

Wilderness.net's Thunder Ridge Wilderness Fact Sheet

Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Thunder Ridge Wilderness in 1984 and it now has a total of 2,428 acres. All of the wilderness is in Virginia and is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

The smallest of Virginia's Wildernesses, Thunder Ridge sits high on the northwestern slope of the Blue Ridge, separated from James River Face Wilderness by Petites Gap Road (gravel, FR #35). It is bordered on the south and east by the Blue Ridge Parkway. Elevations range from 1,320 feet on the northwest corner to 4,200 feet on Apple Orchard Mountain at the southern tip. Thunder Ridge dominates the center of the area, falling away sharply on the north slope and not as steeply on the south. The vegetation is primarily mixed upland and cove hardwoods.

This wilderness contains five miles of trail including about 3.5 miles of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (A.T., FT #1). Trail information is available on National Geographic-Trails Illustrated Map #789 (Lexington-Blue Ridge Mts).

Thunder Ridge Wilderness is located in Bedford, Botetourt, and Rockbridge Counties, in west central Virginia. It is managed by the U.S. Forest Service as part of the Glenwood-Pedlar Ranger Districts of the George Washington & Jefferson National Forests.

Leave No Trace

How to follow the seven standard Leave No Trace principles differs in different parts of the country (desert vs. Rocky Mountains). Click on any of the principles listed below to learn more about how they apply in the Thunder Ridge Wilderness.

1. [Plan Ahead and Prepare](#)
2. [Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces](#)
3. [Dispose of Waste Properly](#)
4. [Leave What You Find](#)
5. [Minimize Campfire Impacts](#)
6. [Respect Wildlife](#)
7. [Be Considerate of Other Visitors](#)

For more information on Leave No Trace, [Visit the Leave No Trace, Inc. website.](#)

Area Management

The Thunder Ridge Wilderness is part of the 111 million acre National Wilderness Preservation System. This System of lands provides clean air, water, and habitat critical for rare and endangered plants and animals. In wilderness, you can enjoy challenging recreational activities like hiking,

backpacking, climbing, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, horse packing, bird watching, stargazing, and extraordinary opportunities for solitude. You play an important role in helping to *"secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness"* as called for by the Congress of the United States through the Wilderness Act of 1964. Please follow the requirements outlined below and use Leave No Trace techniques when visiting the Thunder Ridge Wilderness to ensure protection of this unique area.

General Wilderness Prohibitions

Motorized equipment and equipment used for mechanical transport is generally prohibited on all federal lands designated as wilderness. This includes the use of motor vehicles, motorboats, motorized equipment, bicycles, hang gliders, wagons, carts, portage wheels, and the landing of aircraft including helicopters, unless provided for in specific legislation.

In a few areas some exceptions allowing the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport are described in the special regulations in effect for a specific area. Contact the Forest Service office or visit the websites listed below for more specific information.

These general prohibitions have been implemented for all national forest wildernesses in order to implement the provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964. The Wilderness Act requires management of human-caused impacts and protection of the area's wilderness character to insure that it is "unimpaired for the future use and enjoyment as wilderness." Use of the equipment listed as prohibited in wilderness is inconsistent with the provision in the Wilderness Act which mandates opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation and that wilderness is a place that is in contrast with areas where people and their works are dominant.

Wilderness-Specific Regulations

Wilderness managers often need to take action to limit the impacts caused by visitor activities in order to protect the natural conditions of wilderness as required by the Wilderness Act of 1964. Managers typically implement 'indirect' types of actions such as information and education measures before selecting more restrictive measures. When regulations are necessary, they are implemented with the specific intent of balancing the need to preserve the character of the wilderness while providing for the use and enjoyment of wilderness.

The following wilderness regulations are in effect for this area. Not all regulations are in effect for every wilderness. Contact the Forest Service office or visit the websites listed on the 'Links' tab for more specific information about the regulations listed.

ALL VISITORS

- Group size is limited to no more than 10 people per party.
- Pack out all debris, garbage, or other waste.
- As with all designated Wilderness areas, mechanical transportation (including wagons, game carts, bicycles, and other vehicles) is prohibited.

OVERNIGHT VISITORS

- Maximum length of stay is 21 days within any 31-day period.

Contacts

Glenwood/Pedlar Ranger District

Phone: 540-291-2188

27 Ranger Lane

NATURAL BRIDGE STATION, VA 24579

Remarks: Office Hours 8:00 - 4:30 M-F

Links to Other Websites

[George Washington & Jefferson National Forests Wilderness](#)

Links on Wilderness.net

[National, Regional and Local Wilderness Organizations \(NGOs\)](#)

A listing of societies, organizations, coalitions and other wilderness-related advocacy and stewardship groups.

[Career and Volunteer Opportunities](#)

A listing of sites providing information about wilderness- and environmentally-related career and volunteer opportunities.

Applicable Wilderness Law(s)

Law	Date	Acreage Change (in acres)
Public Law 98-586	October 30, 1984	2,450
Virginia Wilderness Act of 1984 - Public law 98-586 (10/30/1984) To designate certain national forest lands in the State of Virginia, and for other purposes		

 [download 98-586](#)