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Bert Nemcik

of Allegheny Wilderness (FAW), a non-profit organization dedicated to one mission: to designate certain areas of the Allegheny National Forest as wilderness.

Its mission statement is simple.

"Friends of Allegheny Wilderness seeks to foster an appreciation of wilderness values and benefits, and to work with local communities to ensure that increased wilderness protection is a priority of the stewardship of the Allegheny National Forest."

The Wilderness Act of 1964 described the intent of the legislation in section 2a.

"In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of

wilderness. For this purpose there is hereby established a National Wilderness Preservation System to be composed of federally owned areas designated by Congress as "wilderness areas", and these shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character, and for the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness; and no Federal lands shall be designated as "wilderness areas" except as provided for in this Act or by a subsequent Act."

Currently, there are just two ANF areas designated as wilderness under the 1964 Wilderness Act. They are the Hickory Cree and Allegheny Islands Wilderness Areas together encompassing approximately 9,000 acres, or less than two percent of the 513,000 acre forest. This compares to 18 percent of the Forest Service land designated as wilderness nation-wide, and 11 percent in the Forest and 11 percent in the Forest Service's Eastern Region, of which the ANF is a part. The Citizen's Wilderness Proposal for Pennsylvania's ANF identifies a total of 54,460 acres of public land in eight different tracts within the proclama-

tion boundary of the ANF that qualify for inclusion in America's National Wilderness Preservation System (Source: Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, 2003)

The eight areas covered under this proposal are: Allegheny Front, Chestnut Ridge, Clarion River, Cornplanter Wilderness, Hickory Creek Wilderness Addition, Morrison Run, Tionesta and Tracy Ridge.

Anyone who has ever hiked in the Tracy Ridge area knows what a beautiful expanse of prime forest it is. This is one of those places we should to protect forever from development of any kind. There is a strong possibility of future oil and gas exploration in this space making it ripe for exploitation. It needs to be protected.

Designating wilderness in the Allegheny National Forest requires an act of the U.S. Congress. Of the 8,200 public comments the U.S. Forest Service received on their draft Forest Plan in 2006, more than 6,800, over 80 percent, specifically supported FAW. Urging your members of Congress to legislatively support this public mandate with the Citizens' Wilderness Proposal is absolutely critical.

Here's how to do it:

Download a draft letter that urges support for the Citizens' Wilderness Proposal. Fill in today's date, add your return address, and put your name at the bottom. If you like, edit the

letter to reflect your own style and to express your personal feelings about the Allegheny.

Print several copies of the letter, each with the proper salutation for the following members of Congress. One copy each should go to Senator Pat Toomey and Senator Bob Casey. The primary targets in the U.S. House are Congressman Glenn Thompson and Congressman Mike Kelly. If you do not live in their districts, address the letter to your own U.S. Rep. with copies to Rep. Thompson and Rep. Kelly.

Final Step. Just sign the letters, seal them in appropriately addressed and stamped envelopes (addresses are below), and drop them in the mail!

The Honorable Glenn Thompson
United States Representative
127 West Spring Street,
Suite C
Titusville, PA 16354

The Honorable Bob Casey
United States Senator
17 South Park Row
Federal Building, Suite B-150
Erie, PA 16501

The Honorable Pat Toomey
United States Senator
17 South Park Row
Federal Building, Suite B-120
Erie, PA 16501