



# Beaver Creek WMA

TUCKED WITHIN THE heart of the Beaver Creek Wildlife Management Area in Pulaski and McCreary counties is a hidden gem. Descend past the spectacular 200-foot-tall sandstone cliffs of the interior and you'll find yourself in the middle of one of only two federally-designated wilderness areas in Kentucky.

"In the wilderness, there's a lot of rhododendron, mountain laurel and underbrush – it's thick in there," noted Supervisory Forester Laurie A. Smith of the U.S. Forest Service. "The trails are primitive; visitors

should be able to use a map and compass."

Beaver Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) which was first acquired in 1940, now consists of nearly 18,000 acres. In 1975, Congress created the 4,800-acre Beaver Creek Wilderness within this area.

It is an area rich with history. Native Americans lived among the cliffines for nearly 12,000 years. Settlers moved into the area in the late 1800s to carve out farms and dig for coal. The Bauer Cooperage Company used white oaks cut from the area to make whiskey barrels until the mid-1920s. Rem-

nants of past communities, such as foundations and walls, can still be seen in the area.

In 1947, Beaver Creek WMA was one of four areas to receive deer as part of a major restoration effort started after World War II. In 1956, the area was among the first to allow deer hunting when Kentucky reopened a limited season for the first time in decades.

Nowadays, deer concentrations are low because an outbreak of hemorrhagic disease several years ago thinned the herd – only 11 deer were taken there last year. Currently, Beaver Creek is open for archery hunting, but closed for youth firearms and muzzle-loading seasons. Gun hunting is only allowed during a quota hunt. Only antlered bucks may be taken during the quota hunt.

"Most people hunt deer on the ridge tops of the WMA," said Area Foreman George Corder. "Some of the locals do venture into the wilderness to hunt. But you have to make a good commitment if you harvest one there, because you have to bring it out. You have to be dedicated."

Motorized vehicles or anything with wheels – including game carts – are not allowed in the wilderness area.

Other hunting opportunities do exist. Last year, a bear was taken off the WMA for the first time. Corder noted the area has good numbers of squirrels, turkeys, bobcats and coyotes.

Beaver Creek WMA is 93 percent forested, with 60 man-made openings totaling 155 acres spread throughout the landscape. Oaks are becoming the dominant species of this forest, following the devastation of the area's pines by the southern pine beetle a decade ago. ■

### HOW TO GET THERE

From Somerset, take U.S. 27 south to Bauer Road.

### GPS Coordinates

36.896211,  
-84.495152

