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.

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/

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

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.
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
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.

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 uphill 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
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 way up and down. Steep uphill on Green Mountain will hurt unless you’re in really good shape. Shavers Mountain trail has a few steep switchbacks.