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Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, ANF highlighted in new book

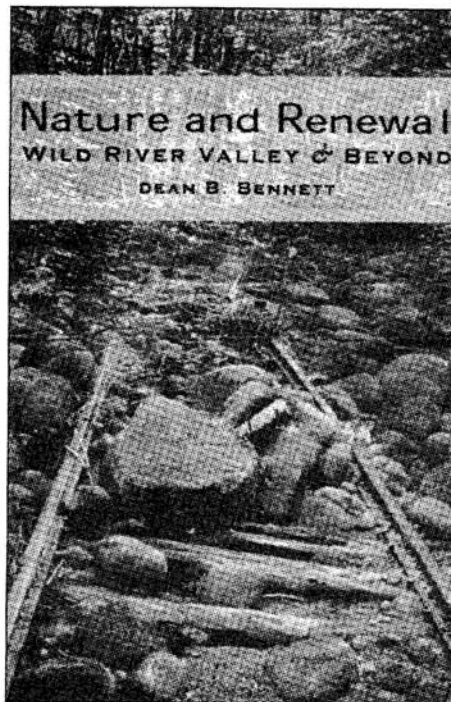
WARREN — The Warren-based non-profit organization Friends of Allegheny Wilderness and the Allegheny National Forest are highlighted in a newly-published book about Eastern wilderness preservation.

In “Nature and Renewal: Wild River Valley & Beyond” (Tilbury House Publishers), Dean B. Bennett examines in detail the political, ecological and human history of the recently designated 24,000-acre Wild River Wilderness in the White Mountain National Forest. President George W. Bush added the Wild River Wilderness to America’s National Wilderness Preservation System on Dec. 1, 2006 when he signed the New England Wilderness Act into law.

Nature and Renewal is the story of a magnificent wilderness in a relatively unknown northern New Hampshire river valley circumscribed by steep mountainous terrain. It is also a history of the New England logging industry, a raging wildfire, and the disappearance of an entire logging village; of both land abuse and land stewardship; of ecological disaster and renewal; and of nature’s resiliency.

Like the Allegheny, the White Mountain National Forest has always been crucial for timber production. And, importantly, both forests also contain large blocks of wild land suitable for wilderness designation. Bennett compares the efforts of Friends of Allegheny Wilderness to protect wilderness on the Allegheny to the New Hampshire advocacy efforts.

He writes “If we look at efforts to



preserve wilderness in America, we would discover a remarkable similarity between the story of Wild River Valley and the story of the Allegheny Plateau in northwestern Pennsylvania.”

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness has proposed that eight areas totaling 54,460 acres of the Allegheny be designated as wilderness under the Wilderness Act of 1964 in their Citizens’ Wilderness Proposal for Pennsylvania’s Allegheny National Forest, published in 2003. During the U.S. Forest Service’s recently completed Forest Plan revision, more than 6,800 of a total of 8,200 public comments — greater than 80 percent — specifically advocated for Friends of Allegheny Wilderness and the

Citizens’ Wilderness Proposal.

“As did the Friends of Wild River work to preserve White Mountain National Forest wilderness, so are the Friends of Allegheny Wilderness campaigning to designate more wilderness in the Allegheny National Forest,” Bennett writes. “In 2007 the Forest Service published its revised ANF Forest Plan, recommending only two new wilderness areas totaling 12,379 acres, far less than the Friends proposed. As this book goes to press, the Friends of Allegheny Wilderness continue to pursue a vigorous campaign to urge the support of its congressional delegation for the wilderness proposal in its entirety.”

“Like the Allegheny’s own story, the Wild River Wilderness demonstrates that areas once harmed by injurious land-use practices can become candidates for wilderness preservation, where nature is allowed to reclaim them, and where visitors can find peace and solitude,” said Kirk Johnson, executive director for Friends of Allegheny Wilderness.

Dean B. Bennett is professor emeritus at the University of Maine at Farmington. Born and raised in Maine, he received a Ph.D. in resource planning and conservation from the School of Natural Resources at the University of Michigan with a special emphasis in environmental education. His other books include: Maine’s Natural Heritage, Allagash: Maine’s Wild and Scenic River, The Forgotten Nature of New England: A Search for Traces of the Original Wilderness, and The Wilderness from Chamberlain Farm.