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Letter to the Editor

This letter offers the support of the PA State Council of Trout Unlimited to the Friends of Allegheny Wilderness (FAW) for its proposal to designate eight additional areas of the Allegheny National Forest (ANF) as Wilderness Areas under the 1964 Wilderness Act.

The ANF is a single 513,000 acre tract of land in the northwestern part of Pennsylvania. So far less than 9,000 acres of that tract are designated as wilderness. The proposal presented to the PA State Council of TU by FAW, if accepted in total, would add eight additional areas totaling approximately 54,460 acres, as follows:

Allegheny Front 6,906 acres

Hickory Creek Wilderness

Addition 1,780 acres

Chestnut Ridge 5,191 acres

Clarion River 6,009 acres

Cornplanter 3,022 acres

Morrison Run 6,887 acres

Tionesta 14,960 acres

Tracy Ridge 9,805 acres

The Hickory Creek and Tionesta areas are of special interest to Trout Unlimited. The Hickory Creek Wilderness Addition encompasses most of the headwaters of Hickory Creek, a PFBC designated Wilderness Trout Stream. The Tionesta tract

contains the largest old-growth forest left in Pennsylvania and a section of Crane Run, another state-designated Wilderness Trout Stream.

Currently there are only two areas of the ANF designated as Wilderness Areas: the Hickory Creek and the Allegheny Island tracts. These total about 9,000 acres or less than 2% of the ANF. Nationwide, 18% of U.S. Forest Services (USFS) land is designated as wilderness. About 11% of USFS Eastern Region land is designated as wilderness. If all eight tracts delineated in the Friends of Allegheny Forest proposal were added, it would bring the total wilderness acreage in the ANF to 63,460 acres, or about 12% of the ANF acreage. This is certainly not an unreasonable amount to be set aside for hunters, anglers, hikers, birders and others who enjoy the wilderness experience.

The ANF is Pennsylvania's only National Forest. Setting aside 12% of its acreage to be enjoyed by this and future generations seems to be a modest proposal. It deserves the support of all those who treasure what is left of the wilderness our ancestors found when they first arrived in what is now the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

Les McNutt, President
PA Trout Unlimited