

Oak Knob

Oak Knob is a popular area for many types of outdoor recreation. It is adjacent to the Hone Quarry Recreation Area which provides good access. Over 12.5 miles of trails are found in the roadless area. There are an additional 11.5 miles of trails adjacent to it.

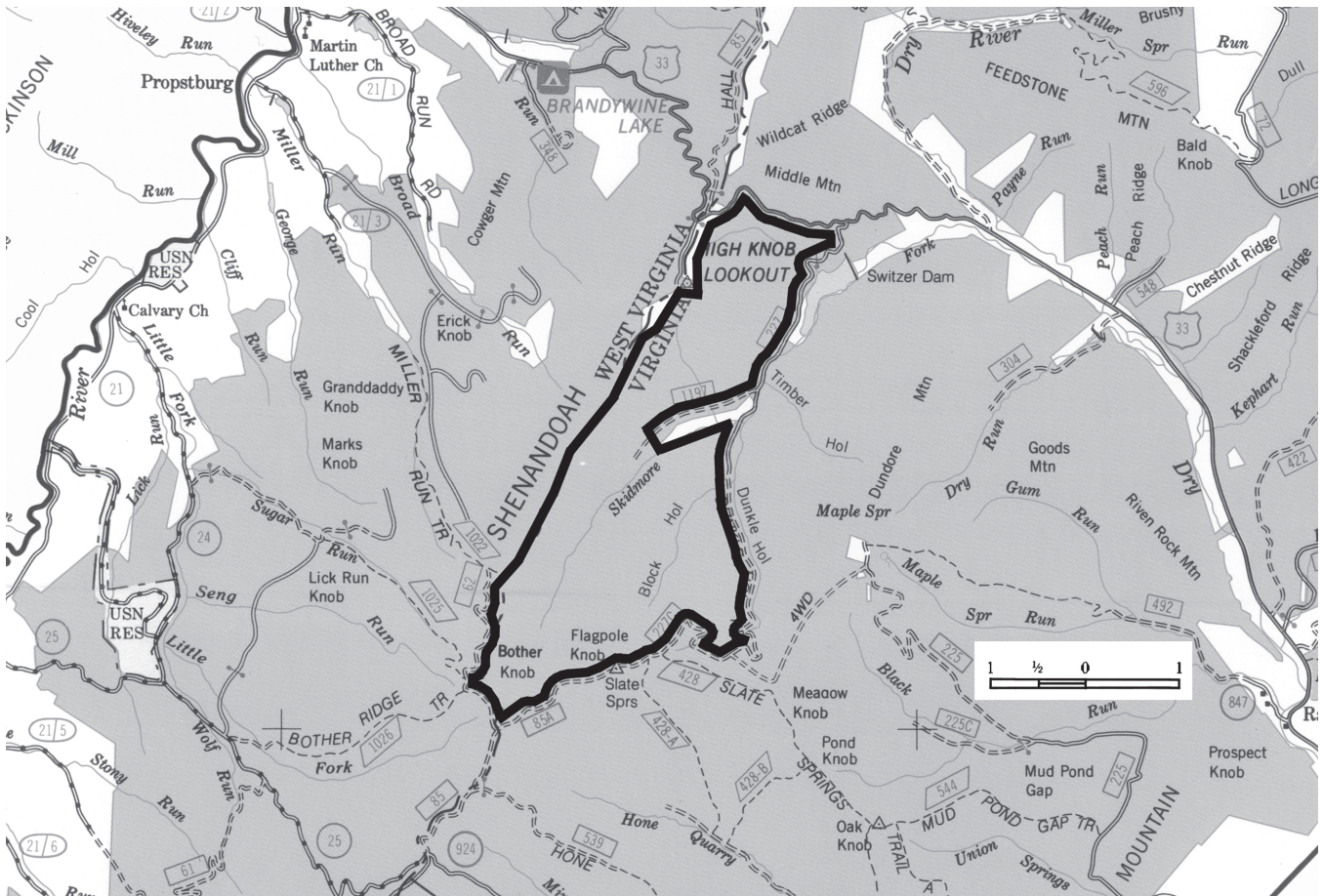
Recreational activities include hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, rock climbing, and backpacking. Hunting, for deer, bear, and turkey, is another major recreational draw. Several streams have sufficient water year round to support a native trout fishery.

There are numerous high knobs including Pond Knob, Oak Knob, Meadow Knob, and Flagpole Knob, with an elevation of 4302 feet. These high ridges are drained by Hone Quarry Run, Rocky Run, and Union Springs Run.

The area is forested with mixed eastern hardwoods. Significant stands of cove hardwoods occur in the deep moist cool drainages. The area is inhabited by the Cow Knob Salamander.

The area may contain 1952 acres of possible old growth forest.

Approximate Size: 10,866 acres
Location: Rockingham County, Virginia in the North River District
Topos: Briery Branch, Reddish Knob



Skidmore Fork

Located just south of US Route 33 on the eastern flank of Shenandoah Mountain in Rockingham County, the 5700 acre Skidmore Fork is home to ten rare, threatened, or endangered species, with five being given the “extremely rare” designation by the state. The area contains a significant 1200 acre tract of old growth which the Natural Heritage program has described as “an exemplary natural community.” A 3691 acre forest plan Special Biological Area is another gem of this special place.

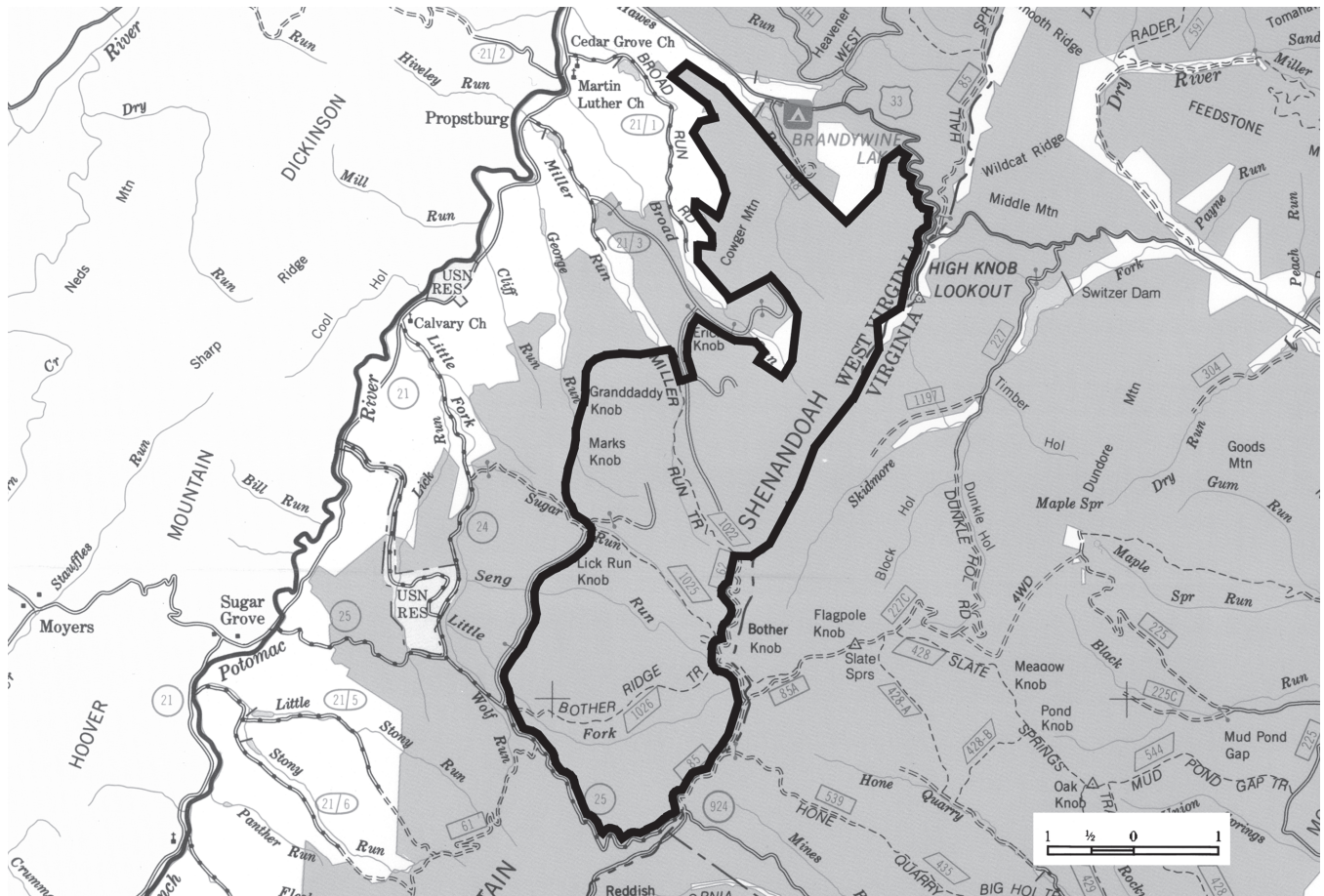
Ranging from flat river bottoms to steep mountainsides, this area is bounded by ridges that exceed 4000 feet on Bother Knob, High Knob, and Flagpole Knob. Challenging primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities can be found.

Skidmore Fork, which flows into Switzer Lake, serves as the principle water source for the City of Harrisonburg and needs protection as a critical watershed.

Approximate Size: 5703 acres

Location: Rockingham County, Virginia in the North River District

Topos: Brandywine



Dry River

This area occupies the steep western slopes of Shenandoah Mountain in West Virginia adjacent to the state line. It is contiguous with the 5703 acre Skidmore Roadless Area in Rockingham County, Virginia.

Elevations range from 2000 feet on Sugar Run at the western edge to 4300 feet at Bother Knob on the southeast boundary of the area. The steep slopes are dissected by numerous small streams that flow into the Potomac River basin.

The roadless area is criss-crossed with a significant trail network. With a total of almost eighteen miles, the area is a popular recreation

destination. Most trails climb the steep ridge to the summit of Shenandoah Mountain. The Shenandoah Mountain Trail on the crest of the ridge serves to connect these side trails.

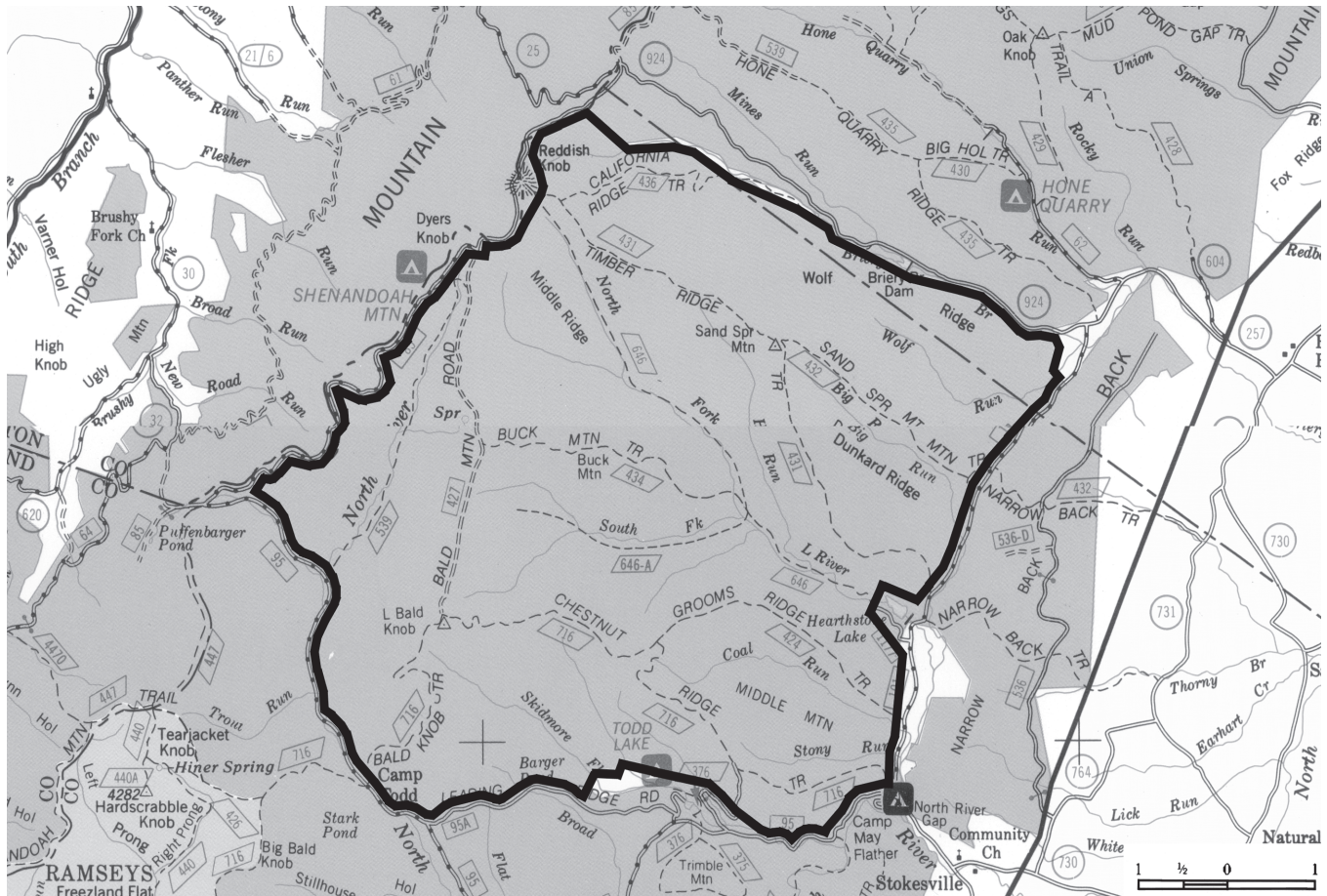
In addition to the trail network, the Brandywine Lake Recreation Area is located near the northwest corner of the roadless area.

Dry River contains a 3333 acre Special Biological Area and may support 5860 acres of possible old growth forest. A rare amphibian species occurs here, the Cow Knob Salamander. Black Bears also find remote habitat here.

Approximate Size: 12,939 acres

Location: Pendleton County, West Virginia in the North River District

Topos: Brandywine, Reddish Knob



Little River

The Little River Roadless Area is the largest “inventoried” roadless area in Virginia. Little River served as a breathtaking backdrop in full autumn glory as President Clinton announced his Roadless Area Initiative from the top of Reddish Knob in October, 1999.

Elevations range from 4440 feet near the summit of Reddish Knob to roughly 1600 feet near Little River. The North and South Forks gather together in the interior of the drainage to form Little River. Other streams of significance include the upper drainage of North River as well as Coal Run and Stony Run, both tributaries of Little River.

An eastern deciduous forest covers the entire

area. Timber Ridge has deep soils that support stands of very large Red Oaks. There are pine stands on the southwest facing slopes.

Wildflowers are abundant. They include Wood Lily, Painted Trillium, and Yellow Fringed Orchid.

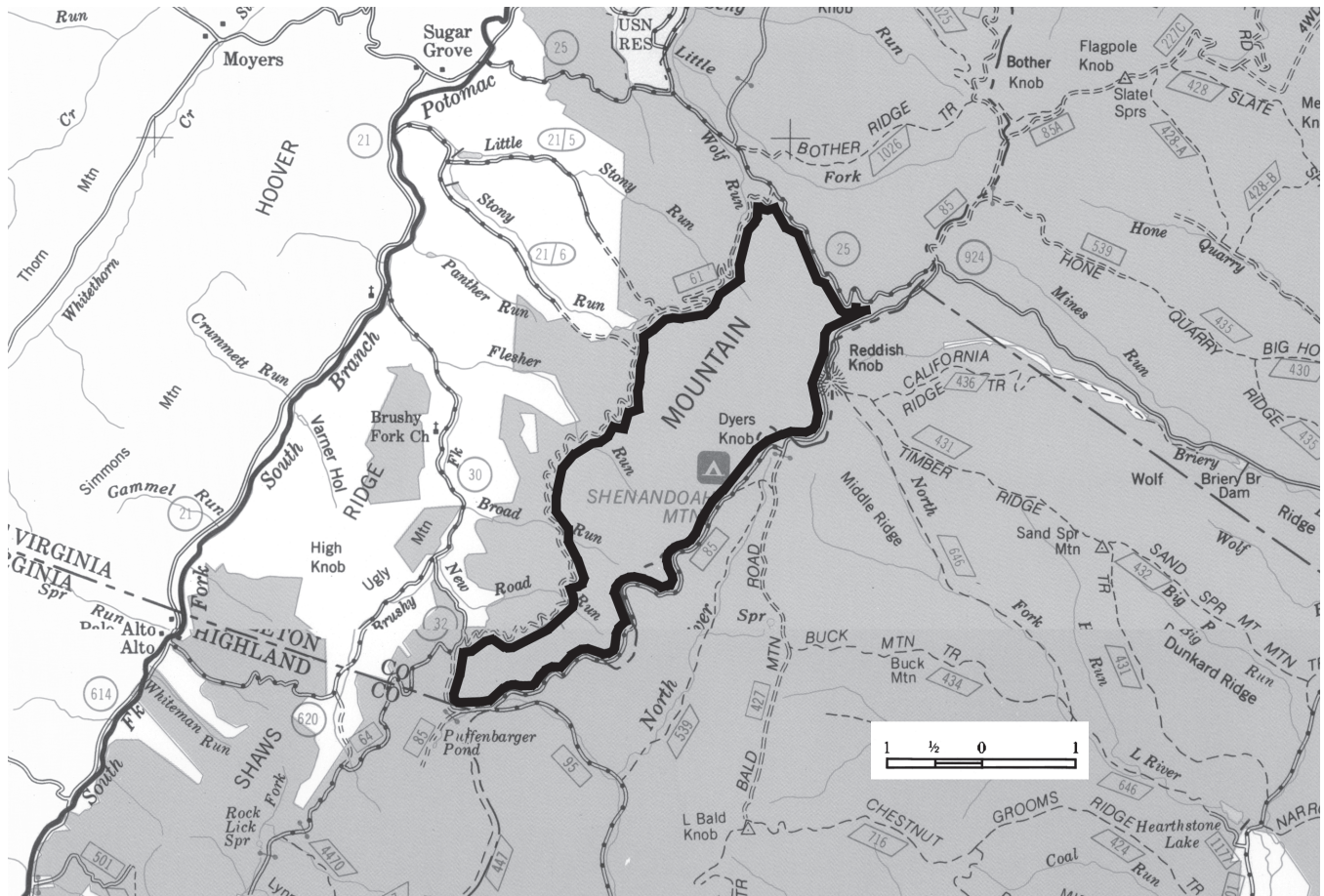
The remoteness of Little River encourages and supports a healthy Black Bear population. The area also provides refuge for a significant number of threatened species. There is an 11,259 acre Special Biological Area as well as 5857 acres of possible old growth.

An extensive trail network, including the Wild Oak National Recreation Trail, provides opportunities for many types of recreational activities.

Approximate Size: 29,342 acres

Location: Augusta and Rockingham Counties, Virginia in the North River District

Topos: Palo Alto, Stokesville, Reddish Knob, West Augusta



Broad Run

Broad Run is located on Shenandoah Mountain west of Reddish Knob. Elevations range from 2300 feet on the west side to over 4100 feet on the crest of Shenandoah Mountain.

Access is provided by FDR 85 on the upper side and FDR 61 below on the west. The area's topography includes the summit of Dyers Knob as well as Flesher and Broad Runs.

Dyers Knob provides habitat for such rare species as the Cow Knob Salamander, Shenandoah Mountain Millipede, Virginia Least Trillium, Red Crossbill, White Alumroot, and American Harebell.

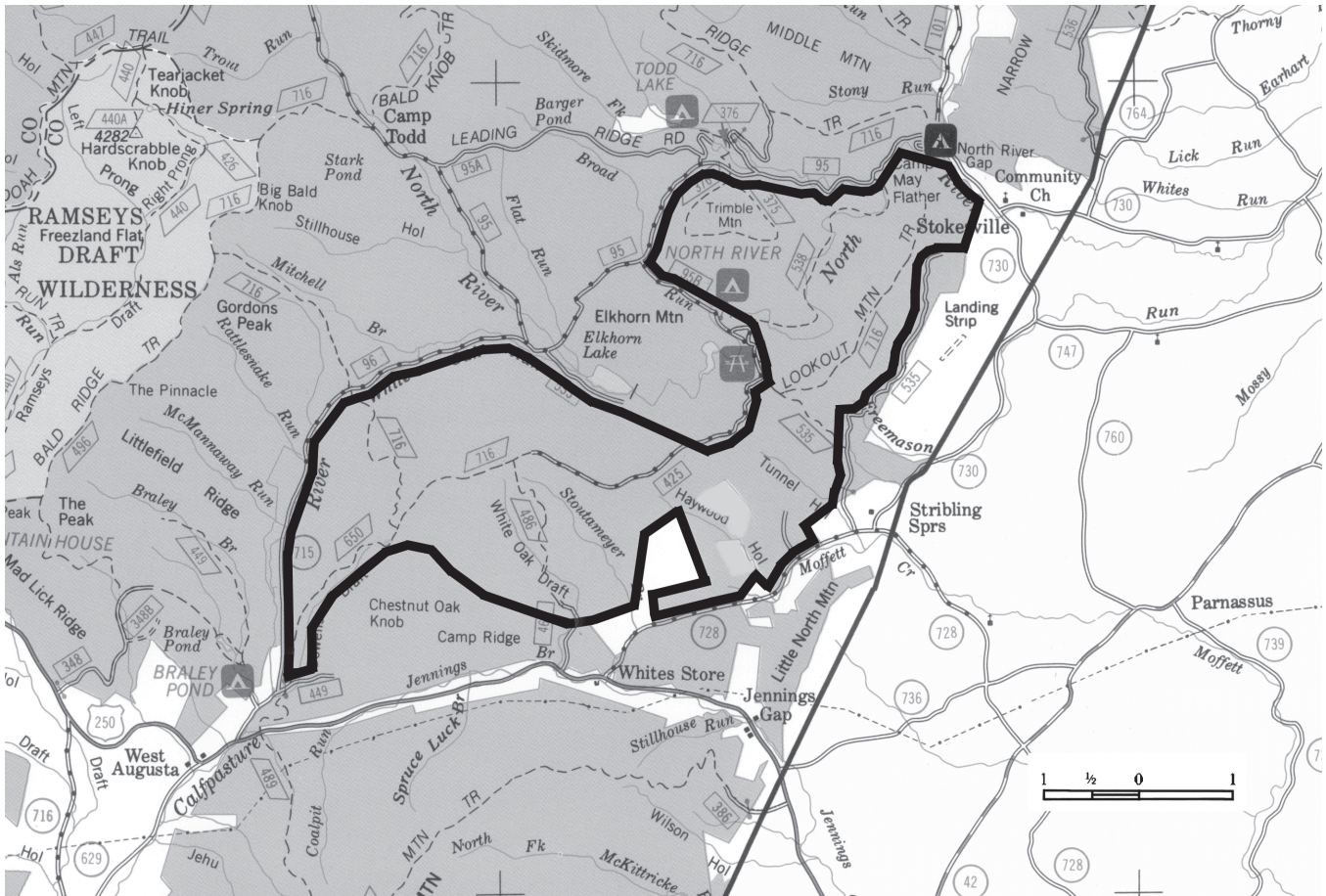
The area includes a 2366 acre forest plan Special Biological Area known as the Shenandoah Crest Special Biological Area. Broad Run also has significant tracts of possible old growth, almost 2040 acres.

The extremely steep slopes and lack of maintained trails provide opportunity for a remote and primitive backcountry experience. The only trail in Broad Run is the Little Stony Trail. This trail parallels Little Stony Run from its meek beginnings near the crest of Shenandoah Mountain to West Virginia County Road 21/6.

Approximate Size: 5047 acres

Location: Augusta County, Virginia and Pendleton County, West Virginia in the North River District

Topos: Palo Alto, Reddish Knob



Hankey Mountain

Hankey Mountain lies just south of the Elkhorn Lake and North River Recreational Areas. This popular area is easily accessible from US 250.

There are several high ridges in this beautiful woodland. They include Hankey Mountain, Chestnut Oak Knob, Trimble Mountain, and Camp Knob. These ridges provide headwater streams for both the Shenandoah and James Rivers

The Coal Skink, a tiny lizard of the forest floor that is considered “very rare and imperiled” in Virginia, is known to occur here, and 1432 acres of possible old growth oak forest are scattered on upper slopes.

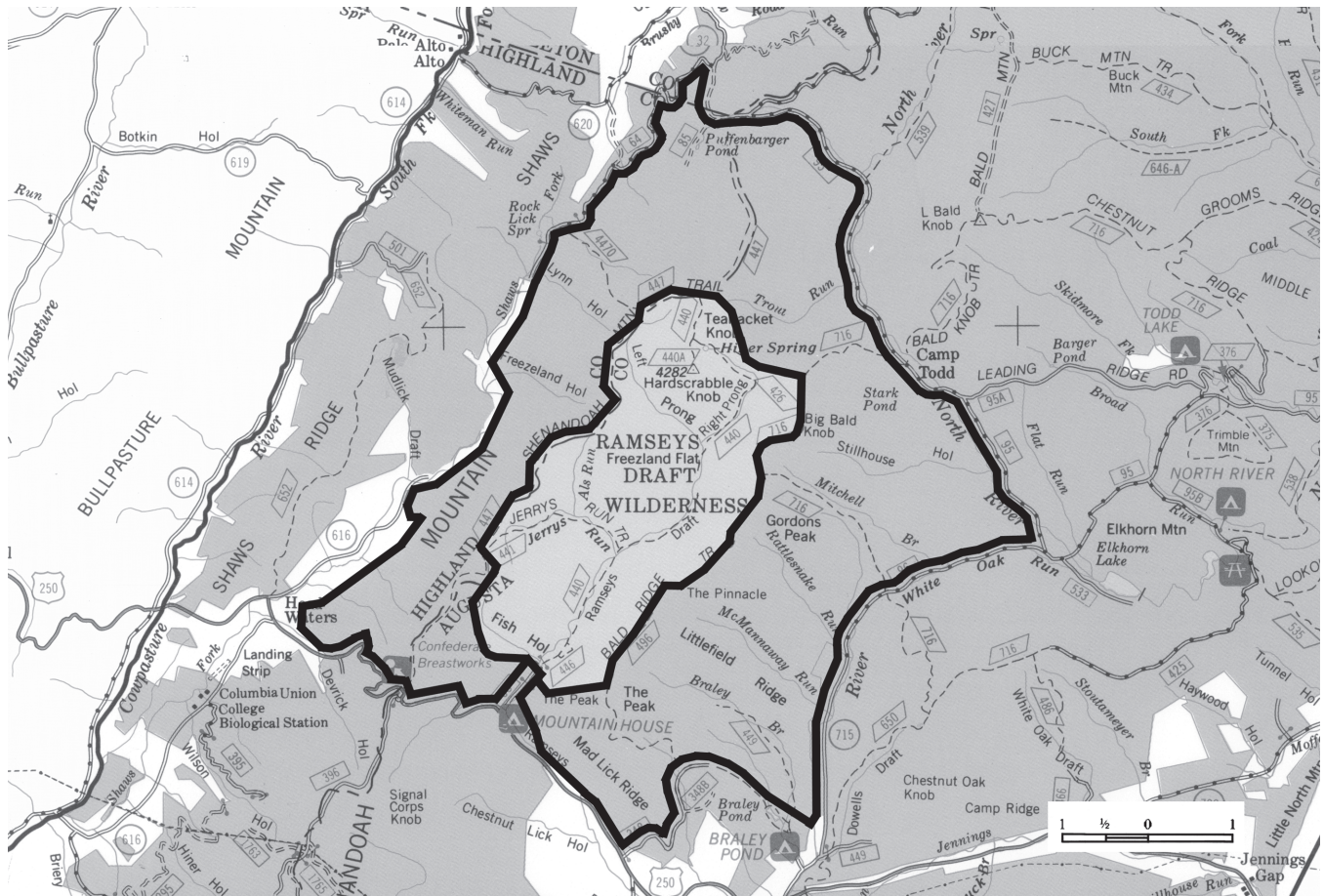
Much of this area is considered suitable for timber. Old growth was clearcut here in the late 1990s, ostensibly to manage habitat for Ruffed Grouse.

The Wild Oak National Recreation Trail passes through the northern part of the area on Hankey Mountain. This trail connects Ramsey's Draft Wilderness, Little River Roadless Area, and the North River Campground. The Dowells Draft trail connects the Wild Oak Trail to FDR 449 at the southside of Chestnut Oak Knob. The Dowells Draft and Lookout Mtn trails are popular with cyclists.

Approximate Size: 11,281 acres

Location: Augusta County, Virginia in the North River District

Topos: West Augusta, Stokesville



Bald Ridge/Lynn Hollow

Bald Ridge and Lynn Hollow are two special places which should be given strong consideration for additional protection. Protection should include a combination of designations to match the potential usage of this beautiful landscape.

The elevation range of this area stretches from approximately 2200 feet to 4200 feet on Hardscrabble Knob. The topography is steep with short, choppy drainages throughout the lower elevations. Slopes vary in steepness, some with grades exceeding eighty percent.

Dividing Ridge forms the boundary between two major watersheds. North of the ridge are the head-

waters of the Potomac River Basin. South of the ridge are the headwaters of the James River Basin.

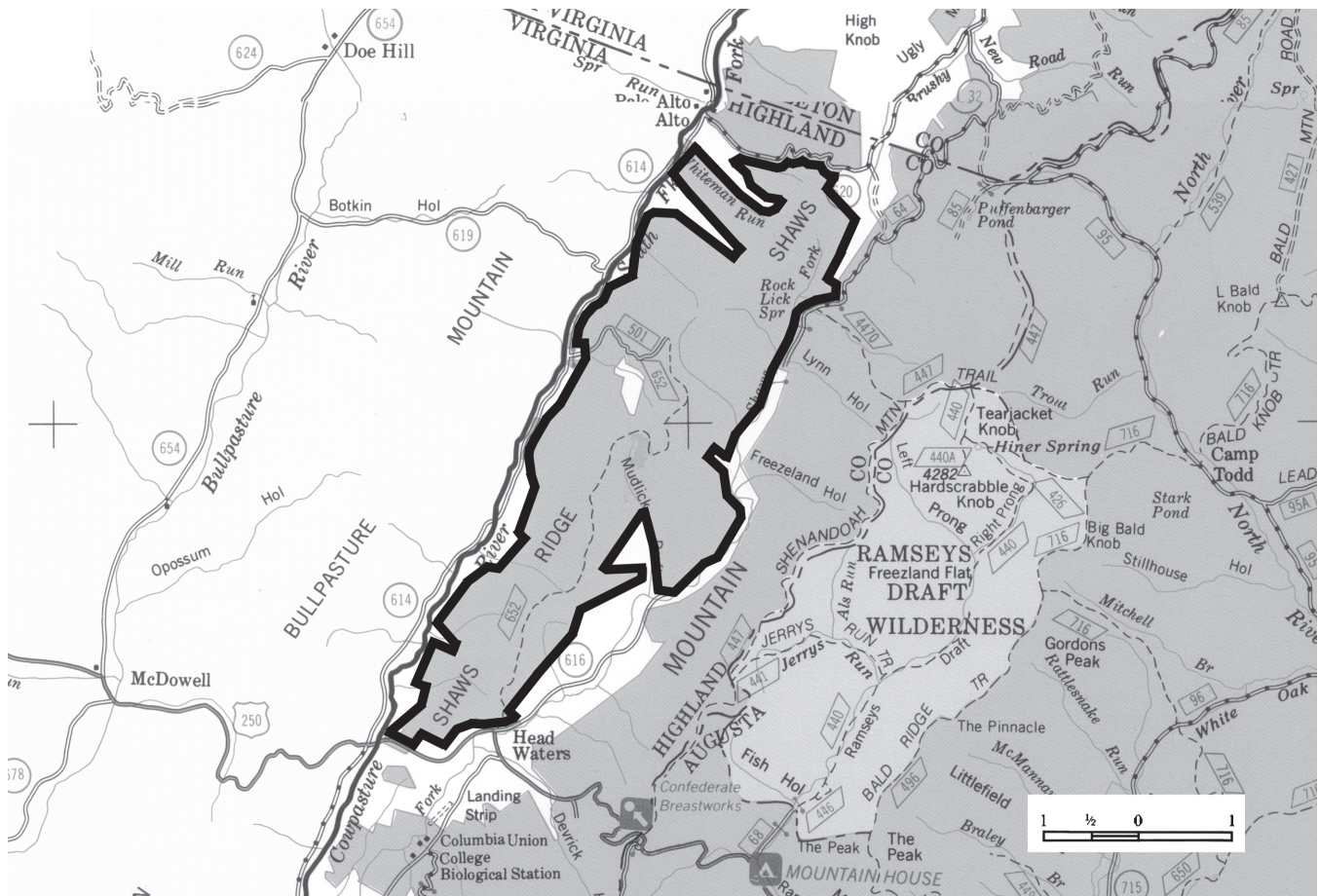
The most notable feature in the Ramsey's Draft Wilderness are the large trees. The steep slopes, combined with the vegetation make the area very picturesque. This forest also provides excellent Black Bear habitat due to lack of human disturbance.

The Virginia Natural Heritage Division has recommended Big Bald Knob as a Special Interest Area and has identified four species of concern, including Paper Birch and the Cow Knob Salamander. There is also a 2256 acre Special Biological Area as well as 6211 acres of possible old growth.

Approximate Size: 17,933 acres

Location: Augusta and Highland Counties, Virginia in the North River District

Topos: West Augusta, Palo Alto, McDowell



Shaws Ridge

Shaws Ridge lies to the west of Shenandoah Mountain, immediately west of the Bald Ridge/Lynn Hollow Mountain Treasure. Streams on Shaws Ridge are headwaters for both the James and Potomac River basins.

Headwaters Shale Barren, a George Washington forest plan-designated Special Biological Area, is at the southeast end of this Mountain Treasure. The rare fishes Potomac Sculpin and Roughhead Shiner are known to occur downstream.

The Shaws Ridge Trail runs 6.3 miles along the ridgeline from FDR 501, dropping down to the Forest boundary along County Route 616 at the town of Headwaters.

Access to the interior of the area is provided on the west side by FDR 501 and on the northeast by FDR 64. Shaws Ridge provides beautiful scenery for travelers on US 250.

Shaws Ridge may contain 2619 acres of potential old growth.

Approximate Size: 7263 acres

Location: Highland County, Virginia in the North River District

Topos: Palo Alto, West Augusta, McDowell

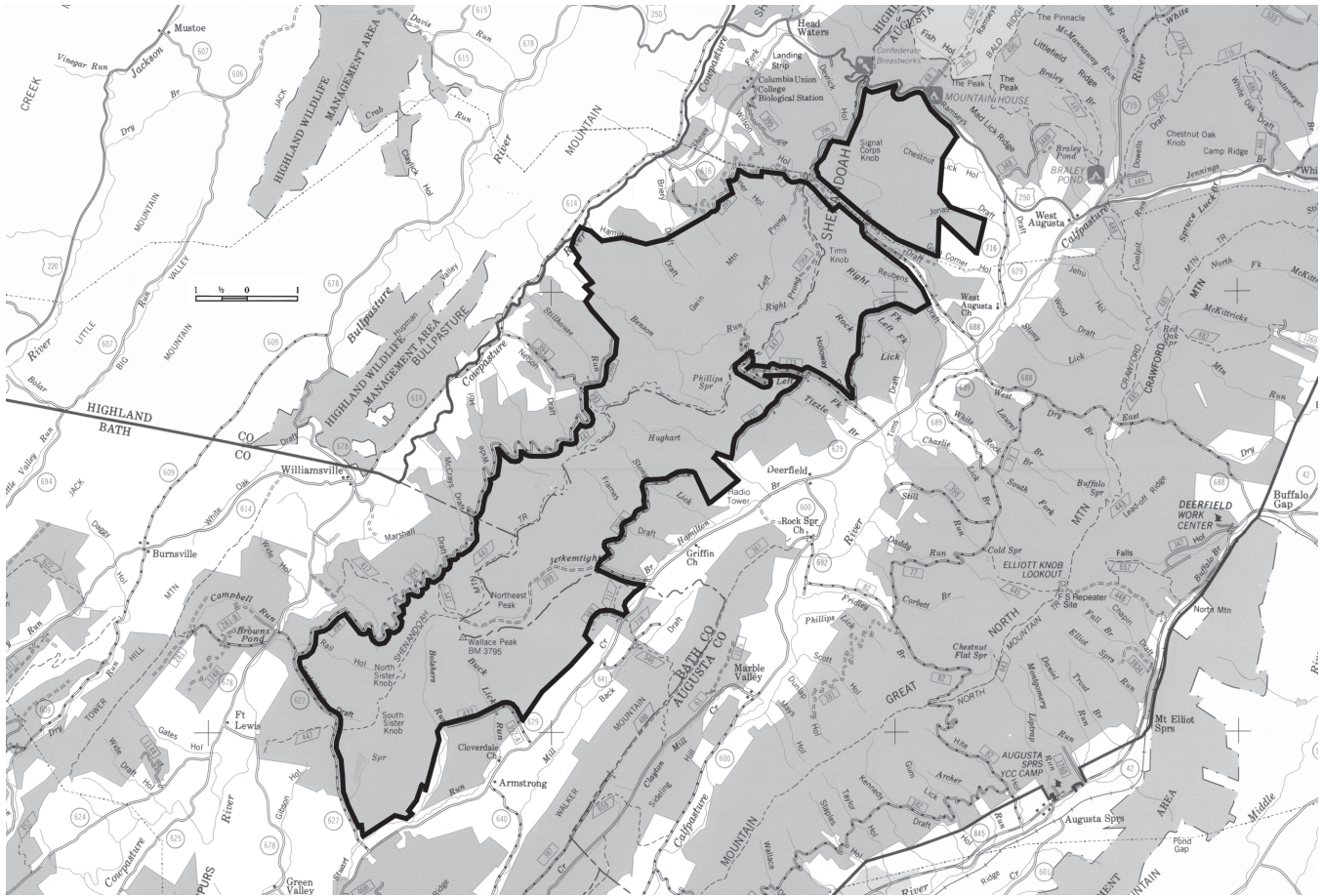


Riding on Crawford Mountain

Photo by Chris Scott

When I ride my mountain bike on the singletrack through the woods and mountains of the George Washington National Forest, I enjoy a sort of moving meditation where simply being, not doing, becomes the focus and a path toward awareness and compassion. Whether I am on my own or sharing the experience with others does not matter. My surroundings remind me of the connection of all beings through earth, air, and water.

Sue George resides in Harrisonburg, Virginia
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Owner, Shenandoah Yoga
Mountain Bike Editor, Cyclingnews.com
Member, International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA)
Founding member Charlottesville Area Mountain Bike Club



Southern Shenandoah Mountain Cluster

Signal Corps Knob

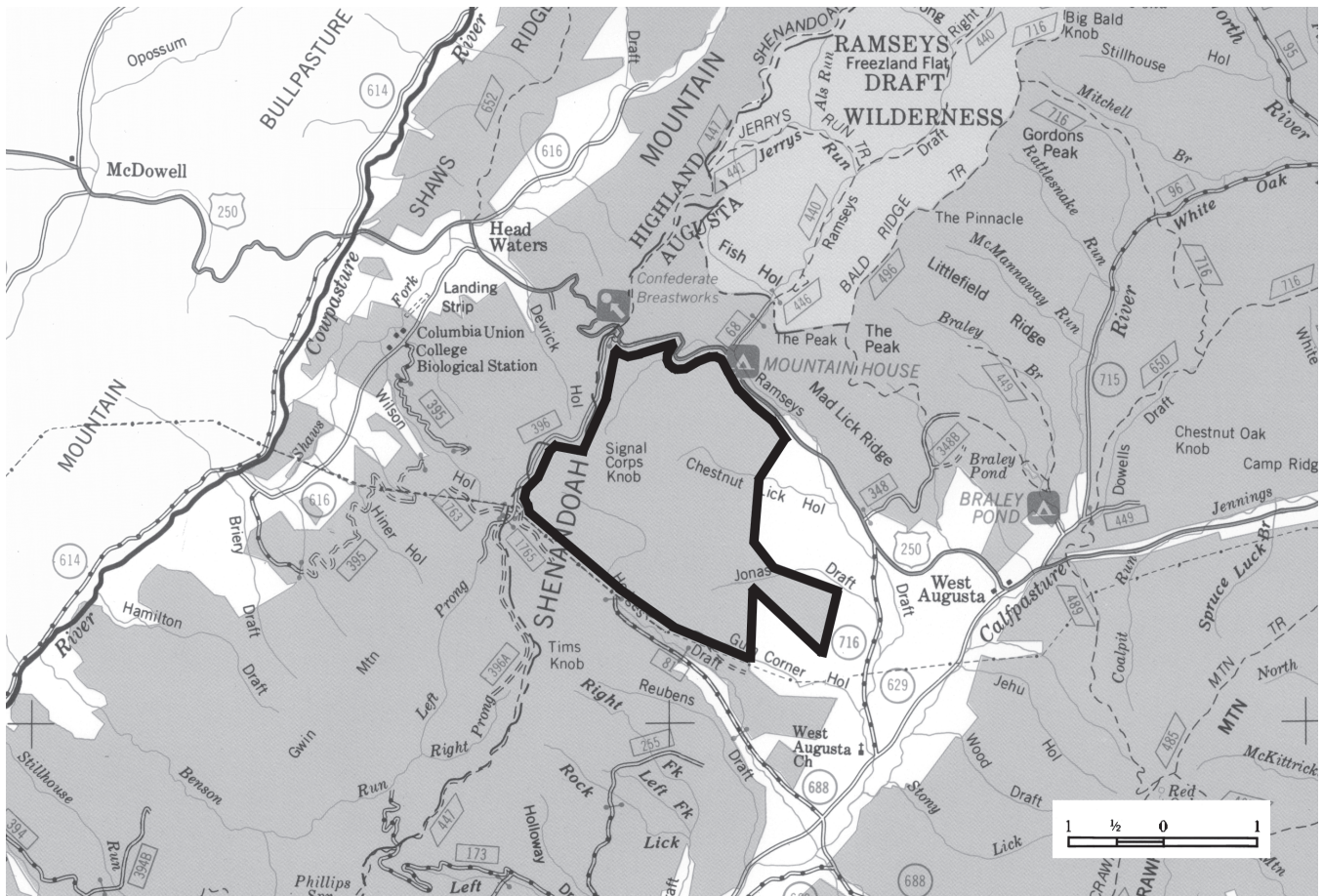
The Southern Shenandoah Mountain Cluster on the North River Ranger District contains only two areas, but they total around 35,000 acres. In fact, the contiguous inventoried Jerkemtight roadless area and Benson Run uninventoried area together constitute a wildland of almost 32,000 acres. This combined area is the largest Treasure in Virginia and is one of the largest roadless tracts found on the eastern National Forests.

This section of forest constitutes the southern end of the sixty-mile long Shenandoah Mountain, and lies

Jerkemtight/Benson Run

on both eastern and western slopes of the mountain. The Southern Shenandoah Mountain Cluster drains into the Calfpasture and Cowpasture Rivers, tributaries of the James. Here can be found wild trout streams, equestrian trails, and Civil War sites.

The Shenandoah Mountain Trail follows the crest of Shenandoah Mountain and passes through the entire area. Although backcountry and remote habitat are wonderfully represented here, there are no designated Wilderness or National Scenic Areas in this section of Forest.



Signal Corps Knob

Signal Corps Knob is an outlier located on the eastern flank of Shenandoah Mountain. The Knob itself dominates the landscape of this area, with an elevation of over 3900 feet.

The significant geological features include Signal Corps Knob itself and the many small intermittent and perennial streams including the upper reaches of Hodges Draft, Stamping Ground Hollow, Georgia Camp Hollow, and Leslie Lick Hollow.

The Forest Service considers much of the area to be suitable for timber harvesting.

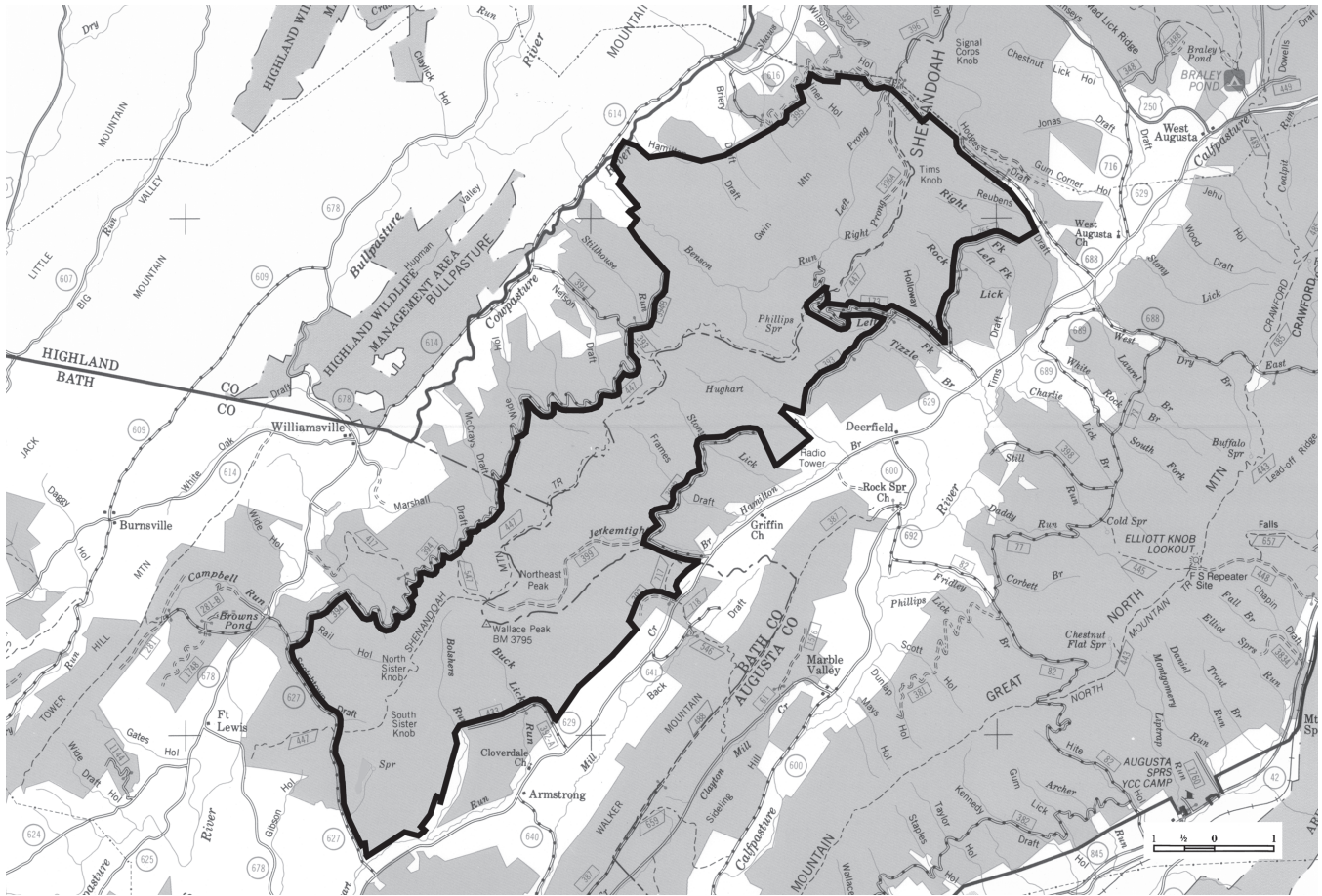
The Georgia Camp Trail is the only established trail in the Signal Corps Knob area. This trail climbs from US 250 to the crest of Shenandoah Mountain and connects to the Shenandoah Mountain Trail.

This area may contain 450 acres of possible old growth.

Approximate Size: 4044 acres

Location: Augusta County, Virginia in the North River District

Topos: McDowell, West Augusta



Jerkemtight/Benson Run

This Mountain Treasure expands the current Jerkemtight Roadless Area to include contiguous lands on the eastern slope of Shenandoah Mountain southeast of Wallace Peak and the uninventoried lands around Benson Run. This expansion includes relatively low elevation lands (2000-2500 feet in altitude) with moderate slopes.

Elevations range from 1700 feet in Rail Hollow to 3800 feet on the summit of Northeast Peak. Other notable names in this area include The Bump, South Sister Knob, and Wallace Peak

The watersheds are very steep V-shaped drainages with an intermittent water flow. They include Bolshers Run, Hughart Run, and Benson Run.

The Jerkemtight Roadless Area is a favorite destination for outdoor recreational enthusiasts. The most important trail is the Shenandoah Mountain Trail. Twenty-two miles of the mountain's crest are within the boundaries of Jerkemtight and Benson Run.

The shale barrens near South Sister Knob have been designated as a Special Management Area. This area protects rare plants associated with the barrens. The Roughhead Shiner and endangered Indiana Bat are also known to occur nearby.

There is a forest plan-designated 1280 acre Special Biological Area, and Jerkemtight/Benson Run may contain 6500 acres of possible old growth.

Approximate Size: 31,988 acres

Location: Augusta, Highland, and Bath Counties, Virginia in the North River District

Topos: Deerfield, Williamsville, McDowell