

STUDIES RELATED TO WILDERNESS

The Wilderness Act (Public Law 88-577, September 3, 1964) and related laws require the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Bureau of Mines to survey certain areas on Federal lands to determine their mineral resource potential. Results must be made available to the public and be submitted to the Administration and the Congress. This map presents an analysis of the oil and gas resources of Otter Creek Wilderness in the Monongahela National Forest, Randolph County, West Virginia, which was established as a Wilderness by Public Law 93-452, January 3, 1975.

INTRODUCTION

The Otter Creek Wilderness comprises about 20,000 acres (an area about 8 mi long and 4 mi wide) in northeastern West Virginia northeast of Elkins (fig. 1). The wilderness lies in the Monongahela National Forest, Randolph County, West Virginia, and is drained by Otter Creek, and includes parts of McDowell and Green Mountains.

STRATIGRAPHY

Paleozoic rocks of Late Devonian, Mississippian, and Pennsylvanian age crop out in the Otter Creek Wilderness and are overlain locally by Quaternary alluvium (Warlow, 1981). The subsurface stratigraphy in the vicinity of the wilderness (fig. 2) is interpreted from nearby deep wells (fig. 3, table 1) to include rocks of Ordovician, Silurian, and Early Devonian age. The oldest rocks penetrated by deep wells in Randolph and Tucker Counties belong to the Trenton Group of Middle Ordovician age (Cardwell, 1974). East of these counties, crystalline basement has been identified from seismic data (Jacobson and Kanes, 1970) and, in eastern West Virginia, is thought to be overlain by limestones and dolomites of Cambrian and Early Ordovician age (Perry, 1964).

Principal stratigraphic units chosen for oil and gas exploration in the vicinity of the Otter Creek Wilderness are the Ordovician carbonate rocks, the Tuscarora Sandstone of Early Silurian age, the Lower Devonian Helderberg Group and overlying Oriskany Sandstone, and the Middle Devonian Helderberg Chert. Younger rocks in the vicinity of the wilderness (see fig. 2) have not produced oil and gas.

STRUCTURE

The Otter Creek Wilderness lies in the North Potomac syncline west of the Allegheny Front in the east-central part of the Appalachian basin. The syncline extends more than 100 miles north of Hyndman, Bedford County, Pennsylvania, across western Maryland into Pocahontas County, West Virginia (Berryhill and others, 1956; Flint, 1965; Reger, 1931; Reger and others, 1923). It trends approximately N. 25° E. and, in West Virginia, plunges gently northeast. Dips of beds in the syncline range from almost flat in the trough to about 15° (Warlow, 1981). The wilderness is bordered by the Blackwater anticline on the east and the Deer Park anticline on the west (fig. 3). Locally the mountains and valleys reflect the anticlines and synclines.

Rodgers (1983) suggested that when these folds were formed, Devonian and Carboniferous strata slipped along a zone of décollement (a large nearly flat-lying thrust fault) in the Silurian evaporite deposits, leaving the subjacent Paleozoic rocks and the Proterozoic basement basement undisturbed. Gwinn (1964) and Rodgers (1970) noted that the anticlines in the vicinity of Otter Creek Wilderness are unfaulted on the surface and highly faulted at intermediate depths. Harris and Miller (1977) showed that the décollement is controlled by contrasts in rock competency and is accompanied by ramping, relay faulting, and shattering of the more brittle rocks, which generate zones of fracture porosity. Miller (1988) showed that the relationship of the regional structural style and that production in the vicinity of Otter Creek Wilderness is from wells in fractured anticlines.

Two types of lineaments occur in the Otter Creek Wilderness, structural lineaments and cross-strike structural discontinuities. The axes of the anticlines and synclines appear to be offset along a structural lineament (fig. 4) trending northwest-southeast across the wilderness along the Randolph-Tucker county line, roughly perpendicular to the trend of the North Potomac syncline. This lineament is discernible on a Landsat image of eastern West Virginia (West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey, 1976) and was earlier identified by Gwinn (1964) in his analysis of the mechanics of deformation of the Appalachian fold. This northwest-trending structural lineament may reflect tear faulting along the edge of advancing thrust blocks (Gwinn, 1964).

The second type of lineament is a cross-strike structural discontinuity (CSD), defined by Wheeler (1979) as a zone of structural disruption, but not a fault zone, containing unusually fractured rock and showing no evidence of basement involvement. Studies by Wheeler (1979) and Dixon (1979) confirm that two zones of structural disruption having patches of twice the normal joint intensity—the Parsons and Petersburg lineaments, each several kilometers wide and more than 50 km long—occur in the vicinity of the wilderness. These cross the regional structural strike and intersect near the Otter Creek Wilderness (fig. 4).

OIL AND GAS POTENTIAL

Consideration of the thermal maturity of the rocks, the rock permeability and porosity, and the production history were included in determining the oil and gas potential for the Otter Creek Wilderness.

The thermal maturity of the rocks, the extent to which rocks have been heated by depth of burial since deposition, is a factor controlling the volume of gas available from source beds and is considered an indicator of hydrocarbon potential. Results of two methods for determining thermal maturity—the fixed carbon ratio (White, 1955) and the conodont color alteration index (CAI) (Wheeler, 1979)—are available for northeastern West Virginia. White (1955) showed that oil and gas had not been formed in the northern part of the Otter Creek Wilderness, but that coals having more than 65 percent fixed carbon, as do the coals of that specific part of the basin. Harris and others (1978), using conodont color alteration as an indicator of the thermal maturity, determined isograds for the Appalachian basin. Their maps indicate that oil production is not anticipated in the Otter Creek Wilderness because the rocks are too thermally altered; however, the thermal maturity of Ordovician and younger rocks in the wilderness is appropriate for the occurrence of natural gas.

The presence of gas in reservoir rocks depends on adequate porosity and permeability. All production in the vicinity of the Otter Creek Wilderness has required stimulation of the wells by hydraulic fracturing to increase permeability. Completion, which may be concomitant with thermal maturation, may have reduced the original porosity and permeability in the shale rocks thus decreasing their reservoir capacity for gas. Faulting and fracturing associated with the décollement, the northwest-trending lineament separating Blackwater and Glady anticlines, and the Parsons and Petersburg lineaments may have created structural traps having fracture porosity with potential for containing gas derived from local source beds. Furthermore, tectonically induced fractures may have increased permeability and become pathways for migration of gas into fracture reservoirs. Fractures may also, however, allow gas to escape from poorly sealed traps. Existing data is insufficient to determine the presence or absence of reservoirs in the wilderness.

Oil and gas occurrence and production from a representative sample of wells in the vicinity of the Otter Creek Wilderness are shown by the well records in table 1. About 2,000 ft of Upper Devonian and younger sandstone, shale, and siltstone are exposed in and near the wilderness. Because most of these beds crop out on the flanks of anticlines, it is likely that any gas that they might have originally contained has migrated to the atmosphere. Oil has not been produced and gas production has been limited chiefly to anticlines of Middle and Early Devonian and Silurian age, mostly from depths of 4,500 to 6,000 ft (Cardwell, 1974). Devonian formations that have yielded gas (table 1, fig. 2) include the Helderberg Group, the Oriskany Sandstone. Gas has also been produced locally from the Tuscarora Sandstone of Silurian age (table 1, fig. 2).

Data from the post-Devonian rocks indicate no potential for oil production and little possibility of gas production in the Otter Creek Wilderness (de Witt, 1975). Data from about 6,000 ft of Devonian rocks, including about 1,000 ft of black shale, in the vicinity of the wilderness indicate gas shows and gas production in anticlines (de Witt and others, 1975). Data from a 2,000-ft thickness of Silurian rocks in the area show little or no gas. Data from the Oriskany and Helderberg groups, which are about 1,500 ft of carbonaceous rocks in the vicinity of the wilderness, show no production and limited potential (Miller, 1975). Regional data suggests that the Lower Ordovician and Cambrian rocks may be about 6,000 ft in thickness in the vicinity of the wilderness, and crystalline basement may occur about 20,000 ft below sea level (Harris, 1973). No production is indicated for these rocks and their potential is unknown.

SUMMARY

The Otter Creek Wilderness shows no potential for oil production and a relatively low potential for gas production. Although local structure suggests the presence of splay and fracture zones having favorable fracture porosity, and recent exploration in similar structural settings in Pennsylvania has proven successful (Koser and Piotrowski, 1979), two recent exploration wells (Randolph 229 and 257) in a neighboring syncline were dry (Patehen and others, 1980). Source and reservoir rocks appear to be present, however, maturation levels are high. Subsurface data are not available from within the wilderness, and data from nearby wells are insufficient to determine if structural traps exist at depth in the wilderness and if gas might be present in the traps. Seismic data are needed to determine if there are structural traps for oil and gas accumulation in the Otter Creek Wilderness, but presently available information suggests a very low oil and gas potential.

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Table 1.--Representative wells near the Otter Creek Wilderness

[Based on data from Cardwell (1974), Martens (1939), and from the Geological Sample Log Company and the West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey well records.]

County and permit number	Operator-lessee and completion date	Altitude in feet (elevation) (kg/kelly bushing)	Total depth in feet	Formations Lithologic zones (depths in feet)	Remarks (depths in feet, of cubic feet, M = thousand, MM = million)
Randolph-1	Potter Development Co. and others; Express Hartman No. 1. Completed 9/1/32.	1960 gl	4480	Tully(?) 1037-1088 Mahantango 1088-1200 Oriskany 1200-1510 Huntersville 1510-1749 Oriskany 1749-1888 Tonoloway 2491-3175 Willis Creek 3175-3498 Williamsport 3498-3511 McKenzie 3511-3736 Keefer 3736-3750 Rose Hill 3750-4166 Tuscarora 4166-4888	Dry. Gas show from Oriskany.
Randolph-3	Southern Pennsylvania Oil Co.; J. W. Inner No. 1. Completed 1/20/50.	1973 gl	8097	Huntersville 1480-1728 Oriskany 1728-1876 Helderberg 1876-2550 Tonoloway 2550 - ? Huntersville 3000-3058 Oriskany 3058-3188 Helderberg 3188-3213 Tonoloway 3813 - ? Willis Creek 4818-4818 Williamsport 4818-4834 McKenzie 4834-5328 Keefer 5328-5348 Rose Hill 5348 - ?	Dry. Fault with 1200 ft of repeated beds.
Randolph-101	Columbian Carbon Co.; United States of America No. G-8. Completed 7/3/59.	2920 gl	9815	Onondaga 4561-4630 Oriskany 4630-4954 Helderberg 4954 Tonoloway 5540-5538 Willis Creek 6238-6534 Williamsport 6537-6527 Rose Hill 6727-7077 Oriskany 7077-7244 Junata 7815 - ? Fault 7815-9815 Tuscarora 9835-9815	Fractured. Dry field. Gas flow from Huntersville at 153 Mcf/day and Oriskany at 11.8 Mcf/day. Gas flow from Tuscarora at 1.6 Mcf/day. Acidized. Huntersville and Oriskany, final flow 2.1 Mcf/day. Shut in 7/12/60.
Randolph-105	Columbian Carbon Co.; United States of America No. G-8. Completed 7/3/59.	3155 gl	6389	Onondaga 5632-5688 Oriskany 5688-6389 Helderberg 6389-6389	Fractured. Dry field. Gas flow from Huntersville at 2.2 Mcf/day. Gas show from Oriskany.
Randolph-106	Holly Oil & Gas Corp.; U.S.A. Department of Interior No. 80-1. Completed 8/21/59.	2258 gl	7053	Marcellus 6385-6570 Huntersville 6570-6818 Oriskany 6818-6985 Helderberg 7046-7053	Dry. Acidized. Huntersville and Oriskany, final flow details not reported. Well plugged.
Randolph-110	Columbian Carbon Co.; Julius Haddix et al. No. 1. Completed 1/19/60.	3075 gl	6260	Tully(?) 5540-5550 Onondaga 5550-5888 Huntersville 5888-6015 Oriskany 6015-6085 Helderberg 6085-6260	Fractured. Dry field. Final gas flow from Huntersville and Oriskany at 88 Mcf/day.
Randolph-113	Barron Kidd (Hope Natural Gas Co.); C. C. & L. E. Riggelman No. 1. Completed 1/18/62.	1990 gl	3225	Marcellus 1945-2302 Onondaga 2302-2338 Huntersville 2338-2350 Oriskany 2350-2648 Helderberg 2648-3225	Dry.
Randolph-151	Consolidated Gas Co.; U.S.A. Department of Interior No. 11289. Completed 12/18/70.	2108 kb	5283	Onondaga 4964-4984 Huntersville 4984-5189 Oriskany 5189-5283	Dry. Well plugged.
Randolph-159	Eastern Operating; E. H. Cooper No. 1. Completed 9/14/77.	2192 kb	8060	Formations	Fractured and acidized.
Tucker-A	Parsons Pulp and Lumber Co. Completed 1912.	1650 gl	4250	Huntersville 3825-3980 Oriskany 3980-4060 Helderberg 4060-4250	Dry.
Tucker-1	Ohio Oil Co.; West Virginia Power and Transmission No. 1. Completed 7/3/44.	3358 gl	8036	Pocahontas top - ? Hampshire 1975 - ? Chenango 7230-7249 Tully 7249-7250 Marcellus 7250-7268 Oriskany 7268-9538	Gas discovery well. Caneen Valley field (Blackwater anticline). Gas flow from Oriskany at 1.5 Mcf/day.
Tucker-8	Natural Resources Corp.; Tucker County Court No. 1. Completed 6/17/54.	1586 gl	5754	Tully(?) 4941-4953 Mahantango 4953 - ? Marcellus 5534-5534 Tioga 5534-5544 Onondaga 5544-5571 Huntersville 5571-5750 Oriskany 5571-5750 Helderberg 5750-5754	Dry. Deer Park anticline. Gas show from shale at 521 ft.
Tucker-13	Columbian Carbon Co.; United States of America No. C-1. Completed 10/31/55.	1638 gl	6383	Tully 2915-2930 Mahantango 2930 - ? Marcellus 3345-3348 Tioga 3348-3352 Onondaga 3352-3375 Huntersville 3375-3400 Oriskany 3400-3450 Helderberg 3450-4251 Tonoloway 4251 - ? Paul 4251-4270 Helderberg 4270-5208 Tonoloway 5208 - ? Willis Creek 5208-5208 Williamsport 5208-5208	Dry. Deer Park anticline. Blackwater anticline. Well plugged.
Tucker-15	Columbian Carbon Co.; United States of America No. D-1. Completed 12/10/55.	2073 gl	4509	Marcellus 4173-4173 Onondaga 4173-4173 Oriskany 4173-4173 Helderberg 4173-4173	Dry. Leadline field (Deer Park anticline). Gas pocket from brown shale at 3415 ft.
Tucker-35	United Producers Fund; Barr No. 1. Completed 5/13/70.	3325 kb	8552	Tully 7804 - ? Onondaga 8085-8145 Huntersville 8145-8205 Oriskany 8205-8459 Helderberg 8459-8552	Gas discovery well. Leadline field (Blackwater anticline). Gas flow from Oriskany at 2.48 Mcf/day.
Tucker-38	Cities Service Oil Co.; L. E. Mullenax No. 4-1. Completed 12/29/71.	1767 kb	6708	Tioga 3541-3571 Onondaga 3571-3584 Huntersville 3584-3740 Tioga 3740-3860 Helderberg 3860-4455 Willis Creek 4455-4710 Williamsport 4710-5040 McKenzie 5040-5210 Rose Hill 5210-5472 Tuscarora 5472-6708	Gas discovery well. Leadline field (Deer Park anticline). Gas flow from Tuscarora at 24.8 Mcf/day.
Tucker-40	Cities Service Oil Co.; A. Tennant No. A-1. Completed 8/26/72.	1834 kb	7395	Onondaga 3834-3860 Huntersville 3860-4139 Oriskany 4139-4139 Rose Hill 4139-4689 Tuscarora 4689-7386 Junata 7386-7395	Dry. Deer Park anticline.
Tucker-41	Traverse Corp.; W. H. Wolford No. 1. Completed 2/07/74.	3671 kb	8770	Tully 5972 - ? Onondaga 8466-8512 Huntersville 8512-8617 Oriskany 8617-8770	Dry. Red Creek field (Blackwater anticline). Gas and salt water in Oriskany at 8750 ft; gas estimated at 100 Mcf/day. Plugged.

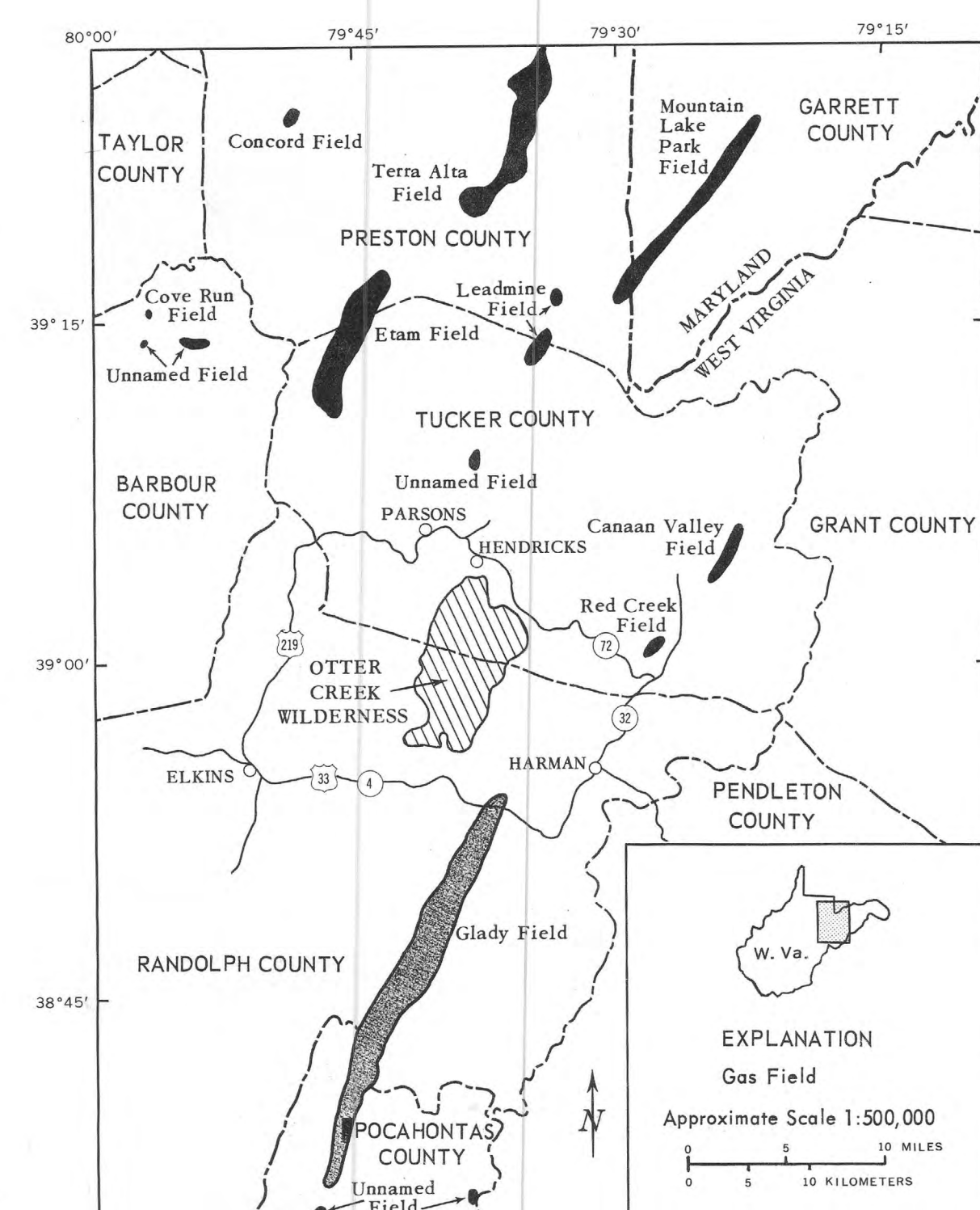


Figure 1.—Location of the Otter Creek Wilderness and nearby gas fields. Modified from Cardwell and others (1970).

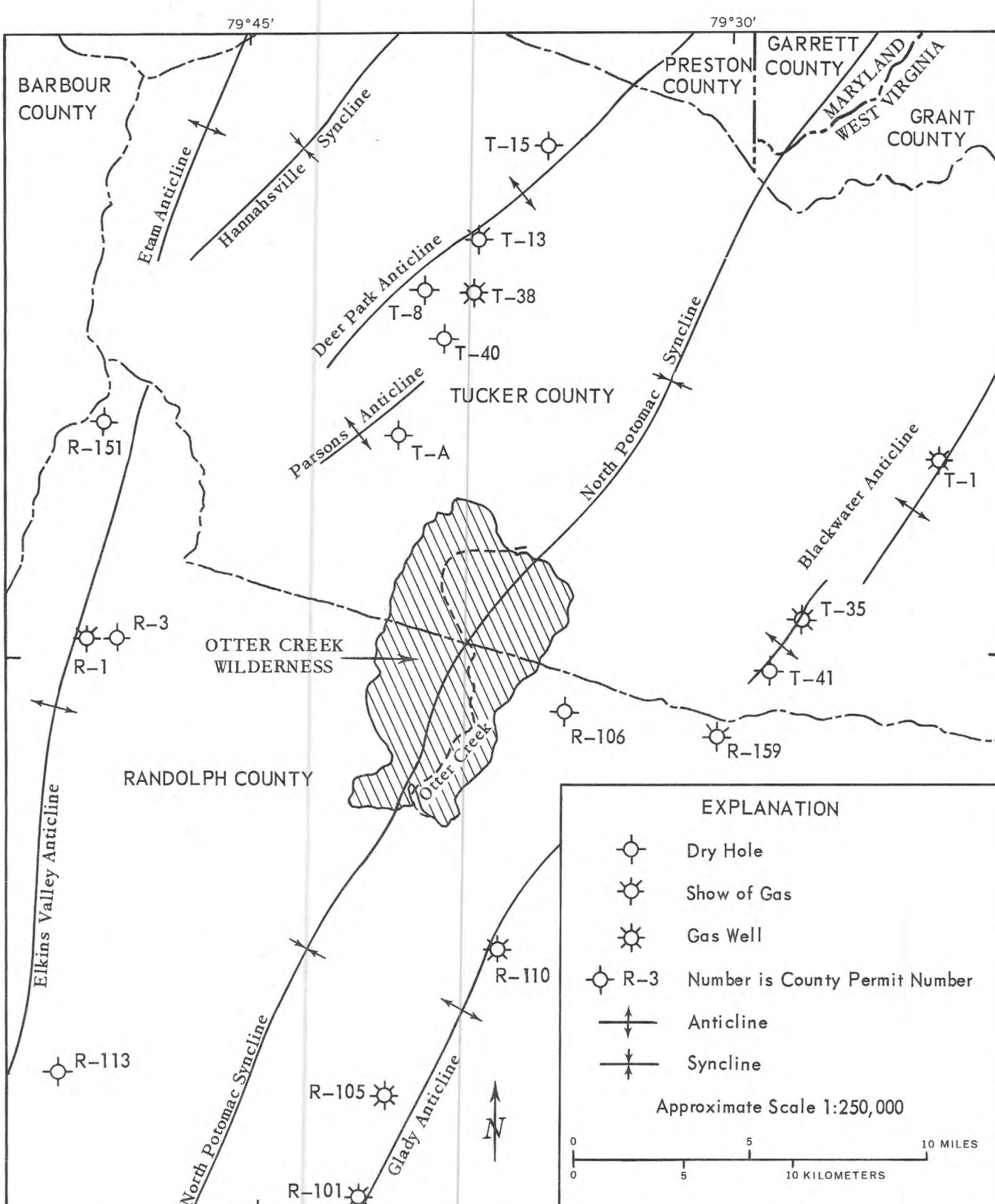


Figure 3.—Location of representative wells and anticlines and synclines near the Otter Creek Wilderness. Modified from Cardwell and others (1970) and Cardwell (1974).

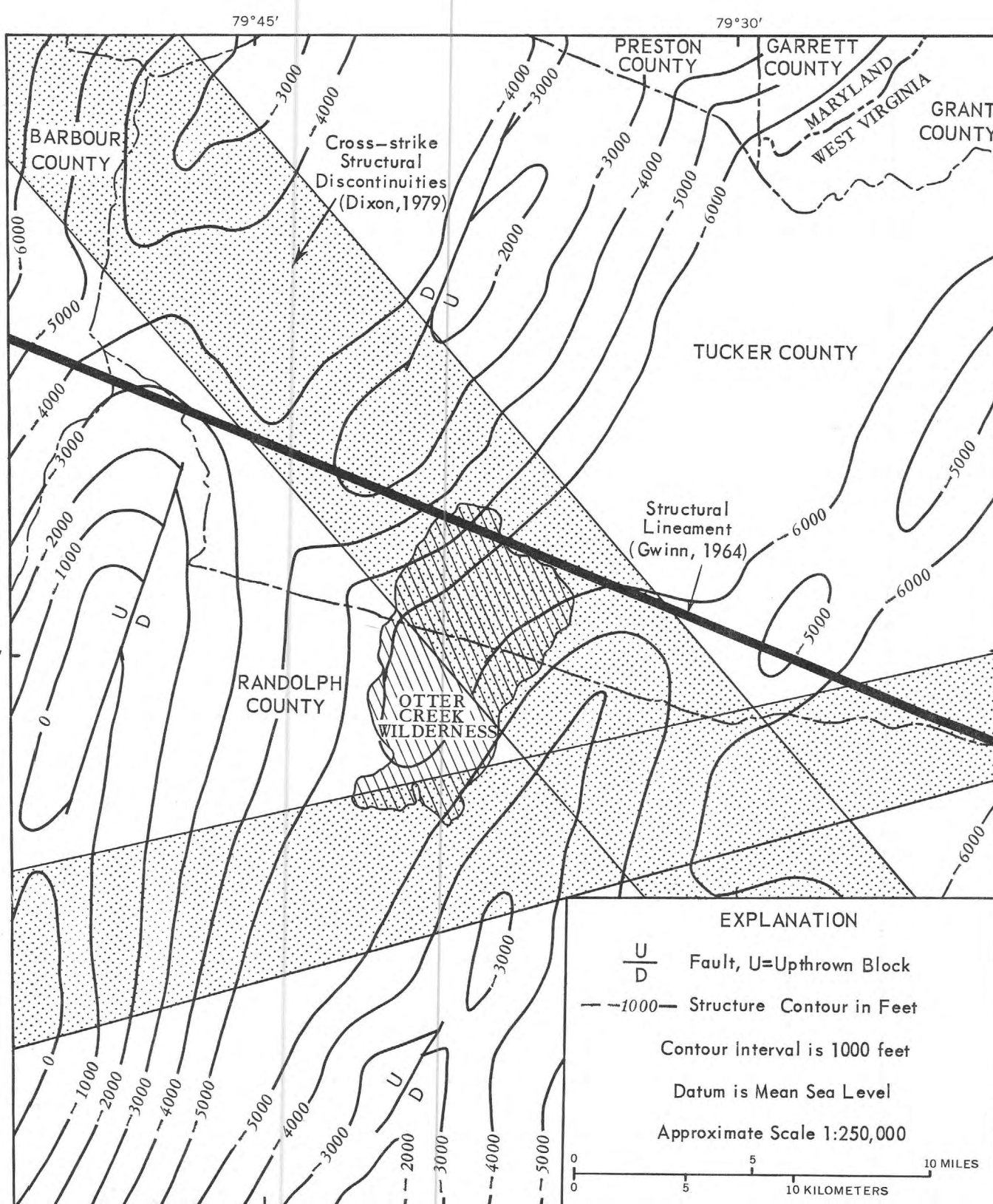


Figure 4.—Structure contour map on top of the Onondaga Limestone or its equivalents. Modified from Cardwell (1974).

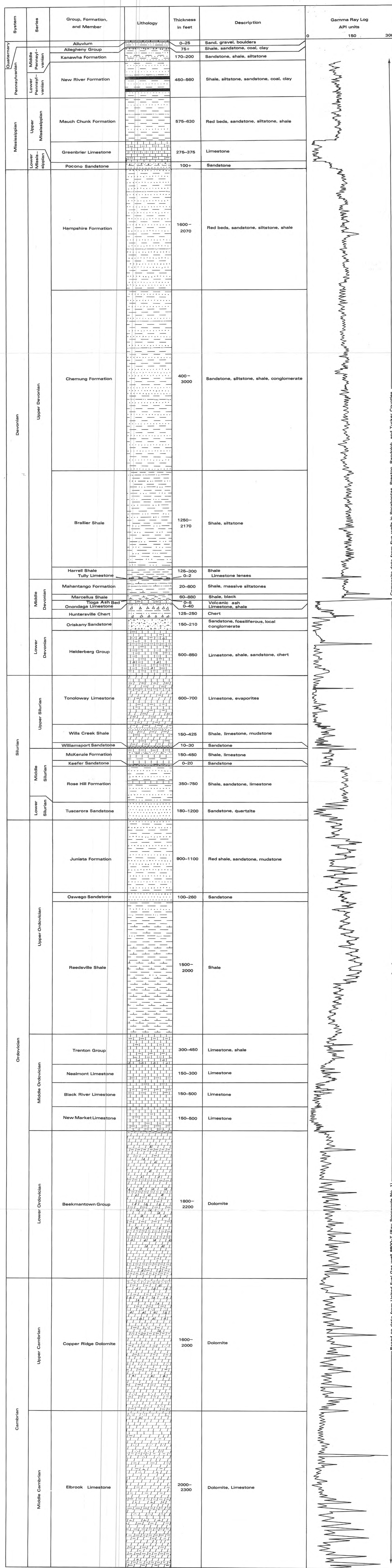
OIL AND GAS RESOURCES OF THE OTTER CREEK WILDERNESS,
RANDOLPH AND TUCKER COUNTIES, WEST VIRGINIABy
E. G. A. Weed
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Figure 2.—Generalized geologic column of rocks in the vicinity of the Otter Creek Wilderness. The thicknesses of the units are based on data from Avery (1979), Cardwell and others (1980), Martens (1939, 1945), Patehen (1980), Warlow (1981), and Geological Sample Log Company and West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey well records.

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