

**Sideling Hill Creek, Allegany County**



The Nature Conservancy



Sideling Hill Creek originates from the southwestern mountains of Pennsylvania, winding its way among the steep, forested shale cliffs of western Maryland before finally spilling into the Potomac River. It is one of the most pristine streams in Maryland, and helps support the state’s healthiest population of the globally-rare aquatic wildflower *Harperella*. The rare shale barren communities are another unique feature of this preserve. There are twelve rare, endemic (occurring in the shale barrens and nowhere else) plants here including the nationally-endangered evening primrose, shale ragwort, and Kate’s

**Sideling Hill Creek is one of the most pristine aquatic communities in its region.**

mountain clover. The preserve also has many different animals, such as the Olympian marble butterfly, green floater mussel, and tiger beetle. Other animals include wild turkey, hawks, and bobcat.

**Fun Facts About Sideling Hill**

The Sideling Hill watershed is about 80% forest cover, and is incredibly intact because there are no urban centers or industry, and the area is sparsely populated. This isolation has allowed Sideling Hill Creek to have supremely high water quality and healthy aquatic communities. Due to the hydrology of the shale barrens, the water level in this clean creek is highly variable. This variability is common for water bodies near shale barrens, but Sideling Hill Creek is exceptionally variable. It has seven species of freshwater mussels and 40 species of fish. Throughout the preserve, there are also a number of ephemeral streams. This type of stream only contains water after a major rain event. Sometimes they are unnoticeable, but other times they create large hollows in the land.

**Key Elements**

- Harperella
- Rare shale barren communities
- Evening primrose
- Olympian marble butterfly

Harold E. Maide



**Shale Barrens are especially important because they contain several endemic species.**

**Visiting**

- Visitor trails
- Parking area
- Signage along the way
- 3 hour drive from D.C.

**Watch Out For!**

- Mosquitoes
- Muddy trails
- Ticks and biting insects

Sideling Hill Creek was chosen for preservation because it is one of the most pristine streams in Maryland. In addition, the occurrence of the rare shale barren communities prioritizes this site as a focus for the Maryland/D.C. Chapter of the Conservancy. 704 acres have been purchased or placed under easement by The Nature Conservancy since 1992.

Management includes annual trail spring cleaning, studying and monitoring the shale barren communities, removing non-native weeds on the shale barren, and monitoring the stream for sediment, pollutants and excess nutrient runoff. Another project involves leasing hayfields to local farmers to demonstrate compatible agricultural practices. In 1998, 40 volunteers restored three acres of stream buffer with 1,200 native tree saplings. These are examples of the many management projects occurring here. Sideling Hill Creek is within the Green Ridge Important Bird Area designated by the National Audubon Society. There is also an audio tour available to enhance a visit to the preserve.

**Directions** (GPS Coordinates: 39.678883,-78.345139)

**From Washington's Capital Beltway (I-495),** take I-270 North. Take I-70 West:

**From Baltimore (I-695),** take I-70 West:

Follow I-70 West from Frederick to Hancock. Take I-68 West towards Cumberland. Exit I-68 at High Germany Road. Turn right at the stop sign. You will cross Sideling Hill Creek after just a couple hundred feet (bridge is inconspicuous). Immediately after crossing the creek, take a sharp right (back-angle) down dirt lane to edge of hay field. Park in the fenced parking area. Please do not block access to dirt lane across the field.

Cathy Kerkam/TNC



**Sideling Hill Creek is part of the ridge and valley region of Allegheny forest.**

**Contact**

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**For more information:**

[www.nature.org/Maryland](http://www.nature.org/Maryland)