

# The Bradford Era



Vol. 134 No. 258 • 43 Main St., Bradford, Pa. 16701 • Monday, Aug. 1, 2011 • www.bradfordera.com • 75 cents

## Local groups concerned about bill's implications for Tracy Ridge

WARREN — Conservation groups, such as the Warren-based Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, are expressing concern over the recently-proposed Wilderness and Roadless Area Release Act, which threatens to weaken protections for millions of acres of wilderness-quality lands across the country, including portions of the Allegheny National Forest.

The proposed bill calls for the release of wilderness study areas administered by the Bureau of Land Management from continued management as defacto wilderness areas and the release of

inventoried roadless areas within the National Forest System from the land use restrictions of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Final Rule and the 2005 State Petitions for Inventoried Roadless Area Management Final Rule, and for other purposes.

If passed into law, conservationists say the bill would weaken protections for 60 million acres of national forest land, including 25,000 acres of the Keystone State. Allegheny National Forest areas under threat include the proposed Allegheny Front,

**(See BILL, Page 10)**

# Bill

Clarion River, and Cornplanter Wilderness Areas; as well as the proposed Tracy Ridge Wilderness Area — the largest roadless area in the Allegheny National Forest — and areas in McKean other Pennsylvania counties.

The House version of the bill, H.R. 1581, was introduced by House Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., and currently has 31 co-sponsors. One of the cosponsors is Rep. Glenn Thompson, R-Pa., whose 5th Congressional District encompasses most of the Allegheny.

A hearing on the House version of the legislation, H.R. 1581, took place last week in the House Natural Resources Committee in Washington.

“While each of these four areas do currently enjoy special designations such as remote recreation area or national recreation area, providing good protection in addition to their formal ‘Roadless Area’ status, passage of the ‘Great Outdoors Giveaway’ bill would certainly whittle away at their protected status,” noted FAW board president Bob Stoudt. “It is patent that retaining formal Roadless Area recognition for these important areas is far more preferable than the alternative.”

FAW executive director Kirk Johnson agrees.

“Friends of Allegheny Wilderness is aware that in recent years developers have inquired with the Forest Service regarding the possibility of constructing a vast golfing resort in the southern end of Tracy Ridge — complete with 36 holes of golfing, townhouses and attendant roads, facilities and other developments,” Johnson noted. “Who among us wants to trade away our last remnants of wild Pennsylvania in order to facilitate golfing for the affluent?”

Tracy Ridge, comprising 9,500 acres, is the largest area on the Allegheny without roads open to vehicles. The forested area is maturing second-growth hardwoods stretching from Route 321 to the Allegheny Reservoir and from Willow Bay Recreation Area to Sugar Bay. It is one of the areas proposed for wilderness designation in the Citizen’s Wilderness Proposal set forth by FAW and supported by many local and national organizations.

FAW has been working with The Wilderness Society and others for months on the issue, and recently signed on to a letter of opposition against the bill, along with dozens of other wilderness organizations.

“This is the biggest attack on wilderness we have seen in the history of The Wilderness Society,” TWS policy analyst Paul Spitler said of the bill. “This proposal flies in the face of values Americans hold dear with respect to stewardship of our public lands. It also flies in the face of nearly fifty years of legislation designating new wilderness areas.”