

Johnson Says ANF Land Out Of Wilderness Bill

By CHUCK HAYES

The House version of the controversial Wilderness bill will not include any acreage on the Allegheny National Forest, 23rd District Congressman Albert W. Johnson predicted Monday.

"If you fly from Bradford airport to Harrisburg as I do," Johnson earlier told a gathering of township officials in Youngsville, "you'll realize Pennsylvania is nothing but wilderness."

The Congressman later told the Times Observer he has recommended the House Committee on the Interior not include the 50,000 Allegheny National Forest acres proposed for wilderness designation in the pending legislation.

Johnson said he is confident the committee will honor his request and not include the ANF land in its version of the bill. The Senate-passed wilderness bill included the local acreage.

Johnson said his opinion of wilderness is based on public opposition to the bill, particularly from Warren County residents and the fact elimination of lumbering and other ac-

tivities on the land would result in reduced revenues to townships and school districts in the four counties which comprise the national forest.

"As far as I'm concerned wilderness would be a great blow to Warren County and its townships and would put the lid on further recreational development," said Johnson.

The Congressman said he has also asked the House Committee they not include the local land in the bill unless they first permit him and Warren County residents to offer testimony.

"I'm sure my decision will not be popular with some people," the Smethport Republican conceded, specifically naming Sierra Club members who recommended ANF land be designated wilderness, "but as the district's representative in Congress I felt I had to take a stand."

After the House version of the wilderness legislation is reported, House-Senate conferees will attempt to hammer out a final bill and Johnson said the bill which is sent to the

President's desk may or may not include the local land in its provisions.

As to whether the ANF acreage will be included in the compromised bill, Johnson said he believes if enough people living in the national forest area voiced opposition to the bill, Pennsylvania Senators Hugh Scott and Richard Schweiker, both co-sponsors of the bill, would "back down".

Johnson also said he would ask to testify against the wilderness areas at the joint committee hearings and feels his opposition could lead to the deletion of the local areas from the final bill.

Johnson noted, however, it is doubtful any final action on the wilderness bill will be taken during the current session of Congress, which reconvenes Nov. 18.

WARREN TIMES OBSERVER

VOL. 9, NO. 182 PHONE 723-8200

WARREN, PENNSA., TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1974

TWO SECT