

HUMAN USES

Recreation

Reference Conditions

On April 28, 1920 President Woodrow Wilson signed the proclamation establishing the Monongahela National Forest. Recreational facilities on the Monongahela National Forest developed very slowly at first because early management emphasis focused on building roads for access, replanting trees following the extensive harvests between 1880 and 1935, and providing fire protection. As a result recreational use was low. It wasn't until the CCC program in 1930s that recreational facilities began to appear across the Forest. One of the first recreational developments was the Frank Mountain Campground on the Greenbrier Ranger District. Following WWII, recreation management funds were not sufficient to manage or construct facilities until the 1960s, when Island Campground, Old House Run Picnic Area, and Lake Buffalo were built. The Gaudineer Scenic area was established in 1964 during this wave of recreational development, which included the establishment of the Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area and the Cranberry Mountain Nature Center. In 1983, Laurel Fork North and Laurel Fork South Wilderness Areas were established just to the north of the watershed (Berman et al. 1992; McKim 1970).

Current Conditions

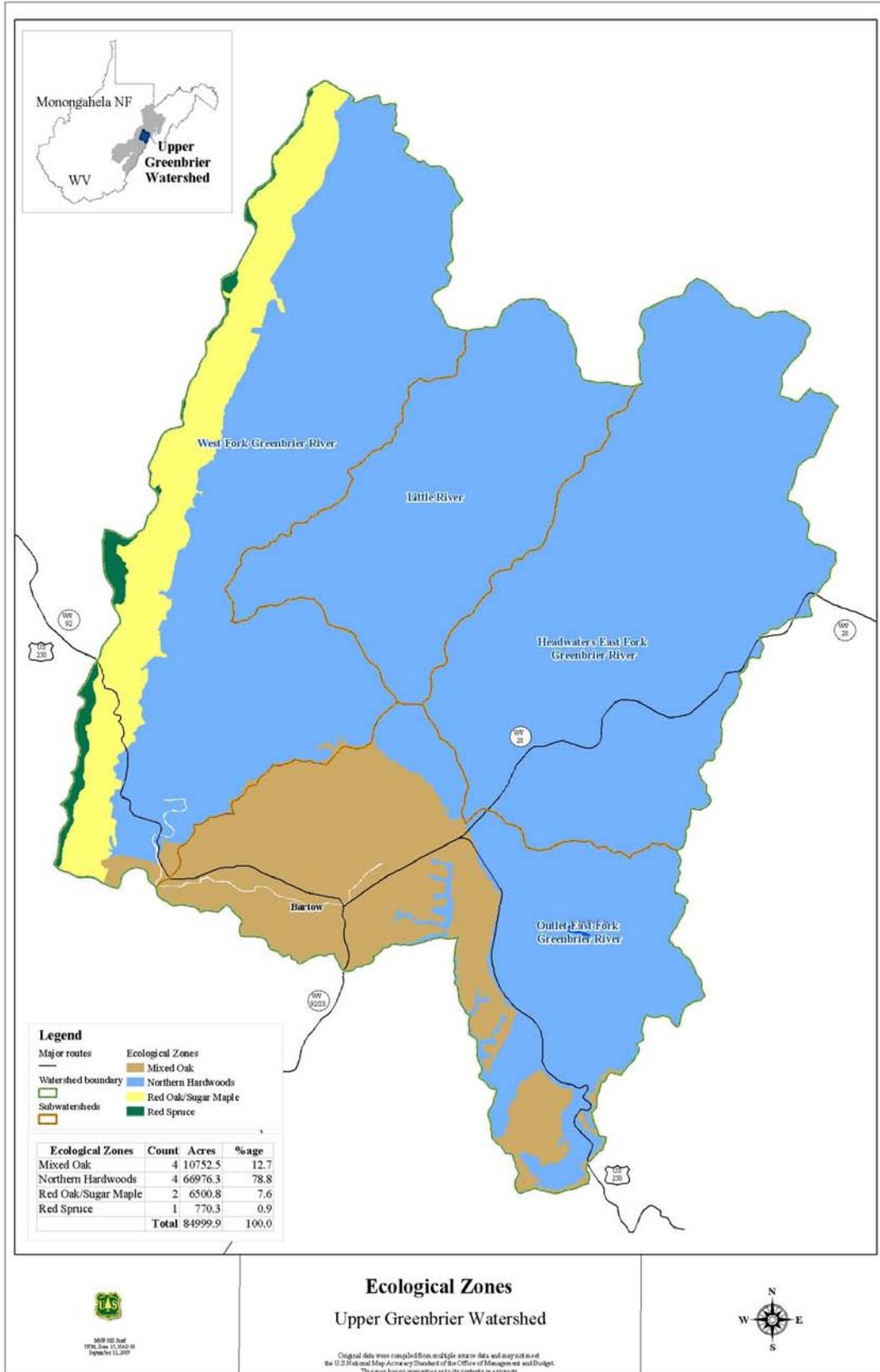
Recreational activities within the watershed consist mostly of dispersed recreation including hunting, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, driving for pleasure, and camping. In general, recreational use is low with the exception of fishing and hunting seasons when dispersed sites and developed sites, like Lake Buffalo and Island Campground, are heavily used. Recreational use of the West Fork Rail Trail is increasing and has the potential to increase exponentially. The same may be true for heritage tourism along the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike Scenic Byway, especially if partnerships are made with the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area group and the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike Alliance.

Scenery

As tourism increases, concerns for scenic integrity should also increase. Views from key scenic viewpoints—such as the Scenic Byway, Lake Buffalo, and the West Fork Trail—will likely become more important in the future.

The Landscape Character of the area has its origins in, and is formed by, early settlement patterns and land uses that have taken place over the years. Early and continuing influences affect the attitude toward landscape uses today. The area is mountainous and therefore activities are more visible and more difficult to screen from the public view. Two of the main Landscape Character Zones in the watershed, Red Spruce and Northern Hardwood, are described below. Map RC-1 shows all of the ecological zones that form the foundation for the Landscape Character Zones in the watershed.

Map RC-1. Ecological/Landscape Character Zones in the Upper Greenbrier Watershed



The Red Spruce Zone usually appears as a dark finely textured cap on an otherwise hardwood-clothed mountain. For visitors to the Red Spruce Zone, views are usually of foreground timber stands but, because of its location on top of the mountains, this zone offers more than an average number of panoramic background views (see photo on Appendices divider). Historically some of the most extensive red spruce stands in the country were found here. Large expanses of red spruce can still be found within this zone. Spruce stands are often thickly stocked and the understory is often open because of the lack of light penetrating to the forest floor. Gaudineer Scenic area is an example of this zone. Towns or communities are rare in this zone, which is true for the Upper Greenbrier Watershed.

The Northern Hardwood Zone consists of the dissected Appalachian plateau at its juncture with the ridge and valley section. Landforms are rolling to steeply sloped mountains with narrow, winding valleys. Visitors encounter mostly enclosed, foreground views. Temporary openings of less than 40 acres from timber harvest are common, as are changes in vegetative texture brought about by partial harvest, such as two-aged or shelterwood cuts. Mountainsides within the zone typically have an even-textured appearance, often punctuated by temporary openings. The lines introduced by road construction on mountainsides is most evident during leaf-off periods.

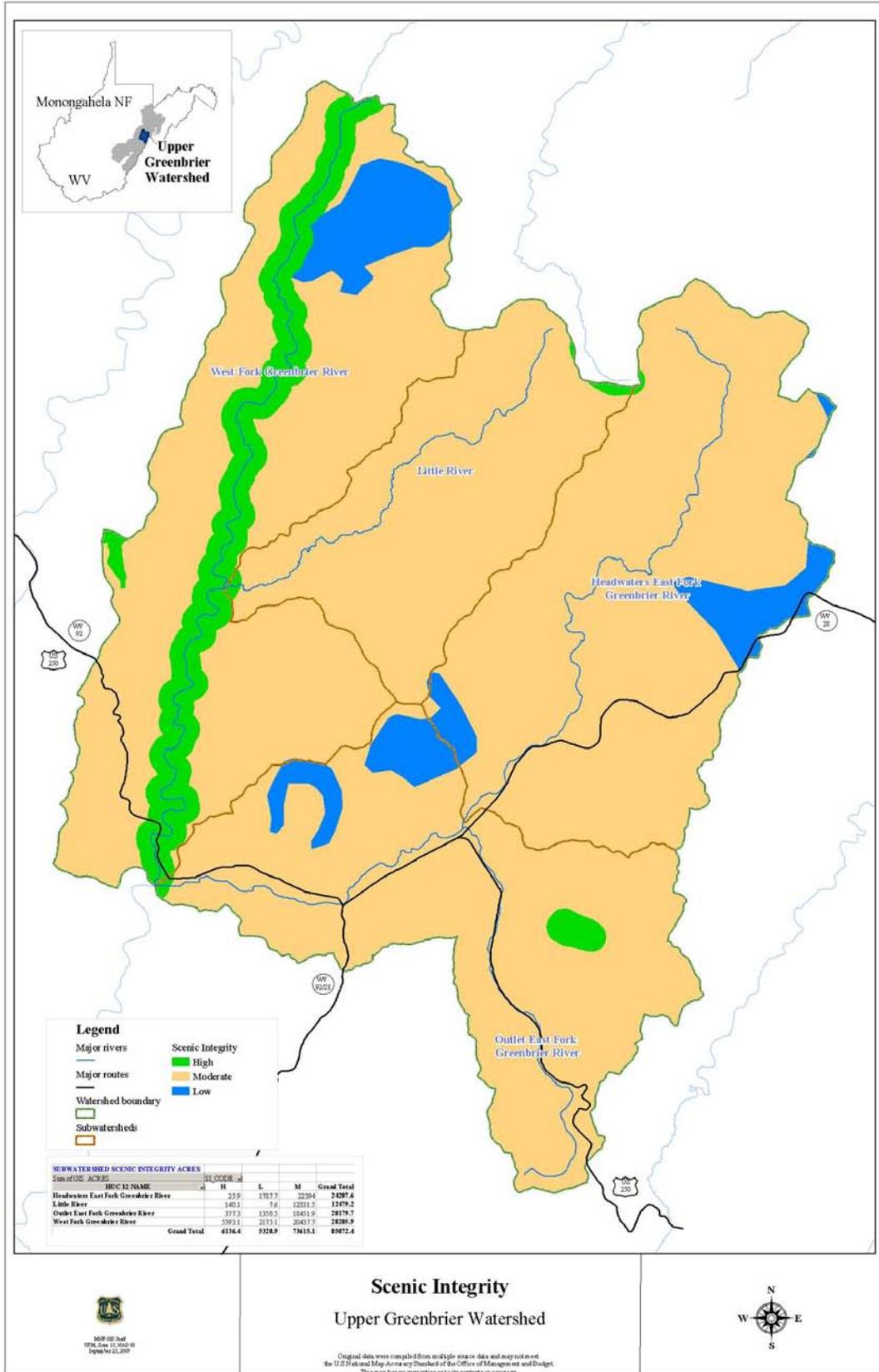
Landscape visibility is characterized in Table RC-1, with the majority of the area falling within the High visibility codes of Foreground 1 and Middleground 1.

Table RC-1. Landscape Visibility Distribution in the Upper Greenbrier Watershed

Visibility Code	Visibility Classification	Acres	Percent of Watershed
Fg1	Foreground (0-1/2 mile) High	45786	53.8
Mg1	Middleground (1/2 - 4 miles) High	31605	37.2
Bg1	Background (4 miles - horizon) High	3	0.0
Fg2	Foreground (0-1/2 mile) Moderate	114	0.1
Mg2	Middleground (1/2 - 4 miles) Moderate	958	1.1
Bg2	Background (4 miles - horizon) Moderate	46	0.1
Fg3	Foreground (0-1/2 mile) Low	1729	2.0
Mg3	Middleground (1/2 - 4 miles) Low	904	1.1
Bg3	Background (4 miles - horizon) Low	1	0.0
ns	None	3938	4.6
Totals		85084	100.0

The Scenic Attractiveness is primarily typical, with some distinctiveness along the West Fork of the Greenbrier River, Lake Buffalo, and the Gaudineer Scenic Area. The existing Scenic Integrity is 86.5 percent moderate, with some high integrity (7.2 percent) near Lake Buffalo and along the West Fork of the Greenbrier River, and some low integrity (6.3 percent) (Map RC-2). Maps of Scenic Attractiveness, Landscape Visibility, and Scenic Condition are in Appendix E.

Map RC-2. Scenic Integrity in the Upper Greenbrier Watershed



Developed Recreation Sites

Island Campground – This campground has basic developed facilities and the area retains a more primitive setting. The campground is adjacent to Long Run and the East Fork of the Greenbrier River and is a favorite among fisherman. It includes six single campsites and 2 vault toilets. Facility improvements at Island Campground are needed and include the following: replace 2 vault toilets with 1 accessible one (including accessible pathway); replace road bridges with bridges or culverts to allow safe public road access, provide additional vehicle barriers around camp sites, and install bear-proof trash cans.

Old House Run Picnic Area – This picnic area is located along US 250 and serves as the first restroom stop as people enter West Virginia along US 250. It includes six family picnic sites with tables, grills, and waste receptacles. One group picnic shelter, two vault toilets and a non-accessible hand pump are also featured at this site. The following facilities at Old House Run Picnic Area need to be improved: replace rotten wood barriers with rock or other form of barrier to prevent vehicles from leaving the road; replace vault toilets with one unisex accessible toilet; paint some picnic tables; gravel parking areas, improve accessibility features where possible, improve existing horseshoe pit, and replace 2 large picnic grills at the large shelter.

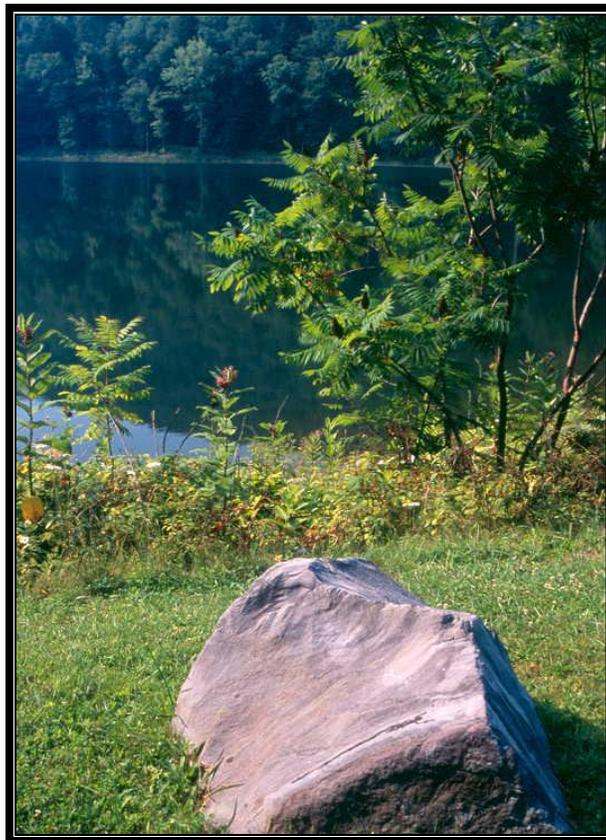


Figure RC-1. Lake Buffalo

Lake Buffalo – Located along Buffalo Run, this 22-acre lake is stocked several times throughout the year and is a popular destination for anglers. Parking, a vault toilet, a boat ramp, and garbage cans are provided. In addition, the Lake Buffalo Trail encircles the lake, providing hiking, fishing, and photo opportunities. Improvement opportunities and needs include more accessible access to the lake, lengthening the boat ramp, improving the trail around the lake by constructing boardwalk across the upper end of the lake, constructing 3 new bridges and replacing 2 bridges, rerouting the trail and providing an accessible fishing pier.

Gaudineer Knob Picnic Area – This picnic area sits high atop Gaudineer Knob where an old fire tower once stood. There are five picnic sites, an accessible vault toilet, and a short 0.5 mile hiking trail. The improvements needed are to replace tables/grills/gravel at picnic sites, widen and improve gravel on all pathways. There are opportunities for additional interpretation at this site, although the parking area is not actually in the Upper Greenbrier Watershed.

Gaudineer Scenic Area – The Scenic Area was designated by the Regional Forester in October of 1964, and in 1981 it was registered as a National Natural Landmark for its exceptional value as an illustration of the Nation’s natural heritage and its contribution to a better understanding of man’s environment. In 1983 it was also registered by the Society of American Foresters as an outstanding example of a vegetative community in a near natural condition dedicated for scientific and educational purposes.



Figure VG-2. - Gaudineer Scenic Area

Gaudineer Scenic Area contains an estimated 50 acres of virgin Red Spruce within its 150 acres that are representative of vegetation that originally occupied large portions of the West Virginia highlands. The Scenic Area Interpretative Trail (#374) runs through the area. Blow down is common because of old and dying red spruce and dying/diseased American beech, so the public is advised to avoid the area when it is windy. The interpretative trail could be upgraded with more current signs and trail improvements.

Dispersed Recreation

Many dispersed recreation sites are located along Forest Road 17 along Little River. These sites are free to the public and offer graveled pull-outs/spurs where the public can camp. These campsites were recently improved with gravel and large rocks to better define vehicle access and reduce environmental impacts. They are currently well used, particularly on weekends.

Dispersed recreation sites are also located along Forest Road 44, mainly south of the intersection with Road 17. The sites are associated with old timber sale landings, which feature relatively flat openings, but also have native surface that is easily eroded and no obstacles in place to keep vehicle traffic from driving on banks, wet areas, or areas where revegetation is desired. These sites could be improved with gravel to harden surfaces and large rocks to keep vehicles out of sensitive areas. Opportunities to create additional dispersed campsites exist in three old landings south of Forest Road 17. This would reduce congestion along Forest Road 44 during hunting/fishing season and create hardened campsites near the West Fork Rail Trail. An estimated 15 sites could be created along with parking for the West Fork Rail Trail within these old landings.

Additional dispersed campsites are located throughout the watershed, but are not concentrated.

The Staunton Parkersburg Turnpike National Scenic Byway - The Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike is the historic highway from Virginia's upper Shenandoah Valley to the Ohio River. Begun in 1838 and completed in 1845, the road was designed by master engineer Claudius Crozet. The road was prized by both Union and Confederate armies during the Civil War as essential for the control of western Virginia, and the road was the western gateway to the Shenandoah Valley, the "Breadbasket of the Confederacy". Today, much of the route follows modern highways (US 250 within the watershed). Other portions are along back roads, offering excellent opportunities for visitors to experience the turnpike much as it was 150 years ago. The Byway and its backways pass through Pocahontas and Randolph Counties in the high Allegheny Mountains of the central Appalachians, crossing some of the most scenic, historic, and rugged terrain in West Virginia. Opportunities exist for scenic byway project grants for recreation improvements and interpretation.

Max Rothkugel Plantation – The Appalachian Forest Heritage Area group has expressed interest in researching and documenting the Max Rothkugel Plantation and developing an interpretive trail and potential parking area. Their proposal includes fieldwork, trail restoration/development, site interpretation, self-guided walking tours, brochures and nomination of the site the National Register of Historic Places.

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area - Many partnership opportunities exist with the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area group for other projects as well. If the proposed Appalachian Forest Heritage Area is designated, there would be future opportunities for partnering with them on forestry and heritage projects.

Trails

Nearly 60 miles of trails in the watershed provide a variety of dispersed recreation opportunities. Most of these are maintained system trails that are described below and shown on Map RC-3.

Laurel River Trail South (306) – Most of this 7.6 mile trail runs from Lynn Divide to the Laurel Fork Campground, through the Laurel Fork South Wilderness. The portion in the Upper Greenbrier Watershed (0.5 mile) follows an old road through the Loop Road Research Area.

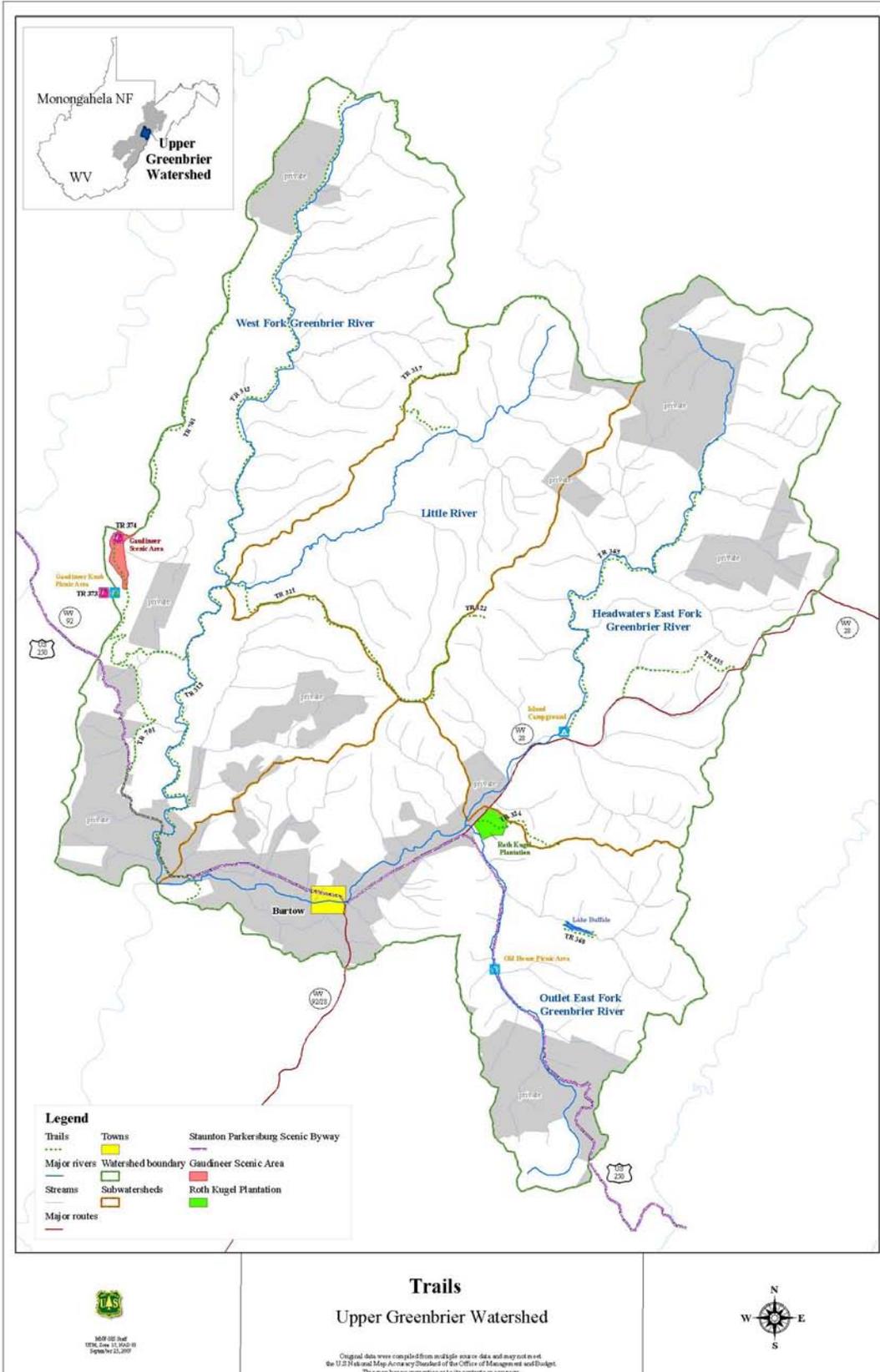
County Line Trail (311) – Trail 311 follows the county line ridgeline between FR 35 and the Beulah Trail (310) for 4.1 miles, but only a small portion (0.8 mile) lies within the Upper Greenbrier Watershed.

West Fork Rail Trail (312) – As the name implies, Trail 312 follows an old railroad grade from Durbin to Glady, a distance of 22.2 miles. The first 17.1 miles are in the Upper Greenbrier Watershed. With only a 400-foot elevation gain over those 17.1 miles, the trail is well suited for hiking, horseback riding or bicycling, and it offers a scenic mix of river, mountains, woods, wild flowers, meadows, and pools. Some improvements that are needed are install benches, install new culvert and place stone in wet area near May, improved passage around several gates is needed to better accommodate bicycle and horse traffic along this trail. The West Fork Rail Trail could be showcased and serve as a destination in northern Pocahontas County. There are several interpretive opportunities for this trail as well.



Figure RC-3. West Fork Rail Trail

Map RC-3. Trails and Other Recreational Features in the Upper Greenbrier Watershed



Lynn Knob Trail (317) – Trail 317 begins at a parking area on Ellick Run Road (FR 179), 0.6 miles west of FR 14. It climbs gradually to Lynn Knob (3990 feet) within 0.4 miles and then descends 850 feet over the next 2.7 miles to FR 17. The trail is well-drained and easy to follow, and forested with beech, cherry and maple.

Span Oak Trail (321) – The eastern terminus of Trail 321 is on FR 15, just across from the Burner Mountain Trail, described below. It runs west 3.7 miles to the Little River Road (FR 17), just above where Little River meets the West Fork Greenbrier River. The elevation gain/loss is 1,150 feet, and the trail passes through several maintained wildlife openings. Approximately 1 mile of trail needs to be rerouted to reduce user-related sedimentation that is occurring.

Burner Mountain Trail (322) – Trail 322 traverses Burner Mountain for 3.5 miles, from FR 14 to FR 15. This is a high-elevation trail, with only about 400 feet of elevation gain. It follows an old woods road most of the way, and is suitable for hiking, mountain biking, or horseback riding.

Smoke Camp Trail (324) – Trail 324 begins on WV Highway 28, just north of the turnoff to Lake Buffalo, and climbs relatively steeply to FR 58, just below Smoke Camp Knob. There are several springs along this trail. The trail is 1.8 miles and has a 1,300 foot elevation gain. The lower section passes through the Max Rothkugel Plantation, which was seeded to Norway spruce and European larch in 1907.

Table RC-2. Trails in the Upper Greenbrier Watershed

Trail Name	Trail No.	Total Miles	Miles in Watershed	Primary Uses
Laurel River Trail (south)	306	7.6	0.5	Hiking, backpacking
County Line Trail	311	4.1	0.8	Hiking, mountain biking, horse riding
West Fork Rail Trail	312	22.2	17.1	Hiking, bicycling, horse riding
Lynn Knob Trail	317	3.7	3.7	Hiking, horseback riding
Span Oak Trail	321	3.7	3.7	Mountain biking, hiking
Burner Mountain Trail	322	3.5	3.5	Hiking, mountain biking
Smoke Camp Trail	324	1.8	1.8	Hiking
Poca Run Trail	335	2.5	2.5	Hiking, mountain biking, horse riding
Johns Camp Trail	341	0.8	0.1	Hiking
Balsam Trail	344	0.3	0.3	Hiking
East Fork Trail	365	8.0	8.0	Hiking, fishing
Lake Buffalo Trail	368	0.8	0.8	Fishing, hiking
Gaudineer Knob Scenic Trail	373	0.5	0.4	Hiking
Gaudineer Interpretive Trail	374	0.5	0.5	Hiking
Allegheny Trail	701	300	16.2	Backpacking, hiking
Total Trail Miles in Watershed			59.9	

Poca Run Trail (335) – Trail 335 begins and ends on WV Highway 28. From the western trailhead, the trail climbs gradually up to the headwaters of Poca Run, where it eventually

crosses a ridge near Colow Knob and then descends back down to the highway. The trail is 2.5 miles, with an elevation gain of around 740 feet.

Johns Camp Trail (341) - Trail 341 begins where FR 317 ends. Within the Upper Greenbrier Watershed this trail follows old woods roads for 0.1 mile and intersects the Allegheny Trail near the Johns Camp Shelter.

Balsam Trail (344) – Trail 344 provides access to the Allegheny Trail near US 250 off of FR 27. The trail passes 0.3 mile through red spruce, northern hardwoods and a meadow.

East Fork Trail (365) – Trail 365 follows the East Fork of the Greenbrier River for approximately 8 miles, never straying far from the river and passing through three pine plantations. It has an easy to moderate grade, gaining only 550 feet over 8 miles. Part of the trail is on an old road and is easy to follow, but its floodplain location makes it wet or muddy in places. The trailhead is at Island Campground, with the northern terminus at the Pigs Ear Road, FR 254.

Lake Buffalo Trail (368) – Trail 368 begins at the north end of the Lake Buffalo dam on Forest Road 54, crosses the dam to the south, and travels along the southern and eastern shores of the lake, for a distance of 0.8 mile. The grade is easy, with little elevation gain or loss, and the trail provides good access to the lake for fishing, photography, or nature watching. The trail to the south and east needs to be rerouted and a to have a bridge installed.

Gaudineer Knob Scenic Trail (373) – Trail 373 begins and ends at the parking lot for the Gaudineer Knob Picnic Area. There are several picnic areas along its 0.5 mile length, as well as a scenic overview of the Upper Greenbrier Watershed.

Gaudineer Scenic Area Interpretative Trail (374) – Trail 374 begins and ends at the parking lot for Gaudineer Scenic Area on Forest Road 27. The trail loops easily through an old spruce-hardwood forest for about 0.5 mile. There are signs along the way that interpret the old growth ecosystem. Due to the many dead trees in the area, hikers are advised not to use this trail during windy conditions.

Allegheny Trail (701) – The Allegheny Trail runs from Pennsylvania to the Appalachian Trail in Virginia, nearly 300 miles. In between it traverses almost the entire Forest, north to south. The segment in the Upper Greenbrier Watershed winds along the crest of Shavers Mountain and then descends steeply, nearly 1500 feet, to the West Fork Greenbrier River near Durbin. The total distance is about 20.8 miles, of which 16.2 miles are in the Upper Greenbrier Watershed. The trail features spectacular views, shelters, and a section through the Gaudineer Scenic Area. Tread work is needed on the section from Balsam Trail to Simmons Run Road.

The MNFLMP provides standards and guidelines for the density of designated trails and system roads on national forest land by area depending on the management prescription.

Table RC-3. Trail Density by Management Prescription Area

MP Area	Trail Miles	Trail Density (miles/square mile)
MP 3.0	24.3	0.48
MP 4.1	7.5	0.29
MP 6.1	0.6	0.09
MP 6.2	19.9	0.82
MP 8.0	1.8	1.06

Table RC-3 indicates trail density on NFS lands in the watershed by Management Prescription area. Trail miles by MP area do not equal total trail miles in the watershed because some trail routes cross private land that is not in any MP area. Overall, trail density is low and should not exceed guidelines for Management Prescription 4.1 (2 mi./sq. mi.), 6.1 (2 mi./sq. mi.), 6.2 (4 mi./sq. mi.), or 8.0 (4 mi./sq. mi.) areas. However, density estimates by MP area will need to be confirmed should any new trail construction be proposed in the future.

Activities That Impact Recreation

Development activities such as mining, utility placement, and road building can impact human uses, both negatively and positively. Additional roads can create more roaded access within the area which may or may not be desirable depending on the type of recreation sought. Renewable activities such as timber harvest can also cause temporary impacts to recreational activities and usually can be mitigated to lessen the effects. Activities on private lands can also impact users on national forest; however we have no or little control over those impacts.

Desired Conditions

People visiting the Forest find a wide spectrum of recreational opportunities. Diverse landscapes offer a variety of settings for recreational activities, ranging from semi-primitive non-motorized where there are opportunities for solitude, risk, and challenge; to a rural setting where there are opportunities for social interaction, comfort, and less risk. A variety of environmentally responsible access is provided for recreation users.

Recreation facilities are managed to provide a range of opportunities and development scales in a relatively safe environment. Recreation programs and facilities meet all applicable local, state, and national standards for health and safety. Accessibility is incorporated into facility and program access projects, while maintaining the development scale and setting of the area.

Dispersed recreation sites and uses are located in an environmentally responsible manner and managed to established standards. Various methods are used to manage recreation activities and facilities, and to mitigate adverse effects from recreation to other resources.

Conflicts between recreationists are reduced or addressed; while a broad array of recreation opportunities are available. Collaboration among users results in decisions that reduce conflicts

between recreational and environmental needs. Local communities, partners, and volunteers are involved and benefit from their roles in providing recreational opportunities.

Interpretive exhibits, displays, and programs provide learning opportunities that enhance Forest visitor's experiences. Interpretive and educational efforts increase visitor awareness of the environmental effects of recreation use, and result in reduced adverse effects to other resources.

Authorized commercial developments and services meet established national standards and broaden the range of recreation opportunities and experiences provided on NFS lands (Forest Plan, p. II-32).

Management Areas

Management Prescription 3.0 (32,440 acres) - A system of roads and trails provides access within the area for public recreation and for administrative and management purposes, including transportation of forest products. Motorized recreation opportunities are featured and public motorized vehicle use is generally provided. Road densities vary considerably but average within 1.0 to 2.0 miles per square mile. Open road densities average 0.5 to 1.0 miles per square mile.

Roads and trails provide abundant opportunities for motorized recreation, including driving for pleasure, forest product gathering, hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing. All of the area is managed for a Roaded Natural ROS setting. High scenic integrity is maintained along visually sensitive viewpoints and travel ways.

Management Prescription 4.1 (16,700 acres) - A system of roads provides access within the area for administrative and management purposes, including transportation of forest products. Non-motorized recreation opportunities are featured and public motorized vehicle use is often restricted. Some roads may be open to provide public access or motorized recreation opportunities. Road densities vary considerably but average within 1.0 to 2.0 miles per square mile. Open road densities are considerably lower, averaging 0.1 to 0.5 miles per square mile, primarily to reduce disturbance to wildlife and soils. New collector and local roads are typically gated or closed by barricade. Many roads are seeded and managed for wildlife habitat and travel routes.

Trails and closed roads provide opportunities for dispersed recreation; including hiking, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing. The area provides limited motorized settings and opportunities. High scenic integrity is maintained along visually sensitive viewpoints and travel ways. Special uses and facilities do not detract from the desired ROS settings for the area.

Management Prescription 6.1 (4,240 acres) - A system of roads and trails provides access within the area for administrative and management purposes, including transportation of forest products. Non-motorized recreation opportunities are featured and public motorized vehicle use is generally restricted. Where roads are temporarily open, motorized opportunities are available. Road densities vary considerably but average within 1.5 to 2.5 miles per square mile. Open road

densities are considerably lower, averaging 0.2 to 0.8 miles per square mile, to reduce disturbance to wildlife. New collector and local roads are typically gated or closed by barricade. Many roads are seeded and managed for wildlife habitat and travel routes.

Trails and closed roads provide abundant opportunities for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation, including hiking, camping, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing. The area is managed for a combination of ROS settings (SPNM, SPM, RN). High scenic integrity is maintained along visually sensitive viewpoints and travel ways.

Special uses and facilities such as utility corridors are compatible with minimizing disturbance to wildlife populations and the ROS settings for the area.

Management Prescription 6.2 (14,950 acres: part of Gaudineer and all of East Fork Greenbrier Inventoried Roadless Areas) - Areas are managed to meet the physical, managerial, and social settings consistent with the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum descriptions for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation. They provide a wide variety of dispersed recreation opportunities and settings. Natural processes are the primary agents for vegetative change, with vegetation management used only to protect the resource or complement the recreational value. Recreation facilities—including bridges, signs, fire rings, shelters, and sanitation structures—are relatively uncommon and rustic in appearance.

The transportation system is closed to public motorized use. Non-motorized recreation opportunities are featured. Trails and closed roads provide abundant opportunities for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation, including hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing, although some restrictions may occur in order to achieve management prescription objectives. The area is managed for a SPNM ROS setting. High scenic integrity is maintained along visually sensitive viewpoints and travel ways.

Management Prescription 8.0 (1,110 acres: Gaudineer Scenic Area, Loop Road Research Area, Max Rothkugel Plantation, Red Spruce candidate RNA) - Special Areas retain the values and qualities for which they were originally designated. Areas contribute to the diversity of the Forest by preserving rare species, communities, habitats, and features. These areas also provide opportunities for scientific research and public enjoyment.

Additional Direction for these areas is found in the 8.0 section of Chapter III in the Forest Plan.