



Goshen Pass Natural Area Preserve

ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY | 936 ACRES

The Natural Area Preserve System

Natural area preserves are dedicated to protect habitat for rare and endangered plants, animals, and significant natural communities and geologic features. Currently, there are 66 natural area preserves protecting more than 59,700 acres statewide. While DCR provides public access at many preserves, recreation is secondary to biodiversity protection. Preserves are open from sunrise to sunset unless otherwise posted. When you visit any preserve, please follow these guidelines so DCR can ensure these natural areas will be healthy and resilient for generations to come.

- A full parking lot means the preserve has reached capacity.
- Stay on marked trails.
- No camping or fires.
- No unleashed pets.
- No bicycles, ATVs or off-road vehicles.
- No horses.
- No collection of plants, animals, minerals or artifacts.
- No rock climbing.

About Goshen Pass

Goshen Pass is Virginia's oldest state-managed natural area. The preserve is home to an exemplary Central Appalachian chestnut oak forest community, two rare plants and one rare animal. Habitats along the Maury River include a Central Appalachian Sycamore-River Birch Scour Woodland. Spring floods often inundate this habitat, which is rich in native plant species.

The property has been owned and managed by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) since 1954 as a natural area. State protection was possible at that time because of ongoing efforts of local citizens during the previous decades, as well as a grant from the Perry Foundation. In 2002, these 936 acres were dedicated as Goshen Pass Natural Area Preserve.

Natural History

About 420 million years ago, the area that is now Goshen Pass was part of a large, shallow inland sea. The sea bottom accumulated sediments that eventually became sandstone, shale and limestone. The Appalachian Mountains were being formed about 320 million years ago. This mountain-building consisted of the uplifting, compression, warping and faulting of the earth's surface and resulted in the ridges we see above the pass today. The pass itself was formed over millions of years by the action of the Maury River down-cutting through rock, in combination with the uplifting of the land surface.

Goshen Pass Natural Area Preserve encompasses most of the steep slopes on the northeast side of the gorge. Dry, acidic thin-soiled sites are vegetated with Table Mountain pine (*Pinus pungens*), pitch pine (*P. rigida*) and a variety of heaths including mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*) and blueberry (*Vaccinium pallidum*). On much of the preserve, oak forest dominated by chestnut oak (*Quercus montana*) is the prevalent community type. Mixed oak forests are also present consisting of white oak (*Q. alba*), black oak (*Q. velutina*) and scarlet oak (*Q. coccinea*), along with various hickories (*Carya spp.*).

The Maury River and its banks are home to some Virginia rarities. The Appalachian jewelwing (*Calopteryx angustipennis*) is a rare damselfly (a delicate-looking relative of dragonflies) that may be spied flitting about the boulder-strewn shore. In the river's scour zone – the area that is frequently flooded – are patches of the rare freshwater cordgrass (*Spartina pectinata*), a predominantly Midwestern species, closely related to the cordgrasses found in Virginia's tidal marshes. Also found on rocky and sandy areas along the river is another rare plant, sand grape (*Vitis rupestris*) that, like the freshwater cordgrass, is more common in the Midwest.



Public access for Goshen Pass

The Goshen Pass Natural Area Preserve is surrounded by the Goshen/Little North Mountain Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Public access to both is available at a trailhead parking area off Route 39 with a swinging bridge that crosses the Maury River. To park here, the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR), which maintains the parking area and bridge, requires a WMA Access Permit for visitors age 17 years and older who do not possess a valid Virginia hunting, freshwater fishing or trapping license, or boat registration. For information on acquiring a WMA Access Permit, contact:

Department of Wildlife Resources - Verona Office: 540-248-9360

<http://www.dwr.virginia.gov/access-permit/>

Directions to Goshen Pass

To reach the parking area near the northwest corner of the preserve, take I-81 to I-64 (exit 191) near Lexington. Go 0.5 mile to Route 11 north (Exit 55). Bear right at the end of the ramp onto Route 11 and go 0.1 mile to the first traffic light. Turn left onto State Route 39 west. Go 15.4 miles and turn right on the gravel road that leads into the parking area. This gravel road is 1.7 miles north of the VDOT rest area near the middle of Goshen Pass.

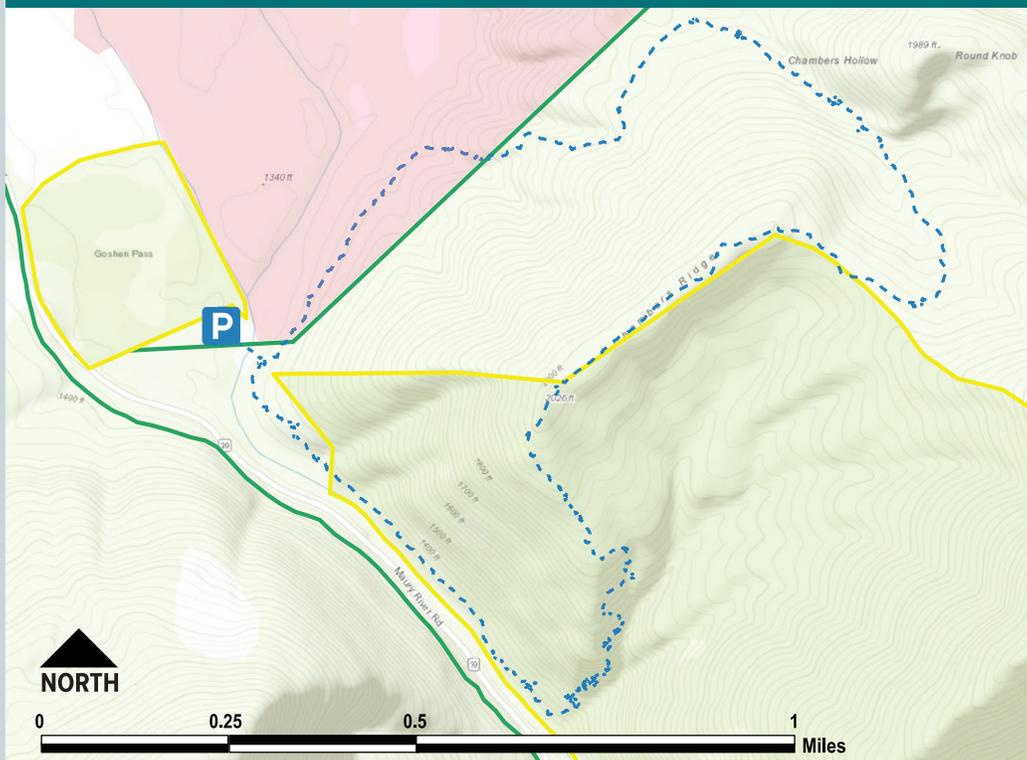
If the lot is full, please wait for a space to open or come back another time.

The Preserve Loop Trail is an arduous 3.5-mile hike. It is recommended to start the trail by following the river downstream (turn right after the swinging bridge), then heading up the ridge. Posted trail signs and tree blazes are in blue.

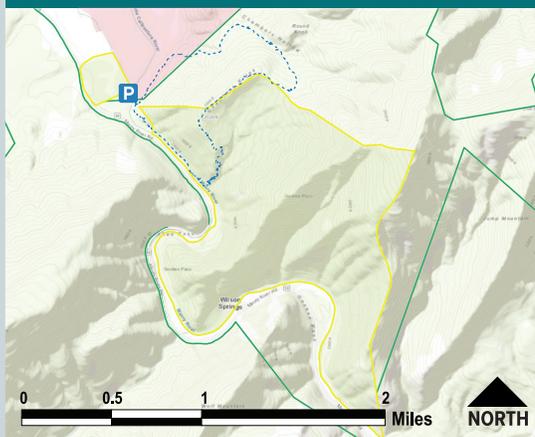
This is the only state-maintained trail in the preserve or WMA.

Photos: *Goshen Pass*, Irvine T. Wilson, *Appalachian Jewelwing*, Jim Johnson

PRESERVE LOOP TRAIL MAP



GOSHEN PASS NAP



- - - Preserve Loop Trail
- P Parking Lot
- Goshen Pass NAP Boundary
- Goshen/Little North Mountain WMA Boundary
- Boy Scouts of America

VITA, West Virginia GIS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, INCREMENT P, Intermap, USGS, METI/NASA, EPA, USDA

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