

# Virginia Forest Watch

## News from the Woods

October 2007

For more news, see our updated website, [www.virginiaforestwatch.org](http://www.virginiaforestwatch.org)

### PUBLIC FORESTS

#### Wilderness and National Scenic Areas Legislation

The Virginia Ridge and Valley Act (H.R. 1101) has officially entered the halls of Congress and is now making its way through various committees. Once it has passed, the Act will create seven new Wilderness Areas, two new National Scenic Areas, and expand six existing Wilderness Areas in southwest Virginia. The bill passed the full House Natural Resources Committee on a voice vote with only one amendment which was supported by Virginia Forest Watch. A hearing was held before the full House Agriculture Committee. Discussion continues between the House Natural Resources Committee and the House Agriculture Committee to iron out some minor issues. We hope to have a vote by the full House soon. In the Senate the bill has been referred to the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. VAFW believes that a hearing before this committee will be held soon. Please take the time to thank the members of the Virginia US House and Senate delegation who have supported the bill and to urge those who have not yet done so to formally support it.

#### 2007 Tour de Cut hikes

This year, VAFW was proud to co-lead a record number Tour de Cut hiking events – a total of three events. Tour de Cut hikes are educational hikes that give members of the public a chance to get into our national forests and catch a glimpse of things they would not ordinarily see – like bad logging jobs or harmful roads – combined with a walk through some of the nicer areas that we are trying to save. This year, we visited the Sours Run timber sale, the Paddy timber sale, the old-growth Hoover Creek timber sale, and the Little River roadless area, the Great North Mountain Virginia Mountain Treasure area, and the Warm Springs Mountain Virginia Mountain Treasure area. Additional hiking events are anticipated in 2008 and announcements will be posted on our website, so please join us on future hikes!



Oct. 6 Tour de Cut event,  
above the Warm Springs Mountain  
Virginia Mountain Treasure Area

#### George Washington National Forest and “Adopt a Mountain Treasure” Initiative

Planning for the 1 million acre George Washington National Forest is currently on hold while the Forest Service sorts out the consequences of a court’s decision that found the Bush administration’s nationwide planning procedures to be illegal (see June 2007 edition of “VAFW News from the Woods”).

In the meantime, we are not letting up our guard. We know that in order to win protection for the forestlands, wildlife, and watersheds of the George Washington for the next 15 years, it is crucial that our work continue day to day. Current drafts of the plan provide inadequate protection for key resources (see [www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/forestplan/revision/plan-home.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/forestplan/revision/plan-home.shtml)) and, unfortunately, without your and our strong efforts, we believe this to be a harbinger of things to come. For VAFW’s response, and the informative “Forests for the Future” and “Our Land, Our Water, Our Home” publications, go to [www.virginiaforestwatch.org](http://www.virginiaforestwatch.org) and scroll down to the “George Washington Nation Forest Revision” on the left side of the screen.

VAFW believes in localizing efforts and working with citizens on the grassroots level on the GWNF. Therefore, with the support of our public lands committee, we are launching a pilot “Adopt a Mountain Treasure”

initiative. Mountain Treasures are key areas identified across the Forest which need stronger protection because they provide high quality recreational opportunities, critical habitat for our wildlife, clean water for communities, and precious old growth forests. With the help and expertise of those at Virginia Forest Watch, the publication ***Virginia's Mountain Treasures: The Unprotected Wildlands of the George Washington National Forest*** will soon be released by ourselves and a coalition of groups. VAFW is currently seeking groups and individuals to adopt each of the 63 Treasures in the George Washington National Forest. This initiative will ensure that all the areas identified as Mountain Treasures will have strong voices for greater protection during the “nitty gritty” of the planning process and afterwards. Contact VAFW public lands coordinator Sherman Bamford at bamford2@verizon.net (540) 343-6359 if you are interested in assisting in this effort.

### **Monitoring Forest Service projects**

Virginia Forest Watch has been vigilant as ever, monitoring harmful Forest Service projects and engaging with the Forest Service and others in order to improve them or halt them, if necessary. Below is a sample of our activities since our most recent “News from the Woods.”

**(1.) Patterson Mountain all-terrain vehicle trail (Craig County)** – An official Forest Service off-highway vehicle trail that the agency has difficulty patrolling and maintaining. VAFW submitted photos and coordinates of muddy, rutted trails and evidence of off-trail riding within streams and riparian areas to Forest Service law enforcement personnel and ranger district personnel.

**(2.) Cubville timber sale (Bath County)** – Proposed 180 acres of logging and 1080 acres of prescribed burning on Warm Springs Mountain near the Bear Rock Trail. The Forest Service temporarily withdrew the decision for the project after VAFW submitted an administrative appeal objecting to the project in the Summer of 2007.

**(3.) Back Valley timber sale (Scott County)** – Proposed 371 acre timber sale on steep slopes in the Dry Creek, where two major floods have previously occurred. The Forest Service temporarily withdrew the decision for the project August 2007 after VAFW and local citizens and conservationists submitted an appeal. See accompanying *Scott County Virginia Star* article (p. 3) for more detail.

**(4.) Jackson Grouse II timber sale (Alleghany County)** - Proposed 268 acre clearcut project in Alleghany County. Over seven miles of logging roads, skid trails, and bulldozed firelines are proposed as part of the project. Members of VAFW and Wild Virginia met with Forest Service officials and toured the site on Sept. 13, and videotaped one stand admitted by the Forest Service to contain old growth.

**(5.) Wells Branch timber sale (Lee and Wise County)** – Proposed 216 acres of logging, 2900 acres of burning, and 6.5 miles of road construction/reconstruction that could impact the Roaring Branch RARE II (roadless) area, the Roaring Branch proposed wild river corridor, and scenic values and biological communities around Keokee Lake. VAFW submitted comments objecting to this project in Sept. 2007.

**(6.) Marshall Run timber sale (Rockingham County)** - Proposed 185 acres of logging and 2.4 mi. of road construction in the Beech Lick Knob area, a beautiful, remote, and scenic 17,152-acre unroaded area. VAFW joined with others in posting action alerts and commenting on the project in October 2007.

### **Healing and Restoration on Virginia's National Forests**

As part of our work, we regularly encourage the Forest Service to promote genuine ecological restoration efforts like restoring damaged streams and riparian areas, removing invasive species, and decommissioning unneeded roads. On June 25, we joined with representatives of WildLaw, the Sierra Club, Heartwood, and Wild Virginia in a meeting with Forest Service supervisor Maureen Hyzer in order to encourage the Forest Service to develop a forward-thinking, fair, collaborative process for proceeding with ecological restoration work. If our efforts are successful, in the future, genuine ecological restoration work will comprise a larger portion of the Forest Service's activities, and the agency will move to a more holistic paradigm that examines restoration priorities on a larger, watershed level, instead of the current piecemeal approach that emphasizes extractive development.

If funding permits, we would also like to launch a small pilot project that would allow the Forest Service and other partners to study sustainable alternatives to even-aged logging. Research from other forests in the eastern US indicate that long-held assumptions about the supremacy of large-scale industrial logging may not be valid.

We will update you on the success of these endeavors in the future.

### **Funding**

Thanks again to the Block Foundation, the Fund for Wild Nature, and individual donors whose contributions at this critical time have enabled us to complete this valuable public lands work.



## PRIVATE FORESTS

### Private Forestry Reform

Two years ago, Virginia Forest Watch was instrumental in establishing the Forest Issues Work Group (FIWG) of the Virginia Conservation Network, a working group dedicated to bringing reform to forest practices on a statewide level. The effort is moving along at full speed and Virginia Forest Watch (VAFW) continues to play a lead role in the FIWG. In the past year, the FIWG completed two white paper reports, one on Forest Certification, and a second on the conflict between local authority and state authority, under the Department of Forestry, over logging practices.

On the forest certification front, VAFW and the FIWG spearheaded a “forestry certification roundtable” with Virginia Conservation Network, Virginia Tech, and the Department of Forestry on September 21st.

VAFW and the FIWG are committed to clarifying and strengthening the local jurisdiction’s abilities to regulate logging practices and are opposed to attempts to weaken provisions in the “Right to Practice Forestry Act” that would weaken the power of local governments.

### Funding

VAFW was recently awarded new and renewed funding to continue our private forest program and we will be launching our plans to staff the program with a qualified forester. We are grateful for the support received this month from the Austin Memorial Foundation and for continuing support from an anonymous foundation for our private forestry reform work.

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## CAPACITY BUILDING

We continue to work with consultant Kim Gilliam to develop a comprehensive development strategy, as part of the grant of participation in the FUNDS program, a new fundraising development program, in partnership with the Environmental Support Center. The final report, due at the end of phase one, is expected later this month. We are becoming a much stronger organization through these efforts.

### House Parties

This fall, friends of Virginia Forest Watch are launching two house parties in the New River Valley and Northern Virginia regions of the state. These house parties will feature enjoyable food, fascinating guest speakers, informative news about the work of Virginia Forest Watch, and a chance for our friends across the state to contribute to our important work. If you live in one of these two regions of Virginia you may have received an invitation already. If not, we hope you will contribute on your own, and will watch for more entertaining VAFW house parties in other regions of Virginia at a later date.

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House on Stony Creek in Scott County, destroyed in July 2001 flood.