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The Push For A National Park And Preserve



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An advocate for a proposed national park and preserve in West Virginia, what would be a first for the Mountain State, says the addition makes sense.

"We think that the High Allegheny National Park and Preserve, which includes a large hunting component, would be an economic engine for the Highlands which really needs more jobs and more revenue," Judy Rodd, the Executive Director of Friends of Blackwater, said.

Starting this month, officials with the National Park Service will be conducting a reconnaissance study to gather information about the proposal which could include parts of more than half a dozen counties in the Monongahela National Forest.

Those counties include Preston, Tucker, Randolph, Pocahontas, Pendleton, Hardy and Hampshire and cover an area from Cathedral State Park near Route 50 in Tucker County to the Cass Scenic Railroad in Pocahontas County.

The reconnaissance study, an early step in a process that could take years, will determine if the land is worthy of park and preserve status.

Rodd says clearing that hurdle should not be a problem.

"West Virginia has some of the most beautiful landscapes in the Eastern United States and people need to know about it and that's the value of a national park, is that it brings more visibility to an area and you get more visitors."

She says visitors would be coming to hunt, fish, take in the scenery or stop at historical locations. And, Rodd says, because land would simply be moved from one federal agency to another federal agency, no cost would be involved.

National Park Service officials say the reconnaissance study that comes at the request of U.S. Senator Joe Manchin should be finished by September of 2012. After that, a more thorough special resources study would be conducted.

The creation of the High Allegheny National Park and Preserve will ultimately need Congressional approval.

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