

Subj: **RE: Wilderness documents 1 of 4**  
 Date: 8/30/2008 12:52:53 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time  
 From: [mkjones@comcast.net](mailto:mkjones@comcast.net)  
 To: [harrisri@aol.com](mailto:harrisri@aol.com)  
 CC: [crpannell@comcast.net](mailto:crpannell@comcast.net)

Rick:

As you know I have a lot of comments on this proposal, and I believe that everyone should understand the down side to the designation of the Upper Bald River Area as wilderness. The wilderness advocates, in my opinion, are after only one objective. Their objective is to prevent timber sales in this area, from now to the end of eternity. The Cherokee Forest Management Plan prescribed this area in March, 2004, to be a Wilderness Study Area (1c). That prescription prevents any logging of this area, and it also prevents volunteer trail maintainers from using anything other than human powered tools. The previous management prescription was Backcountry Recreation (12b), and this prescription also prevented any logging of the area. The area was last logged about 20 – 30 years ago, as you can see on the upper elevations of your section of the BMT. I believe that this logging occurred just before the area was designated a Roadless Area by the Forest Service RARE II process (Roadless Area Resource Evaluation) which began in 1977. For as long as the Roadless Area rules and regulations stand, this area will not be logged. The obvious benefits to trail maintainers from the 12b prescription are that it is treated just like all other non-wilderness trails.

So how does this wilderness designation impact the vast majority of the hikers that don't work on maintaining trails?

1. The maintenance condition of 17 miles of trails within this area will deteriorate over time. My experience in maintaining both wilderness and non-wilderness trails show that it takes **5 times** the hours to maintain a mile of wilderness trail, as opposed to non-wilderness trail. In the next 5 – 10 years we will see almost all of the hemlocks die. They are the biggest trees in the forest, and when they start to fall they will make the trails impassable in this area. We don't have crosscut saws big enough, nor certified trail volunteers plentiful enough to open these trails back up. As long as the area is not designated as wilderness, we stand a good chance of getting a management exception to use chainsaws to clear the trails. The wilderness designation will ensure that some of these trails just go away. The Benton MacKaye Trail accounts for about 8 of the 17 miles of trail within the Upper Bald River Area.
2. Immediately following wilderness designation, the Forest Service will initiate the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) process for the new wilderness area. This process establishes the limits of human influence within the area. The LAC process will establish group limits for trail and off trail users. It will probably also limit the number of tents and size of campsites, as well as other limitations that will impact hikers.
3. Hikers will have to make their way through the trails without the benefit of painted blazes, or informational signs. As the trail maintenance condition deteriorates, the real potential for hikers becoming lost in this area will increase. Many hikers just don't take the time to obtain maps and compass, or learn how to use them.

That's about it for the hiker impacts from wilderness designation. There are also many impacts to the hunters and fishermen in this same area. I won't get into the details here, except to say that wilderness designation will turn some of their legal user activities into prohibited activities, subject to citations and fines.

In the event that I am unable to attend the next Cherokee Hiking Club meeting, either you or Clayton should feel free to read my email to the group.

Ken

-----Original Message-----

**From:** [harrisri@aol.com](mailto:harrisri@aol.com) [<mailto:harrisri@aol.com>]  
**Sent:** Friday, August 29, 2008 4:59 PM  
**To:** [RTMorris@olin.com](mailto:RTMorris@olin.com); [mkjones@comcast.net](mailto:mkjones@comcast.net)

**Subject:** Fwd: Wilderness documents 1 of 4

Ken,  
Comments? Four emails being forwarded to you.  
Rick

-----Original Message-----

From: Jeff Hunter <jeff@safc.org>  
To: HarrisRi@aol.com  
Sent: Fri, 29 Aug 2008 4:24 pm  
Subject: Wilderness documents 1 of 4

Rick:

Attached please find the first of several emails containing maps and a fact sheet about our wilderness proposal for the Cherokee National Forest. Unfortunately, I can't use the YouSendit.com service, because that will only allow me to send one file at a time.

I appreciate your willingness to bring this before the Cherokee Hiking Club for consideration. The Benton MacKaye Trail Association recently approved a motion to support the proposal, with a boundary adjustment along the Stateline Trail to allow for power tools for maintenance.

The Big Frog and Little Frog additions are in Congressman Wamp's district, and the remaining areas are in Congressman Duncan's district. Congressman Duncan is likely to be difficult to sell this to, so we need as much community support as we can muster.

Please don't hesitate to contact me about this matter should you have any questions.

--

Jeff Hunter  
Tennessee Field Organizer  
Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition  
423-322-7866

[\[Image Removed\]](#)

---

[Get the MapQuest Toolbar](#). Directions, Traffic, Gas Prices & More!