

# The Bradford Era

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## Group wants more ANF land designated as wilderness

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Era Reporter

Working through the current revision of the Allegheny National Forest Management Plan, the Friends of Allegheny Wilderness group is seeking to get more acres designated as wilderness areas in the ANF.

A wilderness area is one that is still wild, unroaded, untrammed, or according to the Wilderness Act Handbook, 2000 edition, an area where "man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

Kirk Johnson, executive director of the group said it is a "pro-wilderness campaign— not anti-industry campaign."

Mining, oil and gas drilling, logging and off-road vehicle use is prohibited in

these wilderness-designated areas.

The last time an area was designated as a wilderness area was in 1984, when 8,938 acres in the Hickory Creek area were designated — 8,570 acres in the Hickory Creek area with 868 acres within several islands inside the Allegheny River. These acres equal less than 2 percent of the 513,000-acre forest.

Part of what they do is identify areas that do not conflict with ATV trails, or other motorized use trails within the forest, then submit those areas as possibilities to be designated wilderness. Currently, the Friends of Allegheny Wilderness is in the process of forming a proposal for wilderness preservation. The proposal will

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include maps of suggested areas with boundaries outlined and rationale for why those areas should be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

"We believe this is a positive investment, to get them designated," said Johnson. "An increase in tourism will probably result as well." Johnson said hunting and fishing is permitted in these wilderness areas too.

"Anywhere a person can walk," said Johnson. "People can go."

Other uses Johnson listed include horseback riding, hiking, camping, back-packing, rock climbing, and photography.

"As long as it doesn't involve mechanical transport," Johnson added. "It (the area) can be used."

"There aren't too many areas left that meet the criteria of 'untrammed' wilderness," he said, explaining the urgency of getting areas designated within the upcoming revision of the forest plan.

According to a recent article in the *Era*, Kevin Elliott, the Allegheny National Forest Supervisor, the forest plan will be revised in three years.

In the article, Elliott emphasized the necessity for the public to get involved in the plan revisions. He discussed a series of workshops that will be held in May at a site or sites to be announced.

For this reason, Johnson said the time is now to push for designated wilderness areas.

The new forest plan will be in effect for the next ten to fifteen years when completed, according to officials.

The Friends of Allegheny Wilderness is looking for input from citizens to get additional areas designated as wilderness areas.

People can contact them through their Web site at [www.pawild.org](http://www.pawild.org), or citizens can contact the ANF and get involved directly in the plan revision process.

Proposed areas include the Tracy Ridge area with the majority of the acres proposed in McKean County with about 9,500 acres; the Chestnut Ridge area of 5,000 acres; Morrison Run area with about 6,000 acres; a Tionesta area with about 10,000 acres or more — with parts in McKean, Elk, and Warren Counties; Brush Hollow area with 5,000 acres in Elk County; and the Clarion River Roadless area in Elk County with about 6,000 acres.

Johnson said his group is hoping to get all the acres listed above to be designated, but he said some, all, or none of the proposed acres could be allocated as wilderness areas.

Only Congress can designate wilderness areas, and the Forest Service can recommend wilderness protection during the forest plan revision process, he said.