas but the economic viability is unknown. The remaining 40% of the area does not have mineable coal present. The potential conflict between mineral exploration and development and roadless area values is moderate because the

potential for some mineable coal may be tempered by data suggesting it may be in small pockets, which would limit the economic viability within the privately owner mineral rights.

Cultural Resources: This IRA is located in an overall high probability cultural resource zone. There are 19 known historical or archaeological sites that have been identified within the area. An estimated 60% of the area has been surveyed.

Landownership and Special Uses: The Monongahela National Forest administers all lands in the IRA. There are no non-federal lands, permanently encumbered land titles, or cost-share agreements of record within the IRA. Private land borders a small portion of the IRA boundary on the northwestern perimeter. There are four recreation and no non-recreation special use permits issued within the IRA. Permit activities include hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, mountain biking and hunting.

Disturbances: The Tea Creek Mountain IRA is within Fire Regime V. Fire Regime V has a 200+ year frequency and high (stand replacement) severity. This area's fire regime is in Condition Class 1. Condition Class 1 is within the historical range of variability, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is low.

Botanical Characteristics: The long-stalked holly, a Regional Forester sensitive species, is known to occur in the area. Although there are no inventoried locations of non-native invasive species within the IRA, it is likely that existing road corridors and disturbed areas have a variety of non-native invasive species.

NEED

Proximity to Designated Wildernesses and Population Centers: The Otter Creek and Dolly Sods Wildernesses are 50-55 air miles northeast of the IRA. The Laurel Fork Wildernesses are about 30 air miles to the northeast, and the Cranberry Wilderness is 0.1 air miles south of the area (the Williams River Road separates the IRA from the Cranberry Wilderness). The area is 18 air miles northeast of Richwood and 10 air miles northwest of Marlinton. The IRA is within a 3 hour drive of Charleston, and a 4-5 drive of Pittsburgh and Washington D.C. As a designated wilderness, the area would serve the local communities of Marlinton, Richwood, Summersville, and Webster Springs, and population centers such as Morgantown, Charleston, Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C.

Biological: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221) and more specifically the Southern Middle High Allegheny Subsection (M221Bc), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wilderness.

Public Interest: There has been little public interest in this area becoming wilderness. No organizations have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness in response to public scoping. This IRA was not recommended for wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act or 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act or 1983 West Virginia Wilderness Act.

WILDERNESS EVALUATION SUMMARY

Capability Summary:

Apparent Naturalness	Moderate
Natural Integrity	Moderate
Opportunity for Solitude	Low to Moderate
Opportunities for Challenge and Adventure	Low to Moderate
Special Features	None

Determination of Availability or Unavailability: The IRA does not meet any of the criteria listed in FSH 1909.12.7.22a. Therefore, it is available for wilderness designation.

Values Foregone with Wilderness Designation: Mountain bike use within the area is moderate to high and well-established; designation would eliminate this use within wilderness. Special use permits would need to be modified to exclude any non-conforming uses on trail segments within the designated area. Eliminating this use would be very controversial. In addition trail maintenance, construction, and reconstruction would be limited to non-mechanical equipment.

The creation or maintenance of wildlife openings would be discontinued. This may result in 32 acres of reduced foraging habitat for species like deer and turkey.

Wilderness designation would affect the ability to add lime to streams to help maintain or improve water quality and fish habitat. Liming stations and mechanized transport would be considered non-conforming uses unless they were allowed in the area-specific legislation.

Current fire control techniques would be altered significantly. Mechanized ground equipment is an important tool in this area, especially considering the private land to the northwest. Wilderness designation may also limit options for fire suppression on adjacent private lands.

The economic values associated with 3,911 acres (Management Prescriptions 3.0 and 6.1) of tentatively suited timberlands containing 80,960 CCF would be foregone. Although there is a potential 91,296 CCF on 4,212 tentatively suited acres that could be foregone with wilderness designation, the current 6.2 Management Prescription does not include programmed timber harvest, and only allows harvest activities under certain circumstances.

The values from future development of the Federal mineral estate, which might include natural gas or coal, would likely be foregone. However, there could be values received from future development of the private mineral estate because 90% of the area has privately owned mineral rights. These rights remain valid and could be exercised regardless of wilderness designation.

Biological and Social Need: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wilderness. There has been little public interest in this area becoming wilderness. No organizations have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness in response to public scoping.

ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

NOTE: Tables will be filled-out after the alternatives have been developed.

IRA Disposition by Alternative: The following table displays IRA disposition for each alternative in estimated acres rounded off to the nearest hundred. These values represent the potential, long-term outcomes of managing the IRA based solely upon its management prescription.

IRA Management Disposition	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Recommended Wilderness				
Maintain undeveloped character				
Potential low levels of development				
Available for full range of development				

Potential Future Development: Potential future development is represented by combinations of management prescriptions and existing conditions that are likely to become priority areas for development activities over the course of the next two or three decades. The development activities chosen for this estimation are timber harvest, oil/gas leases, and private mineral rights. Development potential is expressed in acres in the table below.

Potential Development	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Timber activities				
Oil/Gas Leases				
Private Mineral Rights				

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics: The following table displays the effects on wilderness characteristics for each alternative. The effects on wilderness characteristics are based on the estimation of potential future development.

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4

N = No change; slight change or less than 1 percent of the area potentially affected.

L = Light impact; 1-5 percent of the area potentially affected.

M = Moderate impact; 5-20 percent of the area potentially affected.

H = High impact; greater than 20 percent of the area potentially affected.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In this section, we will state if the preferred alternative does or does not recommend this IRA for wilderness. This recommendation will be published in the Draft Plan, November of 2004. If it is not recommended, this section will briefly describe the potential for development in this area.

Please Note:

This document, the Roadless Area Evaluation, is the first step of the review process in which each area is evaluated for its potential as wilderness. Identifying if an area should or should not be recommended is the second step of the process, which will be disclosed in the Draft Plan.

Turkey Mountain

Inventoried Roadless Area No. 09328

6,127 Acres

DESCRIPTION

Location, Vicinity, and Access: The Turkey Mountain IRA is located on the Monongahela National Forest, Gauley Ranger District, Pocahontas and Webster Counties, West Virginia. The area is located north of the Williams River Road and the Cranberry Wilderness. Private land borders the entire northern perimeter of the area, with National Forest System lands bordering the remainder of the area. Nearby communities include Marlinton (12 air miles southeast), Webster Springs (8 air miles northwest), and Richwood (15 air miles southwest), West Virginia. The area is about 5 miles long and 1 mile wide and is found within portions of the Bergoo, Sharp Knob and Webster Springs USGS quadrangle maps. Primary vehicle access is provided by the Williams River Road from the south and State Road 42 from the north. There are two miles of unimproved road and the Bannock Shoals Trail forms the eastern boundary of the IRA.

Topography, Geology, and Vegetation: The Turkey Mountain IRA ranges in elevation from about 2900 feet along the Williams River to over 4,400 feet along the ridge tops. The area is a deeply dissected high plateau with sharp valleys and many peaks. The topography is characterized by steep mountain slopes, broad benches and moderately wide to narrow valleys. The geology of the area ranges from Kanawha and New River formations of the Pottsville Group on the ridge tops to Mauch Chunk on the lower slopes. The vegetation consists of red spruce, hemlock, and intermingled fire cherry, mountain ash and aspen at the highest elevations, to a northern hardwood mix of maple, beech and birch in the remainder of the area. The understory consists of a variety of small trees and shrubs.

Current Uses: The IRA is currently managed under Management Prescriptions 6.1 and 6.2. Prescription 6.1 is managed primarily for remote wildlife species habitat, and Prescription 6.2 is managed primarily for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. There are an estimated 9 acres of wildlife openings currently maintained by the WVDNR. There are no designated trails located within the IRA, although the Bannock Shoals Trail serves as the eastern perimeter of the area. Recreation use within and adjacent to the IRA is considered moderate. The primary recreation activities within the area are fishing, hiking, and hunting. Illegal ATV use occurs, especially in the northern portion of the area.

Key Attractions: The Williams River and its tributaries are very popular fishing destinations on the Monongahela National Forest. The Cranberry Wilderness is south of the IRA and Forest Road 86 (Williams River Road).

CAPABILITY

Natural Integrity and Appearance: Although no timber harvesting has occurred in the Turkey Mountain IRA within the past 10 years, there is still evidence of management actions. The remains from coal mining that occurred in the northern portion of the area are still evident on the landscape. There are 9 acres of wildlife openings maintained by the WVDNR, along with 2 miles of low standard roads. The area does provide good opportunities for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities due to its limited access.

Opportunities for Solitude and Challenging Primitive Recreation: The Turkey Mountain IRA is 6,127 acres including 3,734 acres of core solitude (61% of the area). The entire area is located on National Forest System lands. The entire northern boundary is bordered by private land, and the remaining boundary being National Forest. Overall recreation use is low to moderate, with a moderate to high potential for solitude. Based on the size of the area and the amount of recreation use, the opportunity for challenging primitive recreation opportunities is low to moderate.

Special Features: The IRA provides known or potential habitat for several TE&S species.

Manageability and Boundaries: The size and shape (about 5 miles long and 1 mile wide) of the Turkey Mountain IRA, combined with the relatively high percentage of private land bordering the area to the north, may make the manageability of this area as wilderness difficult. The potential for encroachment and non-conforming uses from private land to the north is moderate to high. Illegal ATV use is known to occur within the area.

AVAILABILITY

Recreation: Recreation use within and adjacent to the IRA is considered moderate. The primary recreation activities within the area are fishing and hunting. Illegal ATV use is occurring, especially in the northern portion of the area. There is only one system trail near the area (Bannock Shoals Trail). This trail serves as the eastern boundary of the IRA.

Fisheries: The IRA is located on the southern flanks of Turkey Mountain, between Upper Bannock Shoals Run to the east and Little Elbow Run to the west, and drains to the Williams River along its southern boundary. There is little information available for the streams draining the IRA. The Williams River adjacent to the IRA is a popular sport fishery with native brook trout, small mouth bass and rock bass present. It also supports nonnative rainbow trout and brown trout. Species of concern collected in the Williams River within the IRA include candy darter and Appalachia darter, which are Regional Forester's sensitive species, and bigmouth chub that are listed by the WVDNR as S3/S4. The dominant geologic type in the IRA is highly sensitive to acid deposition, but no streams are listed on the EPA 303d list of impaired waters. Upper Bannock Shoals Run is considered to be a reference stream by the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection.

Wildlife: The area provides habitat for a diversity of wildlife species. At the present time black bear and whitetail deer are abundant and are increasing in numbers. The area also provides habitat for the West Virginia northern flying squirrel, snowshoe hare, and the Cheat Mountain salamander. The WVDNR currently manages 9 acres of wildlife openings within the IRA.

Water: This IRA contains the headwaters of four cold water streams. There are no major rivers or navigable waters within the area. No water storage needs or existing water-related special use permits are identified at this time. Streams in the area are highly acidic.

Range: The area has no livestock grazing permits or range allotments. There are no capable grazing lands identified within the area.

Timber: Timber harvesting is not currently permitted in the portions of the IRA within Management Prescription 6.2 except for dispersed recreation objectives, public safety, insect and disease control, timber salvage, or restoration of areas severely damaged by hurricanes, ice storms, etc. Portions of the IRA within MA 6.1 do permit commercial timber harvesting, although there has not been any significant timber harvesting activities in the past decade. The IRA contains an estimated 145,499 hundred cubic feet (CCF) of merchantable timber. An estimated 6,066 acres (99 percent) are considered tentatively suited timberlands and 61 acres (1%) are considered unsuitable. An estimated 5,390 acres (88%) are considered to be prime timberland.

Minerals: There are no active private or federal gas leases or coal operations within the IRA and there are no acres in Federal gas leases. Eighty percent of the lands within the IRA are estimated to have a 12.5% chance of natural production at 1.56 million cubic feet per acre, and the remaining 20% has virtually no potential for natural gas production. Ninety percent of the mineral rights within the area are privately owned. Based on known information, 80% of the IRA has mineable coal that may be present in some areas but the economic viability is unknown. The remaining 20% of the area does not have mineable coal present. The potential conflict between mineral exploration/development and roadless area values is moderate because of the potential for some natural gas discovery and information suggesting that mineable coal may already have been extracted.

Cultural Resources: This IRA is located in an overall high probability cultural resource zone. There is one known historical or archaeological sites that have been identified within the area. None of the area has been surveyed.

Landownership and Special Uses: The Monongahela National Forest administers all lands in the IRA. There are no non-federal lands, permanently encumbered land titles, or cost-share agreements of record within the IRA. There is currently one recreation special use permit (outfitter and guide) issued for the area.

Disturbances: The Turkey Mountain IRA is located within Fire Regimes III and V. Fire Regime III has a 35-100+ year frequency of mixed severity (less than 75% of the dominant overstory vegetation replaced). Fire Regime V has a 200+ year frequency and high (stand replacement) severity. The area’s fire regimes are in Condition Classes 1 and 2. Condition Class 1 is within its historical range of variability, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is low. Condition Class 2 has a moderate departure from its historical range of variability, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is moderate.

Botanical Characteristics: The long-stalked holly, a Regional Foresters sensitive species, is known to occur in the area. Although there are no inventoried locations of non-native invasive species within the IRA, it is likely that existing road corridors and disturbed areas have a variety of non-native invasive species.

NEED

Proximity to Designated Wildernesses and Population Centers: The Otter Creek and Dolly Sods Wildernesses are 50-55 air miles northeast of the IRA. The Laurel Fork Wildernesses are about 30 air miles to the northeast, and the Cranberry Wilderness is .1 air miles south of the area (Williams River Road separates the IRA from the Cranberry Wilderness). The area is 14 air miles northeast of Richwood and 12 air miles northwest of Marlinton. It is within a 3 hour drive of Charleston, and a 4-5 hour drive of Pittsburgh and Washington D.C. As a designated wilderness, the area would serve the local communities of Marlinton, Richwood, Webster Springs, and Summersville, and population centers such as Morgantown, Charleston, Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C.

Biological: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221) and more specifically the Southern Middle High Allegheny Sub-section (M221Bc), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wilderness.

Public Interest: There has been little public interest in this area becoming wilderness. No organizations have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness in response to public scoping. This IRA was not recommended for wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act or 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act or 1983 West Virginia Wilderness Act.

WILDERNESS EVALUATION SUMMARY

Capability Summary:

Apparent Naturalness	Moderate
Natural Integrity	Moderate
Opportunity for Solitude	Moderate
Opportunities for Challenge and Adventure	Moderate
Special Features	None

Determination of Availability or Unavailability: The IRA does not meet any of the criteria listed in FSH 1909.12.7.22a. Therefore, it is available for wilderness designation.

Values Foregone with Wilderness Designation: Mountain bike use is low to moderate and established along the Bannock Shoals Trail; designation would eliminate this use within the wilderness. The existing special use permit would need to be modified to exclude mountain bike use on trail segments within the designated area. Eliminating this use would be controversial. In addition, trail maintenance, construction, and reconstruction would be limited to non-mechanical equipment.

The creation or maintenance of wildlife openings would be discontinued. This may result in 9 acres of reduced foraging habitat for species like deer and turkey.

Wilderness designation would affect the ability to add lime to streams to help maintain or improve water quality and fish habitat. Liming stations and mechanized transport would be considered non-conforming uses unless they were allowed in the area-specific legislation.

Current fire control techniques would be altered significantly. Mechanized ground equipment is an important tool in this area, especially considering the private land along the northern perimeter. Wilderness designation may also limit options for fire suppression on adjacent private lands.

The economic values associated with 1,307 acres (Management Prescription 6.1) of tentatively suited timberlands containing 30,555 CCF would be foregone. Although there is a potential 114,944 CCF on 4,759 tentatively suited acres that could be foregone with wilderness designation, the current 6.2 Management Prescription does not include programmed timber harvest, and only allows harvest activities under certain circumstances.

The values from future development of the Federal mineral estate, which might include natural gas or coal, would likely be foregone. However, there could be values received from future development of the private mineral estate because 90% of the area has privately owned mineral rights. These rights remain valid and could be exercised regardless of wilderness designation.

Biological and Social Need: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wilderness. There has been little public interest in this area becoming wilderness.

ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

NOTE: Tables will be filled-out after the alternatives have been developed.

IRA Disposition by Alternative: The following table displays IRA disposition for each alternative in estimated acres rounded off to the nearest hundred. These values represent the potential, long-term outcomes of managing the IRA based solely upon its management prescription.

IRA Management Disposition	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Recommended Wilderness				
Maintain undeveloped character				
Potential low levels of development				
Available for full range of development				

Potential Future Development: Potential future development is represented by combinations of management prescriptions and existing conditions that are likely to become priority areas for development activities over the course of the next two or three decades. The development activities chosen for this estimation are timber harvest and oil/gas leases, and private mineral rights. Development potential is expressed in acres in the table below.

Potential Development	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Timber activities				
Oil/Gas Leases				
Private Mineral Rights				

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics: The following table displays the effects on wilderness characteristics for each alternative. The effects on wilderness characteristics are based on the estimation of potential future development.

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4

N = No change; slight change or less than 1 percent of the area potentially affected.

L = Light impact; 1-5 percent of the area potentially affected.

M = Moderate impact; 5-20 percent of the area potentially affected.

H = High impact; greater than 20 percent of the area potentially affected.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In this section, we will state if the preferred alternative does or does not recommend this IRA for wilderness. This recommendation will be published in the Draft Plan, November of 2004. If it is not recommended, this section will briefly describe the potential for development in this area.

Please Note:

This document, the Roadless Area Evaluation, is the first step of the review process in which each area is evaluated for its potential as wilderness. Identifying if an area should or should not be recommended is the second step of the process, which will be disclosed in the Draft Plan.

Upper Shavers Fork East

Inventoried Roadless Area

8,218 Acres

DESCRIPTION

Location, Vicinity, and Access: The Upper Shavers Fork East IRA is located on the Monongahela National Forest, Greenbrier Ranger District, Pocahontas and Randolph Counties, West Virginia. National Forest System lands border the area to the east and south, and private lands along the western and northern boundaries. The active Durbin and Greenbrier Railroad makes up the entire western boundary of the IRA, and the Cass Scenic Railroad, Snowshoe Mountain and Silver Creek Ski Areas are directly south of the area. Nearby communities include Durbin (4 air miles east), Huttonsville (16 air miles northwest), and the Snowshoe and Silver Creek developments (2-3 air miles southwest), West Virginia. The area is about 8 miles in length and 1 to 2 miles wide and is found primarily within portions of the Cass, Durbin and Snyder Knob USGS quadrangle maps. Primary vehicle access is provided by Forest Roads 227 and 233 from the north, Forest Road 235 (gated portions of the year) from the east, and the Snowshoe and Silver Creek development from the south. Visitors can also access the area from the Cass Scenic Railroad that travels north-south along the western perimeter. There are no system trails or improved roads located within the Upper Shavers Fork East IRA. There is an extensive system of old logging roads and skid trails throughout the area that was created prior to Forest Service ownership in 1988.

Topography, Geology, and Vegetation: The Upper Shavers Fork East area ranges in elevation from 3,000 feet at along the Shavers Fork to over 4,000 foot ridge tops within the area. Slopes are generally steep along the Shavers Fork, with more gradual slopes toward the main ridges. The geologic formations are part of the Pennsylvanian, Mississippian, and Devonian systems. Soils include the Dekalb and Calvin series. The vegetation consists of an overstory of northern hardwoods and red spruce and an understory of rhododendron, small trees and shrubs.

Current Uses: This IRA is currently managed under Management Prescription 6.1 which emphasizes habitat for remote wildlife species, and permits commercial timber harvesting. There are no known managed wildlife openings within the area. Although there has been no timber harvesting in the area over the past decade, this area was harvested heavily prior to Forest Service ownership in 1988. There are no designated trails located within the IRA, but an extensive undeveloped road system that was created prior to Federal ownership provides access throughout the area. Recreation use within and adjacent to the IRA is considered low to moderate. The primary recreation activities within the area are fishing, hunting, and mountain biking. Illegal ATV use is occurring throughout the area. The Durbin and Greenbrier Railroad takes visitors on a train ride along the western perimeter of the area and the Cass Scenic Railroad travels along the southern edge of the area. The abandoned town of Spruce is a current trail stop for the Cass Scenic Railroad and is located just outside of the southwestern corner of the IRA.

Key Attractions: The Durbin and Greenbrier Railroad, which borders the area to the west, and the Cass Scenic Railroad, Snowshoe and Silver Creek Ski Areas, just south of the IRA are key attractions.

CAPABILITY

Natural Integrity and Appearance: Past timber harvesting and associated roads are still very evident within the Upper Shavers Fork East IRA. Although there has been no timber harvested in the area over the past 10 years, this area was heavily logged and roaded (low standard woods roads) prior to Federal ownership in 1988. The natural integrity and appearance of the land is not evident throughout much of the IRA.

Opportunities for Solitude and Challenging Primitive Recreation: The Upper Shavers Fork East IRA is 8,218 acres in size, provides about 2,000 acres of core solitude (24% of the area), and is located entirely on National Forest System lands. The Durbin and Greenbrier Railroad borders the area to the west, and the Cass Scenic Railroad, Snowshoe and Silver Creek Ski Areas and associated development are just south of the area. Based on the relatively small size of the area and only 2,000 acres of core solitude, combined with the railroad to the west and developments to the south, the opportunity for solitude is low to moderate. Previous logging and woods road construction still evident on the landscape significantly reduces the opportunity to experience primitive recreation throughout much of the area. Illegal ATV is occurring within the IRA.

Visitor use of the area is considered low to moderate most of the year and is limited primarily to hunters, anglers, and mountain bikers. Equestrian and hiker use is low. There are no system trails that access the area, although numerous old woods roads do provide access. The likelihood of encountering other visitors within the area is low except during hunting and primary fishing seasons when the likelihood increases to moderate. The opportunity to experience remoteness is moderate. There is the potential to hear noise from the Durbin and Greenbrier and Cass Scenic Railroad Trains as they travel along the western and southern boundaries of the area.

Special Features: The IRA provides known or potential habitat for several TE&S species.

Manageability and Boundaries: The size and shape (8 miles long, 1-2 mile wide) of the Upper Shavers Fork East IRA, combined with ownership and current use patterns, make its preservation potential marginal. The western boundary (Durbin and Greenbrier Railroad) has a low potential for additional development. The private lands south of the IRA have a current high level of development with potential to increase substantially over the next 10-20 years. There is a moderate to high potential for encroachment and non-conforming uses from adjacent private land.

AVAILABILITY

Recreation: There are no designated system trails within the IRA, although there is a fairly extensive system of old logging roads and skid trails that provide access throughout the area. The area receives low to moderate hiker, equestrian and mountain bike use. Dispersed camping is low to moderate and occurs primarily during hunting season. The primary recreation activities within the area are mountain biking, hunting and fishing. There are recreation special use permits issued for the area.

Fisheries: The IRA is located on the east side of the Upper Shavers Fork between First Fork to the north and Bald Knob to the south. The main stem of the Shavers Fork forms the boundary between the Upper Shavers Fork East and Upper Shavers Fork West IRAs. The Upper Shavers Fork watershed has a history of disturbance from logging, railroading and mining, and streams in the area continue to exhibit the effects. A number of studies are currently being conducted to determine limiting factors and restoration opportunities for the fishery resources in the Upper Shavers Fork. The studies include the Shavers Fork main stem adjacent to the IRA and Second Fork, which is the largest tributary in the IRA. Streams in the upper watershed, including the Shavers Fork main stem, that are susceptible to acid deposition are currently treated with limestone sand to mitigate the effects.

Fish communities in the main stem are diverse and dominated by native nongame species. Species of concern include Cheat minnow, a Regional Forester's sensitive species, and mountain red-belly dace that are listed by the WVDNR as S3. Sport fishing opportunities are provided by native brook trout and nonnative rainbow trout and brown trout in the main stem, and native brook trout in Second Fork.

Wildlife: Species within the area include whitetail deer, black bear, grouse, snowshoe hare, wild turkey, and a variety of birds and reptiles. Threatened and endangered species that may be found within or adjacent to the area include the Cheat Mountain salamander and the West Virginia northern flying squirrel. Currently there are no WVDNR managed wildlife openings within the IRA.

Water: This IRA contains the headwaters for 4 cold water streams. There are no major rivers or navigable waters within the area. No water storage needs or existing water-related special use permits are identified at this time. Streams in the area are acidic.

Range: The area has no livestock grazing permits or range allotments. There are no capable grazing lands identified within the area.

Timber: This IRA is currently managed under Management Prescription 6.1, which is managed primarily for wildlife species requiring more remote habitat. Commercial timber harvesting is permitted, although no acres have been harvested in the last decade. The IRA contains an estimated 142,646 hundred cubic feet (CCF) of merchantable timber. An estimated 8,218 acres (100 percent) of the IRA are considered tentatively suited timberlands and an estimated 5,535 acres (68%) are considered to be prime timberland.

Minerals: There are no active private or federal gas leases or coal operations within the IRA and there are no acres in Federal gas leases. All lands within the IRA are estimated to have a 25% chance of natural gas production at 1.56 million cubic feet per acre. All of the mineral rights (oil and gas only) within the area are privately owned. Based on available information, mineable coal is not present within the IRA. The potential conflict between mineral exploration/development and roadless area values is moderate because even though there is the potential for some natural gas discovery coincident with private gas ownership, nearby gas reserves were deemed to have insufficient quantities to be economically viable.

Cultural Resources: This IRA is located in an overall high probability cultural resource zone. There are no known historical or archaeological sites that have been identified within the area. None of the area has been surveyed.

Landownership and Special Uses: The Monongahela National Forest administers all lands within the IRA. There are no non-federal lands, permanently encumbered land titles, or cost-share agreements of record within the IRA. There are two recreation and no non-recreation special use permits issued for the IRA. Permit activities are horseback riding and hunting.

Disturbances: The Upper Shavers Fork East IRA is within Fire Regime V. This regime has a 200+ year frequency and high severity (greater than 75% of dominant overstory vegetation replacement). This area's fire regime is in Condition Class 1. This class is within the historical range of variability, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is low.

Botanical Characteristics: Three plant species within the IRA are Regional Forester's sensitive species: Artic bentgrass, long-stocked holly and lance-leaf grapefern. Although there are no inventoried locations of non-native invasive species within the IRA, it is likely that existing road corridors and disturbed areas have a variety of non-native invasive species

NEED

The Otter Creek and Dolly Sods Wildernesses are 25-35 air miles north and northeast of the IRA. The Laurel Fork Wildernesses are within 14-18 air miles north of the IRA, and the Cranberry Wilderness is about 17 air miles to the southwest. The area is 7 air miles west of Bartow, 17 air miles northeast of Marlinton, 1 mile north of the Cass Scenic Railroad State Park, and is within a 3-4 hour drive of Charleston, Pittsburgh and Washington D.C. As a designated wilderness, the area would serve the local communities of Bartow, Durbin, Marlinton, and Elkins, and population centers such as Morgantown, Charleston, Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C.

Biological: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221) and more specifically the Northern High Allegheny Mountain Section (M221Ba), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wildernesses.

Public Interest: There has been public interest in this area becoming wilderness. Environmental organizations, including the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Highlands Conservancy, and The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition, have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping. This IRA was not recommended for wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act or 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act or 1983 West Virginia Wilderness Act.

WILDERNESS EVALUATION SUMMARY

Capability Summary:

Apparent Naturalness	Low
Natural Integrity	Low
Opportunity for Solitude	Low to Moderate
Opportunities for Challenge and Adventure	Low to Moderate
Special Features	None

Determination of Availability or Unavailability: The IRA does not meet any of the criteria listed in FSH 1909.12.7.22a. Therefore, it is available for wilderness designation.

Values Forgone with Wilderness Designation: Mountain bike use would be eliminated; this use is currently low to moderate and established. If any trails were constructed in the area, maintenance, construction, and reconstruction would be limited to non-mechanical equipment.

The creation and maintenance of wildlife openings by mechanical means would not be permitted.

Wilderness designation would affect the ability to add lime to streams to help maintain or improve water quality and fish habitat. Liming stations and mechanized transport would be considered non-conforming uses unless they were allowed in the area-specific legislation.

Current fire control techniques would be altered significantly. Mechanized ground equipment is an important tool in this area, especially considering the private land to the west and south. Wilderness designation may also limit options for fire suppression on adjacent private lands.

The economic values associated with 8,218 acres of tentatively suited timberlands containing 142,646 CCF would be foregone. The values from future development of the Federal mineral estate, which might include natural gas, would likely be foregone. However, there could be values received from future development of the private mineral estate because 100% of the area has privately owned gas and oil mineral rights. These rights remain valid and could be exercised regardless of wilderness designation.

Biological and Social Need: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wildernesses. There has been public interest in this area becoming wilderness. Environmental organizations have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping.

ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

NOTE: Tables will be filled-out after the alternatives have been developed.

IRA Disposition by Alternative: The following table displays IRA disposition for each alternative in estimated acres rounded off to the nearest hundred. These values represent the potential, long-term outcomes of managing the IRA based solely upon its management prescriptions.

IRA Management Disposition	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Recommended Wilderness				
Maintain undeveloped character				
Potential low levels of development				
Available for full range of development				

Potential Future Development: Potential future development is represented by combinations of management prescriptions and existing conditions that are likely to become priority areas for development activities over the course of the next two or three decades. The development activities chosen for this estimation are timber harvest, oil/gas leases, and private mineral rights. Development potential is expressed in acres in the table below.

Potential Development	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Timber activities				
Oil/Gas Leases				
Private Mineral Rights				

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics: The following table displays the effects on wilderness characteristics for each alternative. The effects on wilderness characteristics are based on the estimation of potential future development.

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4

N = No change; slight change or less than 1 percent of the area potentially affected.

L = Light impact; 1-5 percent of the area potentially affected.

M = Moderate impact; 5-20 percent of the area potentially affected.

H = High impact; greater than 20 percent of the area potentially affected.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In this section, we will state if the preferred alternative does or does not recommend this IRA for wilderness. This recommendation will be published in the Draft Plan, November of 2004. If it is not recommended, this section will briefly describe the potential for development in this area.

Please Note:

This document, the Roadless Area Evaluation, is the first step of the review process in which each area is evaluated for its potential as wilderness. Identifying if an area should or should not be recommended is the second step of the process, which will be disclosed in the Draft Plan.

Upper Shavers Fork West

Inventoried Roadless Area

5,975 Acres

DESCRIPTION

Location, Vicinity, and Access: The Upper Shavers Fork West IRA is located on the Monongahela National Forest, Greenbrier Ranger District, Pocahontas and Randolph Counties, West Virginia. Except for the northern perimeter and a small section along the west-central perimeter, the IRA is surrounded by private land. The active Salamander and Durbin and Greenbrier Railroads make up the entire eastern boundary of the IRA, and the Snowshoe Mountain and Silver Creek Ski Areas are directly south of the area. Nearby communities include Durbin (6 air miles east), Huttonsville (16 air miles northwest), and the Snowshoe and Silver Creek developments (2-3 air miles south), West Virginia. The area is approximately 8 miles in length and .75 to 1.5 miles wide and is found primarily within portions of the Cass and Snyder Knob USGS quadrangle maps. Vehicle access is provided by Forest Road 227 from the north. Visitors can also access the area from the Scenic Railroad that travels north-south along the eastern perimeter of the IRA. There are no system trails or improved roads located within the Upper Shavers Fork West IRA. There is an extensive system of old logging roads and skid trails throughout the area that was created prior to Forest Service ownership in 1988.

Topography, Geology, and Vegetation: The Upper Shavers Fork East area ranges in elevation from 3,000 feet at along the Shavers Fork to over 4,000 feet on ridge tops within the area. Slopes are generally steep along the Shavers Fork, with more gradual slopes toward the main ridges. The geologic formations are part of the Pennsylvanian, Mississippian, and Devonian systems. Soils include the Dekalb and Calvin series. The vegetation consists of an overstory of northern hardwoods and red spruce, and an understory of rhododendron, small trees and shrubs.

Current Uses: This IRA is currently managed under Management Prescription 6.1, which emphasizes habitat for remote wildlife species and permits commercial timber harvesting. There are no known managed wildlife openings within the area. Although there has been no timber harvesting in the area over the past decade, the area was harvested heavily prior to Forest Service ownership in 1988. There are no designated trails located within the IRA, but an extensive undeveloped road system that was created prior to Federal ownership provides access throughout the area. Recreation use within and adjacent to the IRA is considered low to moderate. The primary recreation activities within the area are fishing, hunting, and mountain biking. Illegal ATV use is occurring throughout the area. The Durbin and Greenbrier Scenic Railroad operates along the eastern perimeter of the IRA.

Key Attractions: The Durbin and Greenbrier Scenic Railroad, which borders the area to the east, and the Snowshoe and Silver Creek Ski areas, just south of the IRA are key attractions. The Cass Scenic Railroad is nearby but does not border the IRA.

CAPABILITY

Natural Integrity and Appearance: Past timber harvesting and associated roads are still very evident within the Upper Shavers Fork West IRA. Although there has been no timber harvested in the area over the past 10 years, this area was heavily logged and roaded (low standard woods roads) prior to Federal ownership in 1988. Natural integrity and appearance is not evident throughout much of the IRA

Opportunities for Solitude and Challenging Primitive Recreation: The Upper Shavers Fork West IRA is 5,975 acres in size, provides about 3,500 acres of core solitude (58% of the area), and is located entirely on National Forest System lands. The Durbin and Greenbrier Scenic Railroad borders the area to the east and the Snowshoe and Silver Creek Ski Areas and associated development are just south of the area. Based on the

relatively small size of the area, combined with the railroad to the east and developments to the south, the opportunity for solitude is low to moderate. Previous logging and road construction still evident on the landscape significantly reduces the opportunity to experience primitive recreation throughout much of the area. Illegal ATV is occurring throughout the IRA.

Visitor use of the area is considered low to moderate most of the year and is limited primarily to hunters, anglers, and mountain bikers. Equestrian and hiker use is low. There are no system trails that access the area although numerous old woods roads do provide access. The likelihood of encountering other visitors within the area is low except during hunting and primary fishing seasons when the likelihood increases moderate. The opportunity to experience remoteness is moderate. There is the potential to hear noise from the Cass Scenic Railroad as it travels to Bald Knob, and the Durbin and Greenbrier Scenic Railroad Train as it travels along the eastern boundary of the area. These trains will drop off hikers and mountain bikers wishing to visit the area along the way.

Special Features: The IRA provides known or potential habitat for several TE&S species.

Manageability and Boundaries: The size and shape (8 miles long, .75-1.5 mile wide) of the Upper Shavers Fork West IRA, combined with ownership and current use patterns, make its preservation potential marginal. The eastern boundary (Durbin and Greenbrier Railroad) has a low potential for additional development. There is the potential for development at the abandoned town of Spruce, which serves as a train stop and is located on private land. The private lands along the western and southern boundaries of the IRA have a current high level of development, with potential to increase substantially over the next 10-20 years. There is a high potential for encroachment and non-conforming uses from adjacent private land.

AVAILABILITY

Recreation: There are no designated system trails within the IRA, although there is a fairly extensive system of old logging roads and skid trails that provide access throughout the area. The area receives low to moderate hiker, equestrian and mountain biker use. Dispersed camping is low to moderate and occurs primarily during hunting season. The primary recreation activities within the area are mountain biking, hunting and fishing. There is one recreation special use permit issued in the area.

Fisheries: The Upper Shavers Fork West IRA is located on the west side of the Upper Shavers Fork from just north of Beaver Creek and south to Spruce. Major tributaries in the IRA include Beaver Creek and Rocky Run. The Shavers Fork main stem forms the eastern boundary of the IRA. Fishery resources in the main stem are diverse and dominated by native non-game species. Species of concern include Cheat minnow, a Regional Forester's sensitive species, and mountain red-belly dace that are listed by the WVDNR as S3. The main stem is currently listed on the EPA 303d list of impaired waters due to acid rain. It is treated with limestone sand to mitigate the effects of acid deposition. Sport fishing opportunities are provided by native brook trout and nonnative rainbow trout and brown trout in the main stem, and native brook trout within the tributaries in the IRA. The Upper Shavers Fork and tributaries above Beaver Creek have been proposed for catch and release fishing regulations but no decision has been made

Wildlife: Species within the area include whitetail deer, black bear, grouse, snowshoe hare, wild turkey, and a variety of birds and reptiles. TE&S species that may be found within or adjacent to the area include the Cheat Mountain salamander and the West Virginia northern flying squirrel. Currently there are no WVDNR managed wildlife openings within the IRA.

Water: This IRA contains the headwaters for 7 cold water streams. There are no major rivers or navigable waters within the area. No water storage needs or existing water-related special use permits are identified at this time. Streams in the area are acidic.

Range: The area has no livestock grazing permits or range allotments. There are no capable grazing lands identified within the area.

Timber: This IRA is currently managed under Management Prescription 6.1, which emphasizes remote habitat for wildlife species. Commercial timber harvesting is permitted, although no acres have been harvested in the last decade. The IRA contains an estimated 122,733 hundred cubic feet (CCF) of merchantable timber. An estimated 5,915 acres (99 percent) of the IRA is considered tentatively suited timberlands and an estimated 3,824 acres (64%) are considered to be prime timberland.

Minerals: There are no active private or federal gas leases or coal operations within the IRA and there are no acres in Federal gas leases. All lands within the IRA are estimated to have a 25% chance of natural gas production at 1.56 million cubic feet per acre. All of the oil and gas mineral rights within the area are privately owned. Based on available information, mineable coal is not present within the IRA. The potential conflict between mineral exploration and development and roadless area values is moderate because even though there is the potential for some natural gas discovery coincident with private gas ownership, nearby gas reserves were deemed to have insufficient quantities to be economically viable.

Cultural Resources: This IRA is located in an overall high probability cultural resource zone. There are no known historical or archaeological sites that have been identified within the area. None of the area has been surveyed.

Landownership and Special Uses: The Monongahela National Forest administers all lands within the IRA. There are no non-Federal lands, permanently encumbered land titles, or cost-share agreements of record within the IRA. There is one special use permit (hunting) that has been issued for the area.

Disturbances: The Upper Shavers Fork West IRA is within Fire Regime V. This regime has a 200+ year frequency and high severity (greater than 75% of dominant overstory vegetation replacement). This area's fire regime is in Condition Class 1. This class is within its historical range of variability, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is low.

Botanical Characteristics: The long-stalked holly, a Regional Forester's sensitive species, is known to occur in the area. Although there are no inventoried locations of non-native invasive species within the IRA, it is likely that existing road corridors and disturbed areas have a variety of non-native invasive species.

NEED

Proximity to Designated Wildernesses and Population Centers: The Otter Creek and Dolly Sods Wildernesses are 25-35 air miles north and northeast of the IRA. The Laurel Fork Wildernesses are within 14-18 air miles north of the IRA, and the Cranberry Wilderness is about 15 air miles to the southwest. The area is 8 air miles west of Bartow, 17 air miles northeast of Marlinton, 1 mile northwest of the Cass Scenic Railroad State Park, and is within a 3-4 hour drive of Charleston, Pittsburgh and Washington D.C. As a designated wilderness, the area would serve the local communities of Bartow, Durbin, Marlinton, and Elkins, and population centers such as Morgantown, Charleston, Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C.

Biological: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221) and more specifically the Northern High Allegheny Mountain Section (M221Ba), which is represented regionally, nationally, and on the Forest in existing wildernesses.

Public Interest: There has been public interest in this area becoming wilderness. Environmental organizations, including the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Highlands Conservancy, and The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition, have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping. This IRA was not recommended for wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act or 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act or 1983 West Virginia Wilderness Act.

WILDERNESS EVALUATION SUMMARY

Capability Summary:

Apparent Naturalness	Low
Natural Integrity	Low
Opportunity for Solitude	Low to Moderate
Opportunities for Challenge and Adventure	Low to Moderate
Special Features	None

Determination of Availability or Unavailability: The IRA does not meet any of the criteria listed in FSH 1909.12.7.22a. Therefore, it is available for wilderness designation.

Values Forgone with Wilderness Designation: Mountain bike use would need to be eliminated; use is currently low to moderate and established. If any trails were constructed in the area, maintenance, construction, and reconstruction would be limited to non-mechanical equipment.

The creation of wildlife openings would not be permitted.

Wilderness designation would affect the ability to add lime to streams to help maintain or improve water quality and fish habitat. Liming stations and mechanized transport would be considered non-conforming uses unless they were allowed in the area-specific legislation.

Current fire control techniques would be altered significantly. Mechanized ground equipment is an important tool in this area, especially considering the private land to the west and south. Wilderness designation may also limit options for fire suppression on adjacent private lands.

The economic values associated with 5,975 acres of tentatively suited timberlands containing 122,733 CCF would be foregone. The values from future development of the Federal mineral estate, which might include natural gas, would likely be foregone. However, there could be values received from future development of the private mineral estate because 100% of the area has privately owned gas and oil mineral rights. These rights remain valid and could be exercised regardless of wilderness designation.

Biological and Social Need: The area is in the Central Appalachian Broadleaf-Coniferous Forest Meadow Province Ecological Unit (M221), which is represented on the Forest in existing wildernesses. There has been public interest in this area becoming wilderness. Environmental organizations have specifically suggested this IRA for wilderness recommendation in response to public scoping.

ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

NOTE: Tables will be filled-out after the alternatives have been developed.

IRA Disposition by Alternative: The following table displays IRA disposition for each alternative in estimated acres rounded off to the nearest hundred. These values represent the potential, long-term outcomes of managing the IRA based solely upon its management prescriptions.

IRA Management Disposition	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Recommended Wilderness				
Maintain undeveloped character				
Potential low levels of development				
Available for full range of development				

Potential Future Development: Potential future development is represented by combinations of management prescriptions and existing conditions that are likely to become priority areas for development activities over the course of the next two or three decades. The development activities chosen for this estimation are timber harvest, oil/gas leases, and private mineral rights. Development potential is expressed in acres in the table below.

Potential Development	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Timber activities				
Oil/Gas Leases				
Private Mineral Rights				

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics: The following table displays the effects on wilderness characteristics for each alternative. The effects on wilderness characteristics are based on the estimation of potential future development.

Effects on Wilderness Characteristics	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4

N = No change; slight change or less than 1 percent of the area potentially affected.

L = Light impact; 1-5 percent of the area potentially affected.

M = Moderate impact; 5-20 percent of the area potentially affected.

H = High impact; greater than 20 percent of the area potentially affected.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In this section, we will state if the preferred alternative does or does not recommend this IRA for wilderness. This recommendation will be published in the Draft Plan, November of 2004. If it is not recommended, this section will briefly describe the potential for development in this area.

Please Note:

This document, the Roadless Area Evaluation, is the first step of the review process in which each area is evaluated for its potential as wilderness. Identifying if an area should or should not be recommended is the second step of the process, which will be disclosed in the Draft Plan.