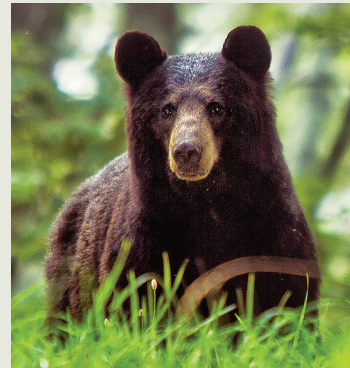
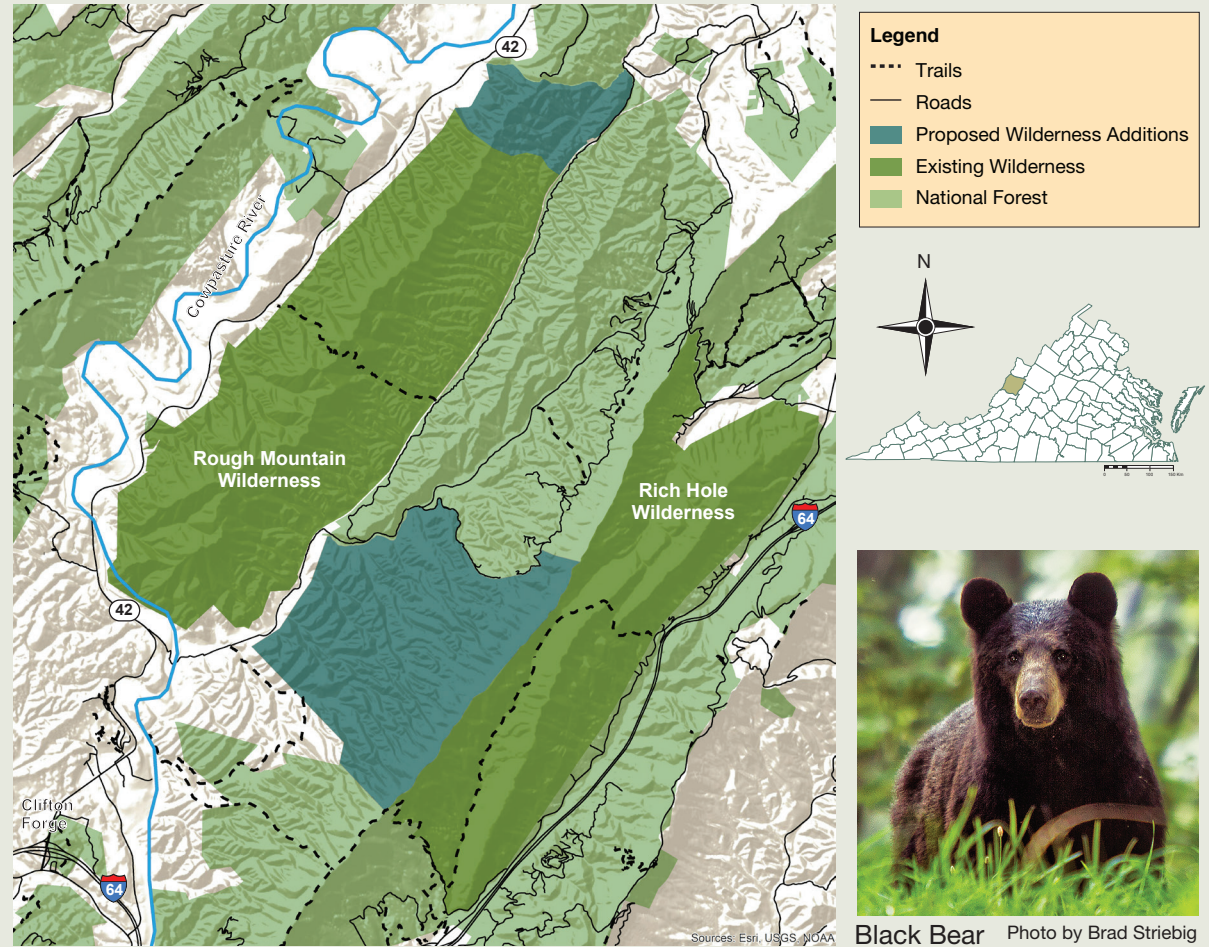


Rich Hole & Rough Mountain Wilderness Additions



Black Bear Photo by Brad Striebig

“Wilderness is a part of a forest mosaic, and provides a level of protection for interior forest that is difficult to achieve otherwise.... By protecting these cores and allowing active management outside of them, including timber harvesting, we believe that we are creating the best of both worlds— space for both young and old forest habitat in the same landscape protects the forest, wildlife, and forest user interests.”

— GWNF Stakeholder Collaborative

Cover photo of hikers in Rich Hole Wilderness with Catawba rhododendron by Lynn Cameron

The Virginia Wilderness Additions Act of 2019

This bill proposes to protect 5,600 acres of the George Washington National Forest (GWNF) in Bath County by expanding the existing Rich Hole and Rough Mountain Wilderness areas that were designated in 1988. Rich Hole Wilderness would increase by approximately 4,600 acres, while Rough Mountain Wilderness would increase approximately 1,000 acres. This would create a nearly continuous Wilderness area of over 21,000 acres, which would be one of the largest well-protected areas on the GWNF.

Supporters Include:

- The U.S. Forest Service recommended that these areas be designated as Wilderness in the 2014 GWNF Revised Forest Plan.
- The GWNF Stakeholder Collaborative, a diverse group representing a range of interests, including timber producers, game managers, and hunting, fishing, conservation, and recreation groups, supports this proposal.



Pioneering Wilderness Protection in Virginia since 1969

Virginia Wilderness Committee
 P.O. Box 1235, Lexington, VA 24450
 540.464.1661
www.vawilderness.org



Rich Hole & Rough Mountain Wilderness Additions

George Washington National Forest





Rich Hole and Rough Mountain

Pew Charitable Trusts/Lee Gillenwater

Why Wilderness?

Virginia is blessed with a rich heritage of wild lands, and the GWNF harbors some of the most unspoiled of these special places. Here forest users can find clear mountain streams, century-old trees, songbirds, breathtaking views, and places to find solitude and spiritual renewal.

Wilderness designation is the strongest, most lasting protection for these areas. Permanently protecting these steep mountains and headwater streams will:

- help maintain exceptional water quality in the Cowpasture River, one of Virginia's cleanest and healthiest rivers;
- preserve critical habitat for wildlife, including black bear, peregrine falcons, bald and golden eagles, migratory songbirds, rare Appalachian salamanders, and native brook trout;
- protect unique Central Appalachian Shale Barren plant communities and old growth cove hardwoods;
- support the local tourism economy by attracting outdoor enthusiasts and visitors who enjoy scenic beauty.

Wilderness designation offers these benefits at no cost to taxpayers.

“The crystal clear Cowpasture River flows through some of western Virginia’s most scenic, rural landscapes. Expanding Rich Hole and Rough Mountain Wilderness areas will help ensure the Cowpasture remains clean and healthy into the future for all who enjoy it.”

— Richard Brooks, President,
Cowpasture River Preservation Association



Photo by Steven David Johnson

Kate’s Mountain Clover



Photo by Brad Striebig

Flyfishing in Cowpasture River

What Activities are Allowed in Wilderness?

Many forms of non-mechanized recreation are enjoyed in Wilderness, including:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| ■ hunting | ■ fishing |
| ■ hiking | ■ camping |
| ■ horseback riding | ■ paddling |
| ■ birdwatching | ■ finding solitude |

To preserve the wild character of these special areas, timber harvest, road construction, and other development are not allowed in Wilderness. The use of motorized equipment, motor vehicles, or other mechanical transport is normally not allowed, except in certain circumstances like control of fire, insects, and diseases, and search and rescue operations.

Current uses and access to the proposed Wilderness areas will not change.

Rich Hole and Rough Mountain Wilderness Areas



Located in the rugged Allegheny Mountains in western Virginia, the existing Rich Hole Wilderness (6,450 acres) and Rough Mountain Wilderness (9,300 acres) span Rough Mountain, Mill Mountain, and Brushy Mountain. Though nearly contiguous, Rich Hole and Rough Mountain Wilderness areas are quite different.

Rough Mountain, with its monolithic peak, Griffith Knob, rises sharply from the banks of the Cowpasture River to dominate the surrounding landscape. The dry south-facing slopes of Rough Mountain are home to a 3,000-acre Central Appalachian Shale Barren. This globally uncommon natural community hosts several rare and endangered plants.

To the east, the lush Rich Hole Wilderness protects the watershed for the rhododendron-lined North Branch of Simpson Creek, a native trout stream. In the upper watershed is a 1,337-acre tract of virgin cove hardwood forest that was designated in 1974 as the Rich Hole National Natural Landmark (NNL), one of only 10 NNLs in Virginia. Rich Hole was named for the deep, rich soils in the natural bowls of the upper watershed. Rich Hole Trail follows the stream up to the cove hardwoods and offers outstanding scenic views from rock outcrops high on Brushy Mountain.



Both Wilderness areas support a dense population of black bear and provide outstanding opportunities for solitude.

Canada Warbler

Photo by Dave Wendelken

Marbled Salamander Photo by Steven David Johnson