

Upper Bald River Wilderness

Cherokee National Forest



9,197 acres, Monroe County, Tennessee

Description

The Upper Bald River Wilderness Study Area is the only stand-alone area recommended by the U.S. Forest Service for wilderness designation. The 9,112 acre area was identified as a Wilderness Study Area in the 2004 Forest Plan, and is currently managed consistent with wilderness guidelines. The Wilderness Study Area, along with the existing Bald River Gorge Wilderness (designated in 1984) constitutes most of the Bald River watershed. The area proposed for wilderness designation offers the rare



Brook Trout Illustration by Duane Raver/USFWS



opportunity to protect an entire watershed, thus securing the water quality, trout and wildlife habitat in a well-defined and geographically distinct area. In addition to the 9,112 acres recommended by the Forest Service, we have identified 85 acres high in the headwaters of the Upper Bald River watershed that we would like protected. This modest addition brings the total wilderness proposal to 9,197 acres.

The Upper Bald River area is a beautiful and rugged landscape dominated by hardwood forests. The area is traversed by both the Benton MacKaye Trail and the Brookshire Creek Trail. These trails are open to and frequented by both hikers and horseback riders. The area is also popular with both hunters and anglers, and is home to sizable populations of Black Bear, White-tailed Deer and native Brook Trout. The area serves as the headwaters for the Bald River, including numerous tributaries and the upper portion of the river. Tributary streams including Brookshire Creek, Kirkland Creek, and Waucheesi Creek are part of an important and popular trout fishery that includes the entire Bald River

drainage and the Tellico River. The area is also home to a dizzying array of flora and fauna.

Location

The Upper Bald River Wilderness Study Area is located in Monroe County, Tennessee – approximately 20 miles east of the town of Tellico Plains. To the south of the watershed lays the Nantahala National Forest in North Carolina. The northern boundary is Bald River Road (FDR 126, and the Holly Flats Campground is found along this road (excluded from wilderness). The area is an easy 90-minute drive from Knoxville, Tennessee.

For more information contact:

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