

FACT SHEET

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Timber & Timber Harvesting in West Virginia

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Wilderness Areas and Timber

The National Wilderness Preservation System was created by the U. S. Congress in 1964 under the *Wilderness Act*. In addition, the *Eastern Wilderness Act* of 1975 further defined and guided designation and management of wilderness areas. West Virginia's wilderness areas are managed under the concept of "leaving nature alone to allow it to return to natural conditions." West Virginia's designated "wilderness areas" in reality contain little virgin or old growth timber. Most areas have a history of land use including timber cutting and homesteading.

Cranberry Wilderness Area was owned by the Cherry River boom and Lumber Company and completely logged by 1930. Dolly Sods was logged, homesteaded, and burned by the time parts of it were sold to the U. S. government in 1916. In 1943 it was used a practice artillery range by the military. Laurel Fork Wilderness was owned by the Laurel River Lumber Company and sold to the U. S. government in 1921 shortly after it finished logging the timber. The Otter Creek Wilderness area was owned and logged by the Otter Creek boom and Lumber Company until 1914. Some second growth timber was logged from 1968 to 1972.

West Virginia contains 78,131 acres of land designated as "Wilderness" in the 909,000 acre Monongahela National Forest. The timber resources are not managed or harvested from these areas.

An additional 102,864 acres of National Forest are in other scenic, recreation, and botanical Special areas where timber is not normally managed for production. Thus, 180,995 acres or 20 percent of West Virginia's Monongahela National Forest is generally off-limits to timber harvesting.

The U. S. National Park Service manages three areas along the New River gorge and its tributaries: the Gauley River National Recreation Area, New River Gorge National river, and Bluestone National Scenic river. These 93 miles of river and gorge areas are generally off-limits to commercial timber management and harvesting.

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service administers the Ohio River National Wildlife Refuge containing 3,500 acres along 363 river miles and the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge consisting of 3,300 acres. None of these acres will typically be managed for or produce timber for harvest.

Approximately 200,000 acres of West Virginia's productive forests have been removed from commercial timber production through various "set asides." These designated areas can serve the public in providing opportunities to experience and study natural areas that receive minimal impact from man. It should also be pointed out that in West Virginia, these areas generally do not contain virgin or old growth timber. The present wilderness designated lands had their timber harvested and were regenerated naturally in almost all cases

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