

# ***Holly River State Park Potato Knob and Laurel Fork Trails: A Trail for Everyone***

by Jim Hudson

Holly River is not one of the better-known State Parks in West Virginia. It doesn't have a big lodge, a golf course or a ski resort. Two things the State Park does have are the Holly River State Park Foundation and trails. Among the close to forty miles of trails in the park are two of note, Potato Knob Trail and Laurel Fork Trail. Both of these trails have recently benefited from the Foundation and Recreational Trail grants from West Virginia Division of Highways and the Federal Highways Administration.

On June 14, 2007, The Coalition for Recreational Trails awarded their 2007 Annual Achievement Awards for Design and Construction to Holly River State Park Foundation for **Potato Knob Trail**. Potato Knob Trail provides a walkway and a series of steps over rugged terrain down to the scenic Upper Falls of the Left Fork of Holly River all while meeting USDA *Forest Service Trail Accessibility Guidelines*. Before this trail, the only access to the falls was by scooting down the hill.



Steep terrain beyond the overlook provided a condition for departure from the grade requirements in several locations. The trail is approximately 200 feet long and has a change in altitude of approximately 120 feet over one stretch.

The extreme terrain makes compliance with the technical provision for grade impractical. Complying with the grade requirements in these areas would cause the trail to be significantly longer and cause a greater impact on the environment. Steps were constructed to carry the trail over these stretches.



**Laurel Fork Trail** on the other hand has recently been rebuilt into a trail that is truly accessible to everyone. The entrance to the trail is located in the parking lot adjacent to the activity building near the park office. Two paved parking spots with an unloading area between them are reserved for those with disabilities. A short distance from the parking area a nicely constructed sign welcomes you to the trail.



Past the sign, a broad bridge takes you to the loop trail. While every new feature of the trail was designed to be accessible but efforts were made to preserve the historic drinking fountains, fire pits and other stonework installed when the park was built in the 1930s. For instance, the original drinking fountain has its modern accessible counterpart just a few yards away.



Among the new trailside amenities are well-designed conversation areas with benches and swings and ample space for those in wheel chairs or scooters to join in discussions or simply sit and visit with nature. Also located along the trail are numerous small signs provided snippets of history about the park. Directly above the brown and yellow signs are green plastic signs repeating the same information in Braille.



Two of the original features that remain along the trail are the picnic shelters. While they are the original structures each has had an accessible picnic table installed in it to make it easier for those with disabilities to join their families and friends in the outdoors.



The Laurel Fork Trail connects to other trails in the park including Tramontane Trail and Salt Lick Trail. And, like most State Parks, Holly River has its share of wildlife.



Whether you are looking for a rugged hike like Potato Knob trail or a leisurely day along Laurel Fork, the little known Holly River State Park probably has a trail that will meet your needs. At the very least, you should get to know it better.