

### Location:

Otter Creek Wilderness is located on the Cheat-Potomac Ranger District of the Monongahela National Forest in Tucker and Randolph Counties, West Virginia. For additional information on this area contact the Cheat Ranger District, PO Box 368, Parsons, West Virginia 26287 at (304) 478-2000.

### History:

The Otter Creek Boom and Lumber Company logged this area from 1897 to 1914. Several areas were also homesteaded either prior to or during this time. In 1917, the U.S. government acquired the majority of the Otter Creek area to protect the watershed. The area was hunted but otherwise virtually ignored until after World War II, when it came to be viewed primarily as a recreation area. It was logged from 1968 to 1972 in areas near Turkey Run, Condon Run, and north of Otter Creek near Big Springs Gap as the second-growth timber started to reach merchantable size. The area was designated as wilderness by the Eastern Wilderness Act, passed by Congress in 1975.

### Ecology:

Spruce dominates the higher elevations and gradually gives way to black cherry and yellow birch on the middle and lower slopes. There are also occasional plantations of Norway spruce. Occasional apple trees can be seen near the old logging camps and homesteads. Many areas, particularly stream drainages, are covered with thickets of impenetrable rhododendron and mountain laurel. Wildlife in the area includes black bear, whitetail deer, wild turkey, grouse, snowshoe hare, cottontail rabbit, and a variety of squirrels. There are many species of birds and reptiles including the poisonous timber rattlesnake. Otter Creek is also home to a small population of brook trout and salamanders.

In 1964, the WV Division of Natural Resources installed a limestone drum at the head of Otter Creek just outside the wilderness boundary to neutralize the naturally acidic water and improve conditions for brook trout.

The gate on McGowan Mountain Road (FR 324) at the boundary with the Fernow Experimental Forest is closed to the public between April 15<sup>th</sup> and August 15<sup>th</sup> to reduce disturbance of wildlife.



For additional information, contact:

**Cheat-Potomac Ranger District  
P.O. Box 368  
Parsons, WV 26287  
(304) 478-2000, Ext 0**

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/mnf/>

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Monongahela National Forest  
200 Sycamore Street  
Elkins, West Virginia 26241  
(304) 636-1800 Telephone/TTY

## Otter Creek Wilderness



**Description:** Otter Creek Wilderness is 20,000 acres in size. The Otter Creek Wilderness lies in a bowl formed by Shavers Mountain and McGowan Mountain. Most of the streams flow north into Otter Creek. Vegetation consists of second-growth timber, rhododendron, and a variety of mosses and lichens. Elevations range from 1,800 feet at the mouth of Otter Creek to 3,900 feet on McGowan Mountain.

These streams can flash flood during periods of heavy rain, and can leave visitors stranded.

## **Trail System:**

Otter Creek Wilderness has 45 miles of trails, many of which follow old railroad grades, logging roads, or farm roads. Listed below are several possible loop hikes. Fords indicate streams that may be a problem to cross during high water events. There may be additional small stream crossings. Level of difficulty is based on people in average condition. Trails are neither signed nor blazed, although rock cairns are occasionally provided in areas that may appear confusing. Deadfall trees are not cut out of the trails unless going around them will cause unacceptable environmental impacts. No bridges are provided at creek crossings. Trails can be muddy and wet so be prepared to get your feet wet.

- Dress for the weather. Wear proper footwear. Be prepared for sudden changes.
- Bring drinking water; otherwise, treat water from streams and springs before drinking to kill harmful pathogens.
- During hunting seasons, hikers are encouraged to wear high visibility clothing.
- Practice Leave No Trace outdoor ethics: do not build a camp within 200 feet of roads, streams and trails.

### **Hedrick Camp - Shavers Mountain - Mylius - Otter Creek**

Trail Numbers: 165 - 129 - 128 – 131

Starts at: Condon Run trailhead

Length of loop: 8.7 miles

Fords: 1 on Otter Creek; 1 on Yellow Creek.

Difficulty: Easy.

### **Moore Run - Otter Creek - Yellow Creek - McGowan Mountain - Moore Run**

Trail Numbers: 138 - 131 - 135 - 136 – 138

Starts at: Moore Run trailhead

Length of loop: 11.8 miles

Fords: 1 on Moore Run, 2 on Otter Creek

Difficulty: Moderate.

### **Mylius - Shavers Mountain - Green Mountain - Possession Camp - Otter Creek - Mylius**

Trail Numbers: 128 - 129 - 130 - 158 - 131 – 128

Starts at: Mylius trailhead

Length of loop: 12.2 miles

Fords: 2 on Otter Creek.

Difficulty: Moderate.

### **Big Springs Gap - Otter Creek - Moore Run - Turkey Run - FR 701**

Trail Numbers: 151 - 131 - 138 - 150 – FR 701

Starts at: Big Springs Gap trailhead

Length of loop: 13 miles

Fords: 4 on Otter Creek, 2 on Moore Run,

Difficulty: Moderate.

### **Big Springs Gap - Otter Creek - Possession Camp - Green Mountain - Otter Creek - Big Springs Gap**

Trail Numbers: 151 - 131 - 158 - 130 - 131 - 151

Starts at: Big Springs Gap trailhead

Length of loop: 13.2 miles

Fords: 4 on Otter Creek, 1 on Moore Run

Difficulty: Moderate. Steep narrow section on Otter Creek; large boulder “steps” on Possession Camp; steep downhill on Green Mountain. Variation: Start from Dry Fork trailhead and leave off Big Springs Gap trail. Trip mileage = 15.6 and eliminates 2 fords of Otter Creek.

### **Mylius - Shavers Mountain - Green Mountain - Otter Creek - Mylius**

Trail Numbers: 128 - 129 - 130 - 131 - 128

Starts at: Mylius trailhead

Length of Loop: 15.2 miles

Fords: 4 on Otter Creek

Difficulty: Moderate. A long steep climb up Mylius trail to the top of Shavers Mountain, then a few short uphill pitches on Shavers Mountain trail. A boggy spot on top of Green Mountain trail and a steep downhill as you head to Otter Creek.

### **Hedrick Camp - Shavers Mountain - Green Mountain - Possession Camp - Otter Creek**

Trail Numbers: 165 - 129 - 130 - 158 - 131

Starts at: Condon Run trailhead

Length of Loop: 14.7 miles

Fords: 1 on Otter Creek; 1 on Yellow Creek

Difficulty: Moderate. Shavers Mountain trail has a few steep switchbacks; Green Mountain trail has a boggy spot; Possession Camp trail is a steep downhill with occasional “steps” down boulders.

### **Big Springs Gap - Otter Creek - Mylius - Shavers Mountain - Green Mountain - Otter Creek - Big Springs Gap**

Trail Numbers: 151 - 131 - 128 - 129 - 130 - 131 - 151

Starts at: Big Springs Gap trailhead

Length of Loop: 16 miles

Fords: 6 on Otter Creek

Difficulty: Moderate. There is a steep narrow section on Otter Creek between Green Mountain trail and Possession Camp Trail. A few short uphill pitches can be found on Shavers Mountain trail. A boggy spot on top of Green Mountain trail and a steep downhill as you head to Otter Creek.

### **Hedrick Camp - Shavers Mountain - Green Mountain - Otter Creek**

Trail Numbers: 165 - 129 - 130 - 131

Starts at: Condon Run trailhead Length of Loop: 18.6 miles

Fords: 3 on Otter Creek, 1 on Moore Run, 1 on Yellow Creek

Difficulty: Moderate. Shavers Mountain trail has a few steep up hills; Green Mountain trail has a serious boggy spot and a steep downhill to Otter Creek. Otter Creek trail has a steep, narrow place between Green Mountain trail and Possession Camp Trail.

### **Otter Creek - Yellow Creek - McGowan Mountain - Moore Run - Turkey Run - FR 701 - Big Springs Gap - Otter Creek - Green Mountain - Shavers Mountain - Hedrick Camp**

Trail Numbers: 131 - 135 - 136 - 138 - 150 – FR 701 - 151 - 131 - 130 - 129 - 165

Starts at: Condon Run trailhead

Length of Loop: 26 miles

Fords: 1 on Yellow Creek, 1 on Otter Creek

Difficulty: Depends on how many days you have to do this! McGowan Mountain has steep sections both up and down hill. Do not divert onto the old logging road that crosses McGowan Mountain trail. Just cross it and keep going downhill to Moore Run trail. Turkey Run has some steep uphill and downhill sections. In late summer, the nettles on the road part of the Turkey Run Trail can be tall and nasty. Steep uphill on Green Mountain will hurt unless you're in really good shape. Shavers Mountain trail has a few steep switchbacks.