

Table C-9. Evaluation of Morrison, Tracy Ridge and Minister Valley			
Inventory Criteria	Potential Inventoried Roadless Areas		
	Morrison	Tracy Ridge	Minister Valley
Total Acres	2,483	9,033	9,145
Acres Core Solitude	980	3,174	3,210
Does boundary and shape follow natural or relatively permanent features	Yes. Defined by roads, well defined ridgelines and Allegheny Reservoir. Shape is relatively uniform.	Yes. Defined by roads and Allegheny Reservoir. Shape is somewhat long and linear	Yes. Defined by roads and utility corridor. Some minor conflict may occur with boundary on private land in NE corner. Shape is uniform
1. Area regaining a natural, untrammeled appearance	Yes. The majority of the area appears natural and untrammeled	Yes. The majority of the area appears natural and untrammeled	Yes. There are some ML 1 and 2 roads however, the majority is regaining a natural appearance.
2. Improvements in area are affected primarily by forces of nature and are disappearing/muted	Yes. There are no improvements within the area. Rimrock recreation site forms border on west.	Yes. Includes hiking trail system and 2 boat-to campgrounds. Tracy Ridge and Willow Bay campgrounds not included.	Yes. Some of the road system is fairly evident. Includes extensive hiking trail system in some areas.
3. Area has existing or attainable NFS ownership patterns, surface & subsurface	Unknown - Depends on willing seller. 0 surface acres private land. 100% of subsurface in private ownership for oil/gas. Current proposal for drilling 30 to 100 wells and road access development.	Unknown - Depends on willing seller. 0 surface acres private land. 100% of subsurface in private ownership for oil/gas. Current active well and road development package proposed near Tracy Ridge campground.	Unknown - Depends on willing seller. 95 surface acres private land. 100% of subsurface in private ownership for oil/gas. No current mineral activity or proposed development packages known.
4. Area location is conducive to wilderness values (Proximity to oil & gas development, private land development, pollution sources or other obvious signs of development)	No. Area is adjacent to extensive oil/gas development which is encroaching on boundary. Allegheny Reservoir to SW with high density motorized water based recreation. Rimrock recreation development bordering area to west.	Yes. Area has small amount of private land on NW. Bordered by Allegheny Reservoir with some influence from motorized recreation. Steep topography helps buffer noise from reservoir. Oil/gas development proposed in area. No current development.	Yes. Area has private land on the north and south however, large uniform shape helps buffer interior area from outside influences. Oil and gas development to south.
5. No more than ½ mile of improved road per 1,000 acres in FS jurisdiction.	Yes, 0 miles/1,000 acres	Yes, 0 miles/1,000 acres	Yes, 0.4 miles/1,000 acres
6. 15% or less with non-native planted vegetation	Yes	Yes	Yes, 3% wildlife openings.
7. 20% or less of area harvested in last 10 years	Yes	Yes	Yes, Less than 10%.
8. Only a few private dwellings or access needs to dwellings	Yes, no access needs to private dwellings	Yes, no access needs to private dwellings	Yes, access needs to private land on edge of area which can be excluded
Area meets criteria for inventory	No	Yes	Yes

ROADLESS AREA 19001 (TRACY RIDGE)

OVERVIEW

Size

Acres: (As calculated using GIS. Actual ground surveyed acres will likely vary)

Forest Service:	9,033 acres
Private:	0 acres
Total:	9,033 acres

Location, Vicinity, and Access

The Tracy Ridge Roadless Area (RA) is located on the Allegheny National Forest, Bradford Ranger District, in the counties of Warren and McKean, Pennsylvania. It is currently a part of the congressionally designated Allegheny National Recreation Area. Nearby towns include Bradford, Pennsylvania to the west, Russell, Scandia and Warren, Pennsylvania to the east/southeast, and Steamburg and Salamanca, New York to the north. The area is generally bound by the Allegheny Reservoir to the west and by roads to the north and east. Specifically, it is bound on the north below Willow Bay Recreation Area along Forest Route 602 off of State Route 346 just below the New York state line. A small parcel of private land also borders the area in the northeast corner along the intersection of State Route 346 and State Route 321. On the west, it is bound by approximately 7 miles of the Allegheny Reservoir shoreline, on the south by a utility corridor just north of the Allegheny Reservoir at Sugar Bay and on the west by State Route 321 and Tracy Ridge Campground. The Tracy Ridge Campground is not included in the RA.

The area is found within U.S.G.S. Cornplanter Run Quadrangle, PA.-N.Y. State Routes 321 and 346, Forest Route 602 and the Tracy Ridge Campground and Willow Bay Recreation Area provide major vehicle access from the east and north. The area is also easily accessible by boat from the Allegheny Reservoir to the west as there are 3 major boat ramps within close proximity to the area, Willow Bay, Webbs Ferry and Roper Hollow. There are no improved roads within the RA however; there are approximately 31 miles of hiking trails which include the North Country National Scenic Trail (10.7 miles) and the Tracy Ridge/Johnny Cake loop trail system (20 miles). Approximately 5 miles of the Tracy Ridge Trail are also a designated National Recreation Trail.

There are a number of abandoned roads and facilities from early oil and gas and logging production; i.e., old roads, railroad grades, pipelines, oil well sites, power houses, rodlines and cleared rights-of-way, which have primarily reverted to natural Forest conditions. Many of the abandoned roads were incorporated into the Tracy Ridge/Johnnycake trail system. There are also two boat-to campgrounds within the RA, Handsome Lake and Hopewell, which are located along the Allegheny Reservoir.

History

This RA has a long history of use and has previously been considered for wilderness designation and study. Under the Pennsylvania Wilderness Act of 1984 (H.R. 5076), Hickory Creek, Allegheny Islands, Tracy Ridge, Complanter, and Allegheny Front RARE II areas (Roadless Area Review and Evaluation, 1979) were considered for wilderness designation. The Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs (Congress), to whom H.R. 5076 was referred, considered these areas on the Allegheny National Forest and established Hickory Creek and the Allegheny Islands as wilderness and Tracy Ridge, Complanter and Allegheny Front as the Allegheny National Recreation Area.

The RA was used by man beginning in the Prehistoric Period (11,000 B.C.-1600 A.D.) and continues into the Historical Period (1600 to present). Beginning about 1000 B.C. the Woodland period begins. The Woodland

Era is characterized by sedentism and the dependence upon agricultural crops. Pottery use is seen throughout Pennsylvania during this time period. Early in this period, the Hopewell-Adena cultures flourished and some evidence of their influence has been observed in the Allegheny floodplain proximal to the RA. Stone artifacts from early to late Woodland have been observed in and around the area. These have been located in rock shelters as well as village sites. Pallisaded villages were known in the immediate area and in other parts of the Allegheny Plateau.

The Iroquois people inhabited the Allegheny Plateau during prehistoric time well into historic and modern time. The Seneca Nation, part of the Iroquois Confederacy and Keepers of the Western Door, controlled the Allegheny Plateau until the close of the Revolutionary War. Treaties after the war of independence provided two reservations, one along the Allegheny River in close proximity to the RA, known as “Cornplanter’s Grant” and one further north in Salamanca, New York. The Cornplanter reservation was occupied until the river was flooded by the Corp. of Engineers in the 1960’s to create the Allegheny Reservoir.

Geography, Topography and Vegetation (Including Ecosystem Type)

According to ecological mapping, this area lies in the Allegheny High Plateau Subsection of the Northern Unglaciated Allegheny Plateau Section within the Laurentian Mixed Forest Province. This section is characterized by sharper ridge tops and narrower valleys than the glaciated portions of the plateau to the north and east. From the reservoir, this roadless area climbs steeply to the east forming a ridgeline that breaks into a broad rounded plateau which generally extends along the length of the area. There are approximately 7 miles of shoreline along the Reservoir. The area is drained by a dendritic drainage pattern type found throughout the Allegheny Plateau. The Allegheny River and tributaries of intermittent, perennial and ephemeral streams drain this roadless area and the surrounding slopes. The elevation ranges from 1328 to 2245 feet. The landscape contains no distinct or dominant rock formations or peaks.

Dominant soil orders include Alfisols, Entisols, Inceptisols, and Ultisols. Soils found within the RA are classified as Buchanan-Hartleton-Hazleton. The Soil Conservation Service describes these soils as, “Very deep and deep, somewhat poorly drained to well drained, nearly level to very steep soils; formed in materials weathered from sandstone and shale; on uplands.” (S.C.S. 1983, p-2)

The ecological landtype association for this area is 212Ga10, Frigid, Mesic, Mixed Oak and Northern Hardwoods. The distinguishing feature of this landtype is its steepness, higher general elevations, climate and potential frigid soils. Vegetation associations include white and red oak, black cherry, hemlock, beech, quaking aspen, red maple, yellow birch, sugar maple and open un-forested patches of mostly grass. **Although there are a few small openings 1 acre in size or less, the Tracy Ridge area is entirely forested and all forest is considered mature or greater than 50 years of age with the majority between 70 and 100 years.** Forest cover types include aspen (< 1%), conifer/mixed conifer (10%), northern hardwoods (7%), upland hardwood (6%) and oak (77%). There are 34 miles of stream which is well distributed across the area and 34 acres of scattered wetlands, all of which are associated with the Allegheny Reservoir or Nelse Run. A diversity of landform conditions including plateau, sideslope, and footslope can be found and portions of the high plateau west of Tracy Ridge contain large rock outcroppings.

Management Direction and Current Use

This RA is part of the 23,100 acre Allegheny National Recreation Area (NRA). The NRA is not one contiguous area as it is divided into three separate land allocations including Tracy Ridge RA to the east of the Allegheny Reservoir, Cornplanter to the west of the Reservoir and Allegheny Front which is south of the Reservoir along the Allegheny River. The NRA also includes the Allegheny Reservoir between Tracy Ridge and Cornplanter. The purposes for which the NRA was established include:

1. *Outdoor recreation including, but not limited to, hunting, fishing, hiking, backpacking, camping, nature study, and the use of motorized and non-motorized boats on the Allegheny Reservoir:*

2. *The conservation of fish and wildlife populations and habitat;*
3. *The protection of watersheds and maintenance of free flowing streams and the quality of ground and surface waters in accordance with applicable law;*
4. *The conservation of scenic, cultural, and other natural values of the area;*
5. *Allowing the development of privately owned oil, gas, and mineral resources subject to reasonable conditions prescribed by the Secretary under subsection (c) of this section for the protection of the area; and*
6. *Minimizing, to the extent practicable, environmental disturbances caused by resource development, consistent with the exercise of private property rights.*

In the current Forest Plan, the Management Area designation for the NRA is MA 6.4. The ANF incorporated standards and guidelines in the current plan in accordance with the purposes described above and the laws, rules, and regulations applicable to the National Forest System. The emphasis of this MA is to provide a land condition with vegetation generally progressing through the natural succession process to mature or over mature hardwood forest. The primary purpose is to: preserve and protect the natural scenic, scientific, historic, archaeological, ecological, educational, watershed and wildlife values and to provide enhancement of dispersed semi-primitive motorized and non-motorized recreation. This MA is managed as a National Recreation Area, typically without harvest, except to facilitate private and mineral resource exploration and development and/or to achieve wildlife and recreation management objectives. Typically, road construction is not allowed except for those needed to satisfy private legal rights. Public traffic within the area is not allowed.

Use of motorized off-highway vehicles is not permitted in the NRA except for administrative vehicles, emergency vehicles and use authorized by permit, contract or outstanding private rights. There are no trails designated for motorized OHV or snowmobile use. Equestrian use and mountain bike use on designated trails within the RA is prohibited as per Forest Supervisor closure order, however open, cross country horse and bike riding is allowed. There are two campgrounds and two boat launches located immediately adjacent to the RA. These include the Willow Bay Campground, Tracy Ridge Campground, Willow Bay Boat Launch and Sugar Bay Boat Launch. There are two campgrounds within the RA located along the Allegheny Reservoir, Hopewell and Handsome Lake which are boat-to/hike-in campgrounds. There are 30.68 miles of trail in the area linked to three trailhead parking areas: one adjoins Tracy Ridge Campground, another is just outside Willow Bay Campground, and a third is located along State Route 321 where Nelse Run enters Sugar Bay. Existing trail within the RA includes 19.98 miles in the Tracy Ridge/Johnny Cake loop system and 10.7 miles of the North Country National Scenic Trail. Hopewell and Handsome Lake Boat-to Campgrounds are along the Reservoir. Each site is roughly 6 acres and 7 acres respectively, constructed to development scale 2 (little site modification), contain a concrete single vault toilet, a well with a pump for potable water and each contains 20 single use campsites with a picnic table and fire ring at each site. Trail and campground maintenance occurs on an annual basis. Volunteers of the North Country Trail Association help with trail maintenance activities.

The primary use of this RA is for recreation associated with the trails, boat-to campgrounds, Allegheny Reservoir, scenery and wildlife. Recreation use is, on average, moderate with higher use on weekends than weekdays. Campground occupancy of the two boat-to campgrounds averaged 60% between 1997 and 2003.

Two types of trail users can be found; the long distance hiker or backpacker which hikes between trailhead locations and may camp along the way and the day-use hiker who hikes a portion of a trail to access the Reservoir, a vista or one of the boat-to campgrounds. Day hiking is most popular with visitors along the shorter trails to the Reservoir. The RA is used for a variety of additional dispersed activities and includes hunting, trapping, nature, wildlife and bird viewing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Many water based activities occur on the Reservoir including boating, jet and water skiing, fishing, and social gathering

on house boats and shoreline. Swimming off-shore of the RA is generally limited due to a relatively muddy, steep bottom.

Tracy Ridge RA is encumbered by outstanding mineral rights with roughly 94% or 8,491 acres of the subsurface mineral rights owned by private parties. There is currently no mineral drilling or exploration occurring in the RA; however drilling has occurred in the past with 5 well sites still remaining in the RA. These sites appear to be abandoned and there has been no drilling for over 20 years.

The Tracy Ridge RA was harvested for hardwood timber between the late 1880's and 1940's and the entire area consists of mid-seral (<150 years) second growth. There has been no large scale timber harvest since that time except for some small scale non-commercial release of aspen that occurred prior to 1980. The current plan allows for timber to be harvested only for achieving wildlife and recreation management objectives. Uneven-aged management or salvage is a management option used to maintain browse and mast production around existing habitat improvements, to maintain continuous canopy in visually sensitive areas, to enhance scenery in recreation travelways and use areas, to maintain or create permanent openings for wildlife and to provide viewpoints for recreationists. While these options occur within the current ANF Land and Resource Management Plan, no wildlife habitat or scenery improvement work has been conducted in the last 25 years other than bat box installation along the Allegheny Reservoir shoreline at the boat-to campgrounds. Vegetation management has been limited due to this areas status as a National Recreation Area however limited herbicide use as occurred to control gypsy moth through the use of Bt and Dimilin in the early 1990's.

Appearance of the Area and Characteristics of Surrounding Areas

The Tracy Ridge RA is characterized by steep rugged terrain leading to high plateau uplands set in a wooded landscape intermixed with streams and continuous forest cover. There are no prominent rock formations or peaks. There are eight scenic vistas located atop the plateau along the trail system. Dense vegetation often inhibits views from the vistas.

Within the RA, there are 31 miles of trails which have been maintained to varying standards and two boat-to campgrounds which are maintained to a high standard. The trails and campgrounds are visually evident and influence ecological processes, at a minimum, in the vicinity of the trails and campgrounds. Old roads and facilities from early oil and gas and logging production still exist in some areas; however, they have regained a mostly natural appearance. Approximately 5 oil well sites with old pumps still remain. The trail and sections of old road from Nelse Run to the boat-to campgrounds was widened in portions to approximately 20 feet to accommodate a bull dozer and maintenance vehicles in 2002. This was done as a recreation maintenance activity to accommodate the installation of the vault toilets in the boat-to campgrounds. This activity has altered the more natural appearance of the RA along the trail and old road system for approximately 2.3 miles.

Most of the area was cut over in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Approximately 4% of the forest is in the 61 to 70 year old class, 36% is in the 71 to 81 year class, 35% is in the 81 to 90 year class, 18% is in the 91 to 100 year class, and 6% is in the 101 to 110 year class.

The Allegheny Reservoir is largely undeveloped with little to no facilities or homes along the shore or uplands. Chestnut Ridge RA is located immediately to the west; separated from this RA only by State Route 321. Chestnut Ridge is similar in character to Tracy Ridge with steep rugged terrain and natural appearing, wooded landscapes. Chestnut Ridge can also be viewed from the uplands in this RA. Across the Reservoir to the east is a continuation of similar natural landforms and vegetation found in the Complanter portion of the NRA. To the north, the Allegany State Park offers a similar undeveloped landscape. The Tracy Ridge area and surrounding landscape provide a vast continuum of natural vegetation characterized by low development and low to moderate human influence.

Key Attractions

The primary attractions within this area are tied to the National Recreation Area, the Allegheny Reservoir, the trail system, the boat-to campgrounds and the scenery as follows:

- The RA is contained within a congressionally designated National Recreation Area which is recognized as having showcase recreation opportunities and scenery.
- The North Country National Scenic Trail and the Tracy Ridge/Johnny Cake Trails cross the area from north to south and connect to the Allegheny Reservoir from the road system east to west. These trails offer both day hikes and long distance hiking.
- The boat-to campgrounds, Hopewell and Handsome Lake, provide camping opportunities along the Allegheny Reservoir and they provide access and staging to the RA.
- Interior vistas along the plateau in higher elevations provide an overlook of the Reservoir and vast wooded landscapes in surrounding areas.
- A large, well distributed component of big trees that include species greater than 100 years old.

WILDERNESS CAPABILITY

Natural Integrity and Appearance

The scenic integrity of the Tracy Ridge RA is high. The RA contains eight documented vistas which are located along the trail system in higher elevations. Natural processes are operating within the area and overall, the area is minimally affected by outside forces except at the boat-to campgrounds where natural processes are affected by human influence and development. The logging and oil and gas development which occurred in the 1930's have regained a mostly natural appearance and do not compromise the areas's natural integrity and appearance. Trail maintenance has affected natural ecological processes however the range of influence is limited. Generally, the trail tread is limited to a 24 inch path with a 6 foot center line clearing limit. Trails are compatible with wilderness designation however not all maintenance activities are. The 20 foot clearing limits to accommodate the installation of the toilets at the campground has compromised the natural integrity to a moderate extent along this section of trail. The area has regenerated from past harvest and other land uses, and now the forest appears mature to old aged. Along the RA's southern edge, a utility corridor forms the RA boundary and when cleared, can appear dominate.

Opportunity for Solitude, Challenge and Primitive Recreation

This RA contains 9,033 acres which is easily accessible with good road and trail access on the north, south and east, and by boat via the Allegheny Reservoir on the west. There are several well-developed boat launches nearby. The RA is dissected by an expansive network of trails except for a portion (roughly 1/3) in the northeast corner which has no trail development. There are two large campgrounds which border the area, Tracy Ridge to the east and Willow Bay to the north and two boat-to campgrounds within the RA along the Reservoir. The area is at most 3 miles wide and approximately 7 miles long which makes it possible to traverse in a day whether traveling east to west or north to south. The Tracy Ridge RA is judged to have a moderate to high potential for providing primitive recreation and solitude in interior areas and low potential along the road system and adjacent to the campgrounds. The presence of the North Country Trail and Tracy Ridge/Johnny Cake trail system reduce the potential for challenge and solitude however, at times there is very little to no use on the trails. On busy summer weekends, 50 to 100 hikers are estimated to use the trail system. This periodic high use would sometimes challenge the solitude and serenity in wilderness. The potential for solitude and primitive recreation increases during winter months when the area generally receives low use. Trails are not groomed during winter months, campgrounds are closed and the opportunity for snow based primitive recreation and challenge is high. This information is consistent with a recent Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) inventory that identified the area as having an interior core of 3,174

acres for Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized recreation and 5,859 acres on the exterior as having a Roded Natural experience.

Special Features

Scenic: This area is part of a large complex of forested landscapes which offer long distance views of the surrounding area and the Allegheny Reservoir. The RA is a relatively large, unaltered landscape with few modifications from the ridgetops to the shoreline. The Allegheny Reservoir is a key scenic attraction. There is a large component of big trees that also provide a special scenic feature of the RA.

Scientific: There are no designated Research Natural Areas or Experimental Forests in the Tracy Ridge RA. The entire RA is part of a designated National Recreation Area.

Geological: There are no known areas of unique or rare rock formations in this RA.

Ecological: The Allegheny National Forest identified this RA as part of the 1995 Landscape Corridor Concept of continuous forest canopy for connecting the large forested blocks (wilderness, scenic areas, research natural areas, national recreation areas and roadless areas) to provide higher quality habitat and better ecosystem functions for wildlife. The Tracy Ridge RA is a larger representative core area for connectivity between forest patches being managed for late-successional habitats. This area has a large component of late successional forest habitat, especially in comparison to the remaining Forest which reflects the high importance of this RA in achieving habitat conservation goals for a variety of wildlife including neotropical birds as well as less mobile species such as reptiles, amphibians and small mammals.

Wildlife and Fish: The most significant characteristic of the Tracy Ridge area lies in the predominance of mature forest conditions, combined with the remote, undisturbed nature of the area. Undisturbed and/or undeveloped areas on the ANF are somewhat rare as the ANF contains extensive private development within the proclamation boundary, over 4,200 miles of roads (Forest Roads, State, County or Township roads, and oil and gas roads) and widespread oil and gas development. The Tracy Ridge area provides optimum habitat conditions for species that are sensitive to human disturbance, as well as species that require large blocks of mature forest habitat such as the bald eagle, great blue heron, red-shouldered hawk, black bear, northern goshawk and bobcat. The proximity of Tracy Ridge to Chestnut Ridge and the Allegany State Park in New York provides an important complex of mature, undisturbed forest areas for wildlife. Other key wildlife habitat features that characterize the Tracy Ridge area include the predominance of oak and northern hardwoods (88%) and the hard mast production associated with these Forest Types. The widespread distribution of oak in particular, greatly influences landscape level wildlife use and provides suitable habitat conditions for the Cerulean Warbler, which is presently being reviewed for listing under the Endangered Species Act and has been documented in the area during breeding bird surveys. Due to the presence of scattered openings, beaver ponds, apple trees and concentrated mixed conifer/hardwood stands, the North Branch Sugar Run bottom provides the most diverse habitat conditions within the Tracy Ridge area. Due to the proximity to the Allegheny Reservoir, the remote nature of the area and the presence of superior white pine trees that are preferred for nesting, the Tracy Ridge area provides some of the most desirable bald eagle nesting habitat in the Forest. Although no eagle nests have been identified within the area, eagles have been observed roosting at various locations along the western edge of the area, adjacent to the Allegheny Reservoir.

Rare and Endangered Animals: Although the federally endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis solalis*) has not been documented within the Tracy Ridge RA, suitable oak habitat is widely available. Additionally, a single Indiana bat was captured on private land within approximately 10 miles of the RA and detected on NFS lands within 3 miles of Tracy Ridge. As a result, the Tracy Ridge area is considered occupied Indiana bat habitat. The bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), which is federally threatened, also occurs within the Tracy Ridge area. Although there are no known nests within the RA, eagles have been observed roosting along the eastern

boundary of the RA adjacent to the Allegheny Reservoir. The only Regionally Sensitive species known to occur within Tracy Ridge is the Northern long-ear bat (*Motis septentrionalis*) and suitable habitat for this species occurs throughout the Tracy Ridge area. Streams and their biological resources are not unique nor have extraordinary fisheries, aquatic invertebrates, or mussel populations. There are no known federally listed threatened or endangered aquatic species nor are there any known Regional Forester Sensitive Species.

Rare and Endangered Plants: There have been few to no formal plant surveys within the RA. Currently, there are no known records of state or federally listed rare or endangered plants, Regional Forester Sensitive Plant Species or other plant species of viability concern. However, this RA is considered to contain suitable habitat for species of viability concern.

Historical: There are 2 known prehistoric open sites recorded for the Tracy Ridge area. No historic sites have been documented. The Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) considers all rockshelters and upland open sites to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of historic places. These sites need further testing to gather data to facilitate determinations of eligibility. Potential for prehistoric as well as historic sites is moderate-to-high.

Size, Shape and Manageability

The size and shape of the Tracy Ridge RA makes its preservation as potential wilderness practical. The proximity of the RA to multi-use private lands in the northeast quarter may present management challenges near border areas as well as near the boat-to campgrounds and the Willow Bay and Tracy Ridge Campgrounds. There may be additional management challenges along the Allegheny Reservoir shoreline where motorized boats land and use the uplands. The motorized boat use may not be consistent with wilderness designation.

Boundary Conditions, Needs and Management Requirements

Most of the property boundary lines are well defined by roads on the north and east, a utility corridor on the south and the Reservoir on the west. The boat-to campgrounds contain non-wilderness developments which would be difficult to remove and the history of developed use in these campgrounds would make wilderness management difficult. Also, there is historic motorized access by boat to the Allegheny Reservoir shoreline which would be difficult to eliminate or restrict. Adjusting the boundary to exclude the boat-to campgrounds as well as establishing the boundary above the high water mark for boat landings is warranted. Additionally, activities and motorized use within the Willow Bay and Tracy Ridge Campgrounds could impact wilderness users. Boundary adjustments to buffer the Willow Bay and Tracy Ridge Campgrounds may be warranted if this RA is designated as wilderness.

AVAILABILITY FOR WILDERNESS DESIGNATION

Recreation, Including Tourism

Designation of this RA as wilderness would not eliminate its current designation as a National Recreation Area (NRA). However, more restrictive wilderness management standards and guidelines would supersede the less restrictive management direction currently established for the NRA. The NRA allows for greater recreation use than wilderness designation and provides greater alteration of the land to manage and maintain trails, scenery, wildlife, and forest health conditions. Future planning for the NRA could result in increased opportunities for development of overnight facilities such as Adirondack shelters and dispersed campsites for hikers as well as increased trail development opportunities for snowmobiling, mountain biking and horse use. Designation of Tracy Ridge as wilderness would eliminate or restrict future options for these types of recreation activities and improvements in the NRA.

Wilderness designation would restrict trail maintenance on the North Country Trail and the Tracy Ridge/Johnny Cake trail system to the use of non-motorized equipment and non-mechanical transport of

supplies and personnel. Historically, chainsaws and mechanical transport have been used to maintain these trails. With the restriction on use of chainsaws and other mechanized equipment, maintenance of the trail system will be more challenging and time consuming. Trail directional signing and marking would conform to wilderness sign standards. Existing signs and trail markers would need to be replaced or removed in order to meet wilderness standards.

Wilderness designation may also warrant future public use restrictions by limiting visitor use and distribution including establishment of group size limits to preserve the wilderness character of the area, whereas, the NRA allows for greater visitor use and group size limits. Currently, there are no restrictions on group size within the NRA.

Recreation objectives for wilderness are to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation (FSM2323.11 (2)). Campsites should not be designated and existing camps should be relocated or removed to allow maximum opportunity for solitude and to minimize the evidence of human use. The boat-to campgrounds in the NRA would not be compatible with wilderness designation. Removal of these areas would reduce benefits to other non-wilderness recreationists. Adjusting the boundary to eliminate these areas is an option however; the campgrounds may impact some wilderness user's experience. Likewise, the large, developed Willow Bay and Tracy Ridge Campgrounds infiltrate the RA on the periphery. Use of these campgrounds may also impact wilderness experiences and values.

The NRA allows for motorized use of boats on the Allegheny Reservoir, for landing and exploration of the shoreline and camping at the designated boat-to campgrounds. Wilderness designation excludes the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport including the use of motorized boats landing on shore. Establishing the boundary above the high water mark would allow this use to continue however, use of boats on the Reservoir may still impact some wilderness users' experience.

Wilderness designation advertised and included in a broad tourism planning effort may draw visitors to the Tracy Ridge RA attracting recreationists seeking remote, primitive and unconfined types of recreation and solitude. However, the NRA currently provides many wilderness values including the opportunity for solitude and serenity, self-reliance, adventure, challenging experiences, and semi-primitive recreation. For many recreationists, primeval wilderness character is less important than protection (Loomis, 1999). The NRA designation was considered an alternate to wilderness designation with the intended purpose of protecting the undeveloped character of the area. This designation protects the RA from timber harvest, road construction and most road based recreation.

Wildlife and Fish

Minimal disturbance to the area has occurred due to Tracy Ridge's current designation as a National Recreation Area. Wilderness designation would maintain the remote, undeveloped character of the area which is considered the areas greatest wildlife asset. Wilderness designation would further restrict human influence and disturbance primarily from recreation maintenance activities and visitor use restrictions. Numbers of users and group size may be more limited with a wilderness designation than National Recreation Area designation. A minimum tool approach would replace the current option of using chain saws and other mechanized equipment for trail maintenance in which wildlife may benefit from reduced human disturbance and noise. **Designation as wilderness would benefit those species seeking remote, undisturbed habitats (e.g., black bear, bobcat, northern goshawk) and those that benefit from a mature, continuous forest.**

Risks to wildlife habitat include the presence of exotic pests such as gypsy moth and hemlock wooly adelgid. Wilderness designation would limit intervention and control of disease and pest outbreaks. Without treatment, disease (e.g., Beech Bark Disease Complex) or pests could reduce, or eliminate, certain habitat conditions. Current management practices found in the 1986 ANF Land and Resource Management Plan allow for pesticides in designated Wilderness only when necessary to prevent the loss of significant aspects of

the designated wilderness or to prevent significant loss of resource values on private or public lands bordering the Wilderness. Suppression of non-native invasive species, where native ecological communities or TES species are threatened by their presence, is allowed in designated wilderness.

Oak is a fire dependent ecosystem and if it is to be maintained over the long-term, periodic under burning and manipulation of the canopy is required to reduce competition of other hardwoods. This is particularly the case on the ANF due to decades of over browsing by deer which further reduces the likelihood that oak seedlings will become established. The absence of roads in the National Recreation Area already restricts management's ability to maintain oak. Wilderness designation of the Tracy Ridge area would eliminate management activities that promote oak regeneration and mast production which is important to many species on the ANF.

There are 13 miles of perennial stream, 14 miles of intermittent stream and 7.4 miles of Reservoir shoreline, all of which provide suitable habitat for cold-water fisheries communities. All streams are dependent on natural reproduction and none are stocked with trout due to their small size and accessibility. The ability to use motorized equipment to conduct fisheries surveys would be eliminated with wilderness designation.

Typically, the ANF has not improved fish habitat on cold-water streams, but relies on natural input of large wood for the creation of habitat diversity. This RA occurs in the National Recreation Area (NRA) where this type of work has not occurred. Wilderness designation would not change the way fish habitat improvements have been managed in this RA.

Noncommercial hunting, fishing and trapping are allowed in wilderness. In addition, wildlife and fish species may be stocked in order to restore a native species that has been eliminated or reduced by human influence. Exotic species may not be stocked. Habitat may be manipulated only when it is necessary to correct conditions resulting from human influence or to protect threatened or endangered species. Research and management surveys are permitted if done in a manner compatible with the preservation of wilderness guidelines.

Water Availability and Use

The streams in this RA are not part of a municipal watershed and there are no known water storage needs. No change in water quality is anticipated if the RA were designated as wilderness.

Livestock, Timber and Minerals

Timber harvest and the associated production of wood products from this RA do not occur as the National Recreation Area designation prohibits this use. Timber harvest and production would not occur with wilderness designation either. Currently, 8,044 acres of the RA are capable of growing commercial crops for timber (Source: ANF GIS Timber Suitability analysis).

Ninety-four percent of the subsurface mineral ownership is by private individual(s). During consideration of this RA as wilderness in 1984, Congress found that the Tracy Ridge area possessed a high quality wilderness resource however "matters were complicated" in that the bulk of the wilderness candidate lands in question were underlain by privately owned mineral rights. Available information at that time suggested that the rights underlying the area were likely to be exercised and that exploration for oil and gas resources appeared imminent. Accordingly, the Committee believed that wilderness designation would be "futile" unless the mineral rights problem could be resolved (refer to H.R. 5067).

Due to the estimated high oil and gas values, outright purchase of mineral rights was judged to be too costly. In particular the mineral values in Tracy Ridge, Complanter and Allegheny Front were believed to be in excess of \$10 to \$100 million to acquire.

Currently, the mineral rights have not been purchased in Tracy Ridge and there are no known willing sellers. Although the exploration of oil and gas seemed imminent, no development occurred since the area was designated as a National Recreation Area in 1984. There is current interest (April, 2004) to drill within the RA to test for the presence of hydrocarbons with the potential for a 5 to 10 year drilling development program. Associated with a drilling program is the removal of vegetation and construction of access roads. This area has been characterized as having a high potential for shallow oil and deep gas production (Legislative Report HR 5067, PA Wilderness Bill, 1984). New technology and current market trends make the potential for oil and gas drilling and exploration high. Wilderness designation would not prohibit the exercise of private oil and gas development. The goal of the Forest Service would be to mitigate impacts of development on wilderness values. Consistent with the valid existing rights, a review and approval of operating plans that incorporate reasonable terms and conditions for the protection of the wilderness character of the area, and that provide for restoration as near as practicable of the disturbed lands promptly upon abandonment of operations is warranted (FSM 2830). Acquisition of the mineral rights within this RA is a future option available to the Forest Service.

There are no livestock operations or potential for such operations.

Heritage Resources

Cultural features such as archaeological sites, historic trails or routes, or structures that have been included in wilderness are protected and maintained by using methods that are consistent with the preservation of wilderness character and values and cultural resource protection requirements. Only two heritage resource surveys have been conducted in this RA, both of which have been documented as prehistoric sites. This area also has a long history of use beginning in the Prehistoric Period (11,000 B.C.-1600 A.D.) and continuing into the Historical Period (1600 to present). Additional survey, research and evaluation for prehistoric and historic Native American sites is warranted. Preservation activities such as salvage rehabilitation, stabilization, restoration, excavation and intensive inventories are approved on a case-by-case basis, if they will not degrade the overall wilderness character of the area. Cultural resource sites that appear to qualify are nominated for the National Register of Historic Places. Unless they are needed to provide wilderness benefits or serve administrative purposes, those sites or structures that do not qualify for the National Register are allowed to deteriorate naturally, or are removed or destroyed. The degree to which heritage resources may be interpreted on site might also be affected by wilderness designation. Development of heritage interpretive trails and panels would be restricted in order to meet and retain wilderness character. Interpretation of sites is done outside of wilderness, except for verbal interpretations by wilderness rangers.

Land Uses

No special uses are currently issued for this RA. There is a utility corridor which forms the border on the southern boundary. There are no other encumbrances other than the ownership of oil and gas subsurface rights by private individuals. There are currently no outfitter and guides operating in this RA. Wilderness designation would allow for selected outfitter-guide services, but only where they do not degrade wilderness character.

Management Considerations

Fire: Fire is an important natural disturbance that regulates or helps to maintain several natural communities, especially oak, which is an important component of this RA. However, wildfire occurrence is rare for this RA. Wilderness designation would prevent agency management of disturbance regimes, and thus may result in the loss of some species requiring introduced disturbances. Fire would be allowed to play a more natural role in the ecosystem except where such activity would be a threat to public safety, private property, or adversely affect resources adjacent to the wilderness. Naturally ignited fires may be designated and managed as prescribed natural fires (fire use) in wildernesses that have approved fire management plans, as long as the fire meets and remains within established criteria.

Insects/Disease: Outbreaks of insects and diseases are a major threat to the ANF and wide scale outbreaks have occurred on the Forest. Under wilderness designation, routine control measures for potential disease outbreaks would be restricted. Insect and disease outbreaks may be controlled if necessary to protect adjacent lands or an unnatural loss of the wilderness resource due to exotic pests. Control measures are carried out with the least adverse impacts on the wilderness resource and are compatible with wilderness management objectives. Special care must be taken with the use of chemicals inside wilderness because of possible effects on the total biological complex.

Rare Plants and Unique Ecosystems: There are no known records of state or federally listed plant species, Regional Forester Sensitive Plant Species, or other plant species of viability concern within the RA, nor are there records of rare or exemplary natural communities. There is potentially suitable habitat for rare plants in the area. The National Recreation Area designation already limits human disturbance and management practices such as timber harvest and road construction. Wilderness designation would further limit human disturbance and management practices, however impacts from trail maintenance and trampling may continue regardless of designation, as the North Country Trail and Tracy Ridge/Johnny Cake trail system will remain and may pass through suitable habitat. Given the current management practices established for the NRA, wilderness designation would likely have a neutral effect on potential rare plants and unique ecosystems.

Non-native Invasive Species: Both non-native and native plant species pose a serious threat to the ANF. While there are no widespread invasive conditions in the RA, the potential for occurrence is high. On-site observations have identified three populations of Japanese barberry along the North Country Trail within the RA. Management of non-native invasive plants typically includes the components of the Integrated Weed (or Pest) Management Process. If treatment options are pursued, they are done using direction in the Wilderness Act of 1964 to address insect and disease infestations. All options to address non-native invasive plants in wilderness are available including no treatment, hand pulling, herbicides and biological control. Any request to use herbicides in wilderness requires the approval of the Regional Forester.

Non-Federal Lands: There are no private lands located within the RA however there is private land adjacent to the area in the northeast corner. Access is provided along the road system and access through the area is not anticipated.

SUMMARY OF WILDERNESS EVALUATION: BENEFIT & IMPACT

There is a mix of opportunity for solitude and serenity, self-reliance, adventure, challenging experiences, and primitive recreation ranging from low to high in the Tracy Ridge RA. These opportunities are high in interior areas away from adjacent roads, the Allegheny Reservoir, developed campgrounds and the North Country National Scenic Trail and Tracy Ridge/Johnny Cake trail systems. Challenging experiences can be had by testing one's orienteering and survival skills in an area that is un-marked, where only unique landforms or distinct vegetation provide guidance. Primitive recreation opportunities include fishing, cross country hiking, dispersed camping and hunting. These opportunities diminish the closer you are to the periphery near campgrounds, roads and the Allegheny Reservoir which is often busy with boat traffic and noise, especially in the summer. The majority of the RA however, provides moderate to high potential to provide the wilderness attributes and values appropriate for wilderness designation.

There are few places on the Forest that offer as high quality scenery, natural integrity and wide scale ecosystem function as the Tracy Ridge RA. This area has a large component of late successional forest habitat, especially in comparison to the remaining Forest, which reflects the high importance of this RA in achieving habitat conservation goals for a variety of wildlife including neotropical birds as well as less mobile species such as reptiles, amphibians and small mammals. The presence of a significant old tree component enhances the scenic quality of the area for potential wilderness.

Due to the current designation of the area as a National Recreation Area, there would be no change in terms of timber harvest, road construction or prohibition of OHV use. Other changes such as the elimination of motorized equipment for trail maintenance would occur and there would be no vegetation management activities allowed to achieve wildlife and recreation management objectives. There would be no change in the exercise of rights for private oil and gas development. Areas in the East are actually recommended to Congress for wilderness study designation. If this RA is designated as a wilderness study area, examination of the mineral rights is conducted as part of the study process and may include both the potential for development and consideration for the acquisition of subsurface mineral rights.