

# Wolf Den Run State Park

## OFF-ROAD FUN



### THE ONLY MARYLAND STATE PARK FEATURING SPECTACULAR OFF-ROAD ADVENTURES

Written by: **Dan Whetzel**

You now have an opportunity to explore and experience Garrett County, Maryland, like never before. Fifty miles of rocks, dirt, and trails in an off-road vehicle (ORV) await those willing to take up the challenges of outdoor adventures in a spectacular park setting. The experience is also unique because there is no other state owned destination like Wolf Den Run—it is the only Maryland state park featuring off-road trails for full size trucks, all-terrain vehicles, side-by-sides, and dirt bikes.

Wolf Den State Park consists of three parcels of land in close proximity that feature off-road excitement and other outdoor activities including bird watching, hiking, fishing, and hunting. Since opening in 2019, the park has hosted thousands of outdoor and nature enthusiasts seeking a wilderness environment.

According to Donnie Oats, Park Manager, “Land was purchased for the park in 2018 and we opened for riding in July 2019. The property was previously operated as a



private business for off-road vehicle riding and hunting. We used the existing trails, so the purchase worked out perfectly.”

The park has been welcomed by Garrett County residents who embrace the outdoors. The county government has also been a welcoming host by permitting limited use of off-road vehicles on county roads. The permitting has made the park easily accessible as residents may drive their ORV to the park for recreation instead of having to trailer them. Daryl Anthony, Executive Director Maryland Office of Outdoor Recreation, adds that the use of off-road vehicles at the park has reduced the amount of illegal riding that was occurring because legal trails were previously unavailable.

Municipalities are not included in the county permitting and decide independently whether off-road vehicles may be driven.

The opening of Wolf Den State Park has also been timely because it meets the needs of a rapidly growing outdoor industry and increasing sales of off-road vehicles. Daryl recalled, “At first there were dirt bikes and ATV’s, and then side-by-sides were introduced that changed the industry.”

Side-by-sides are commonly described as off-road vehicles with a minimum of two seats positioned side-by-side and enclosed within a rolled cage. They are four wheeled vehicles controlled by a steering wheel that is similar to a typical car. Daryl explained that side-by-sides made it easy to get into off-roading experiences and take the family. Hunters also enjoy the benefits of the vehicles because they easily cover rough terrain and carry supplies.



**Ample parking for trucks and trailers is available at several locations throughout Wolf Den Run State Park. Riders must bring their own vehicles and register online or in person at the camp office.**

*PHOTOS BY DARYL ANTHONY*



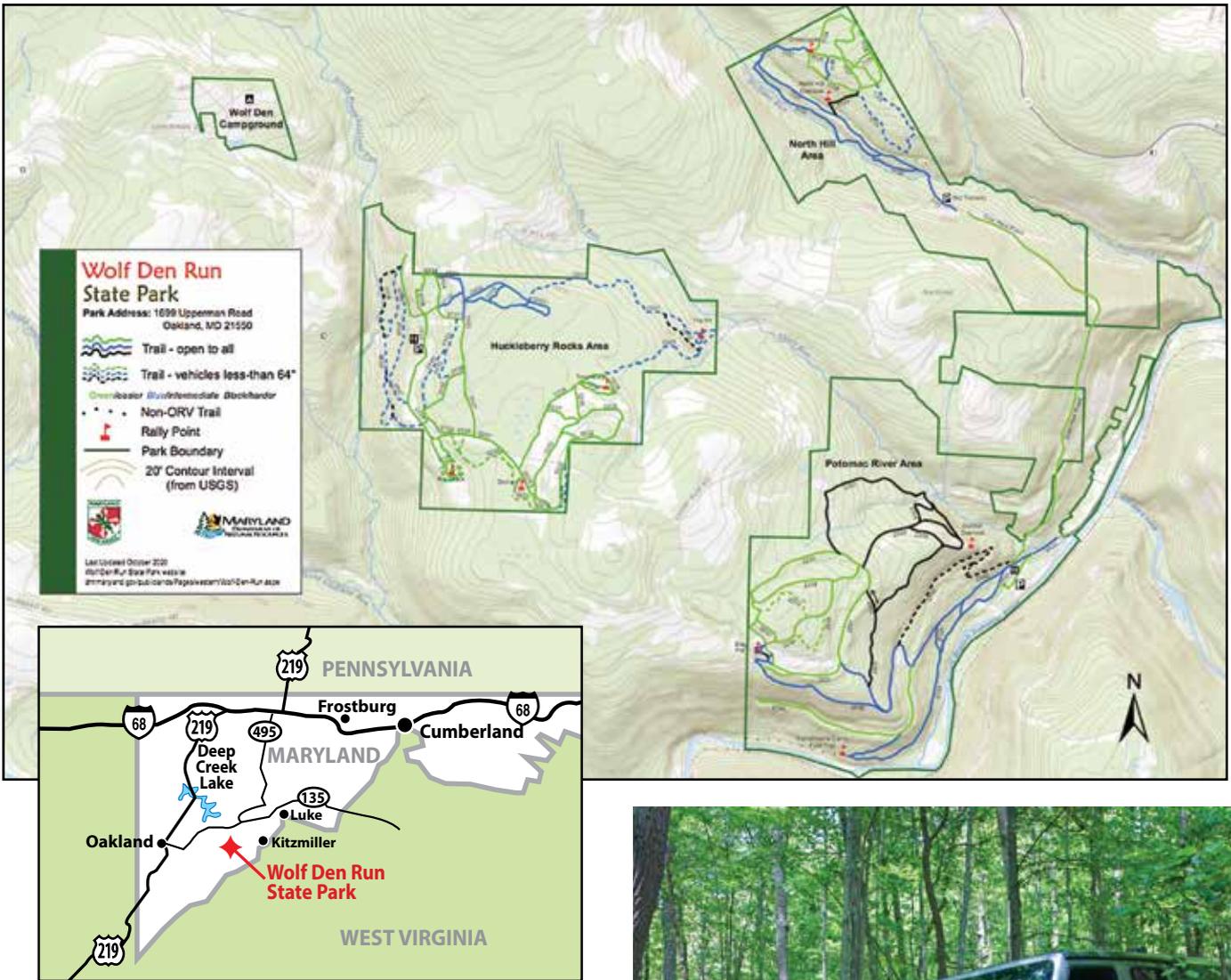
**Top:** Huckleberry Rocks Area has one of the spacious parking areas. The trails are well marked and color coded according to levels of difficulty — green, blue and black.

PHOTOS BY MIKE CALHOUN

He also stated that retail sales of full size four wheel drive vehicles dramatically increased in recent years. “Everybody wants four wheel drive. And manufacturers are offering optional “off-road” packages that feature heavy duty shocks and other enhancements. The advertising for those vehicles emphasizes adventure and we provide that in our park.”

Guests are welcomed to an expanse of property that includes three miles of frontage on the Potomac River, three brook trout streams, mixed forest and rugged mountainous terrain. The 50 mile network of trails is well marked and color coded according to levels of difficulty, so there is sure to be a trail that suites everyone’s wishes.

Much of the Wolf Den land area experienced coal mining operations in the twentieth century that left marks on the landscape. Park officials, partnering with local groups, quickly began to manage resources and create opportunities by improving the watershed. Luke Mongrain, State Park Supervisor Ranger, explained that one of the park’s initial successes was the removal of a culvert that blocked the passage of brook trout in Wolf Den Run. “We partnered with Trout Unlimited to secure funding and remove the barrier. The project is a great example of making the area more sustainable. All of our proposals are reviewed by



**The 50 mile network of trails includes mixed forest and rugged mountainous terrain. A primitive camping area is currently available near the Park Office (no electricity or water hookups available at this time).**

PHOTO BY MIKE CALHOUN

Maryland Department of Natural Resources agencies, so we can implement the best plan.”

Another example of effective land use was the decision to use existing trails that predated the park’s opening. Luke explained, “We have not opened new trails. Instead, we are first focusing on stabilizing the existing trails by controlling erosion and managing other resources.”

Wolf Den will continue to improve the outdoor experience by adding trails for all types of riding, including hill climbing.

A second major enhancement will be upgraded amenities for campers. Currently, the camping sites are designated as “primitive” meaning without electricity or water hookups.

Daryl stated that future plans include working with local officials. “We want to continue to commit to additional opportunities in the county and continue economic

development the park provides. Wolf Den will also show the success of this outdoor recreation model, so it can be expanded to other counties in the state.”

While the park offers multiple experiences, Daryl believes the most important factor staff considers is resource management. “It is vital to consider resource management and sustainability; it is always our overriding concern when deciding on development and the expansion of recreational opportunities.”

All riders at Wolf Den must bring their own vehicles and register online or in person at the camp office (office hours: 9 am – 3 pm daily). Payment of a fee is due prior to riding. If riders plan to visit regularly, an annual PASSPORT option is available for 75 dollars for residents and 100 dollars for out-of-state residents. PASSPORT is valid for one year from the month of purchase and offers unlimited day use of all Maryland state parks, unlimited boat launching, and a 10 percent discount on state operated concession items.

Wolf Den State Park is located at  
 1699 Upperman Road, Oakland, MD 21550  
 Park Office: 304-334-1272



Luke Mongrain, Jim Moore, and Daryl Anthony (left to right) guided *Mountain Discoveries'* writer, photographer, and editor on an off-road adventure on a beautiful day in July. PHOTO BY MIKE CALHOUN

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