

## **Rob Messick on Hickory Creek and the USFS Centennial**

In April and November 2009 Tom Kenney, Rob Messick, Hal Morgan, and Kenyon Kelly located a new (or additional) big tree area on a tributary of the Right Fork of Hickory Branch in McDowell County. This is on the first tract of land purchased as national forests in the eastern United States. It is not known now exactly which tributary of the Right Fork, Verne Rhoades and W. W. Ashe described as having significant tulip poplars in their initial report of 1911, but it is clearly one or the other of the two main tributaries on the Right Fork.

The US Forest Service has proposed a bland and customarily management-oriented 'centennial event' for March 2011, but it is clear from their prospectus of September 2009 that the Progressives who envisioned the need for national forests in the East, and pulled things together a century ago will not get the recognition they deserve.

The most important legacy of national forest land acquisitions in the east is that the land base still exists. Through benign neglect, inaccessibility, or ignorance, uncut places like parts of Hickory Branch have persisted from day one.

May places like Hickory branch remain in the hold of national forest processes for centuries to come.

--Rob Messick (November 18, 2009)

*The pictures of Hickory Branch, below, were taken November 8, 2009 by Kenyon Kelly.*

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