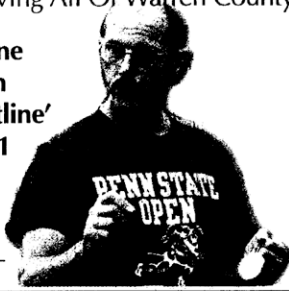


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## FAW canoe trip to mark 40th anniversary of Wilderness Act

By DEAN WELLS

*Times Observer Staff Writer*

The Wilderness Act established the National Wilderness Preservation System, which now comprises more than 106 million acres in 44 of the 50 states.

The Friends of Allegheny Wilderness (FAW) are planning to follow in the footsteps of a giant.

Make that wake.

FAW, which supports establishing wilderness area in the Allegheny National Forest, will trace part of the river route taken by noted conservationist Howard Zahniser during a three-day canoe trip beginning on Aug. 27. The trip from Warren

to Tionesta will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. Zahniser, from Tionesta, wrote the first draft of the act, which was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in 1964.

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Zahniser, the son of a minister, was born in Franklin and spent his teenager years in Tionesta. He returned to Tionesta with his wife Alice on a long canoe trip

from Olean, N.Y., in 1937. Zahniser went on to become the executive director of the Wilderness Society, where he worked steadily for eight years for the passage of the Wilderness Act. FAW signed the bill into law in September 1964. However, Zahniser didn't live to see it: he died that May.

According to FAW director Kirk Johnson, the organization's commemorative trip will leave from Warren at 3 p.m. on Aug. 27. He said 21 people have signed up for the event, including members of

Zahniser's family and an outdoors writer from the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

The canoers plan to camp on two of the Allegheny Wilderness islands during the three-day trip. On Sunday, they will view the Zahniser historical marker along Rt. 62, followed by a visit to Zahniser's grave in Tidioute and childhood home.

"It will be a lot of fun," Johnson said. "This man was from Tionesta, in our own backyard. He went on to direct the

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Wilderness Society, he spent eight years shepherding legislation through Congress. The roots (of the Wilderness Act) are in Tionesta."

#### Trail cleanup

The Friends of Allegheny Wilderness will hold a cleanup along Hickory Creek Wilderness Trail at 9 a.m. Sunday.

FAW adopted the trail several years ago and has held seven cleanups and maintenance sessions since. Sunday's cleanup will consist mostly of clearing the trail of debris. FAW will hold a work session in October to finish work along the Coon Run portion of the trail. Last year, the organization worked to improve wet sections of the trail along the run.

"It really required a lot of stone work to make a durable treadway," Johnson said. "There's still a lot of work to do there. We're maybe a third of the way finished."

#### Endorsement

The Howard County Bird Club, based in Ellicott City, Md., recently endorsed FAW's proposal to add 54,000 acres of wilderness to the already existing wilderness areas in the Allegheny National Forest.

FAW has also received support for its proposal from the Wilderness Society and the Pennsylvania Sierra Club.

In its endorsement, Howard County Bird Club president Kurt Schwarz urged ANF Forest Supervisor Kevin Elliott to include FAW's proposed wilderness areas in the U.S. Forest Service's forest plan revision.

Less than two percent of the ANF is currently designated as wilderness, while the country's national forest average is 18 percent. Eleven percent of national forest lands in the east are designated wilderness.

"The Allegheny National Forest is one of the least represented as far as wilderness," Johnson said. "We're working within the framework which Congress has established (to establish new wilderness areas)."

According to Johnson, the original purpose of national forests in the United States was to provide timber supplies. "The Wilderness Act added a wrinkle," he said. "It allowed national forest land to be protected as wilderness."

Johnson said that while FAW supports establishing more wilderness in the Allegheny National Forest, it in no way supports halting logging in the forest.

"There's no basis in law for a zero-cut policy," he said. "People see we have a balanced approach. People see we're not against logging in the Allegheny National Forest. We're not."