

(From the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, a partner in the Wilderness Coalition) WVRC is a Wilderness Coalition supporting organization.

Planning Meetings for the New River Gorge, Your input is needed!

The National Park Service is working on a new General Management Plan (GMP) for the New River Gorge National River. It will guide management of the park for the next 15-20 years. It will set the overall management direction for the Park, with a long range, broad, conceptual view.

The Park Service has been working for over 2 years to gather the public's ideas, issues and concerns for what they would like to see for the future of one of our state's great public natural resources. They have taken the gathered information and developed 5 alternatives and will be issuing a formal "Draft" GMP in the near future. Before this happens, the Park Service is asking for one last round of public comments before it finalizes the draft alternatives and selects a preferred alternative.

Some of the important topics the Plan will address are hunting, biking, water quality, boundary adjustments and Wilderness. We like Alternative #5. This alternative would preserve primitive recreational experiences throughout the Park. It would also identify cultural and interpretive focal areas and allow visitors to experience the river and enjoy a variety of recreational experiences. It envisions a "through the Park" connector composed of scenic roads and trails. It would partner with gateway communities to improve rim to river experiences and focal areas would allow visitors to explore the Park's historic sites. This alternative also balances frontcountry and backcountry management zones providing for both developed and primitive recreational experiences.

The Park Service has identified 3 areas of the Park that would make good Wilderness candidates; Glade Creek, Dowdy Creek and Backus Mountain. Currently Alternative #5 supports wilderness designation for only Glade and Dowdy Creek areas. We hope the final GMP recommends all deserving areas including Backus Mountain to Congress for Wilderness designation.

We encourage folks to get involved in this planning process by contacting the Park Service to express your concerns. Comments are due December 15th. The latest Planning Newsletter is available online at www.nps.gov/NERI. For an on-line comment form go to <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/commentForm.cfm?parkID=259&projectID=11040&docum entId=20930> OR, send your written comments to;

Superintendent
New River Gorge National River
104 Main Street
PO Box 246
Glen Jean, WV 25846

If Possible, try to get to one of the 3 public meetings the Park service is holding and advocate for Wilderness protection for the 3 areas selected.

Sandstone Tuesday, November 6th 2007 from 5-6:30pm
Hinton Technology Center, 301 Summers St., Hinton

Beckley Wednesday, November 7th, 2007 from 3-5pm
Tamarack Conference Center, One Tamarack Park (exit 45, I 77)

Fayetteville Thursday, November 8th 2007 from 7-9 pm
American Legion Hall, 205 W. Maple Ave., Fayetteville