RAMSEYS DRAFT

Boundary Description

Ramseys Draft in Augusta County from its headwaters (which includes Right and Left Prong Ramseys Draft) downstream to the Wilderness Area boundary for a total distance of approximately 7.4 miles.

Observations

On October 29, 2002, a site visit to the nominated segment of Ramseys Draft in Augusta County was conducted by David C. Whitehurst as required by DEQ Exceptional Waters guidance. The nominated segment of Ramseys Draft is contained entirely within the Ramseys Draft Wilderness Area in the George Washington National Forest. Approximately two miles of the lower portion were observed and further progress was discouraged due to high water and hazardous fording conditions as a result of recent rainfall events.

Long, relatively straight runs with the occasional riffle or pool characterize the morphology of the first mile upstream of the lower boundary of the nominated segment. Here, the substrate is composed of mostly cobble and pebble with intermittent areas of bedrock outcroppings when the stream meanders up against the wall of the stream valley.

After the first mile, the gradient increases somewhat and the stream tends to narrow and plunge pools become more frequent. The tree canopy almost completely covers the stream at this point and eventually, farther upstream; coverage is total along most of the stream. Large, mature hemlocks predominate in many areas.

Ramseys Draft is designated as a Class IV native trout stream by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and managed as such. No trout are stocked and fishing for the native brook trout is limited to single hook artificial lures. A number of brook trout were caught and released. Others were observed and few appeared to exceed seven inches. The lack of larger fish may be attributed to extremely low water levels over the summer and fall. A self-sustaining population of brook trout is considered to be indicative of near pristine conditions. Numerous fish of the cyprinid family were also observed. Most observed were black nose dace.

A cursory benthic survey was done at several points and numerous individuals of the families ephemeroptera (mayflies), plecoptera (stoneflies), and trichoptera (caddisflies) were seen as were crayfish and, occasionally, snails.

Ramseys Draft offers excellent opportunities for hiking with a trail that follows the stream from the wilderness area parking lot to the headwaters. The trail crosses Ramsey Draft at numerous points and no modifications have been made to assist in fording the stream. Ramseys Draft also offers an outstanding opportunity for remote, wilderness camping.

Conclusions

After considering observations made during a visit to the site, staff has concluded that Ramseys Draft satisfies all three of the eligibility criteria to be considered for designation as Exceptional Waters. The environmental setting, recreational opportunities, and aquatic communities in the nominated segment of Ramseys Draft appear to be of exceptional quality.