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Allegheny Wilderness Bill Signed

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Reagan on Tuesday signed the Pennsylvania Wilderness Act, creating the state's first federal wilderness area in a 9,700-acre tract of the Allegheny National Forest.

The new law bars all oil, gas, mineral and timber development in the Hickory Creek and Allegheny Islands sections of the forest, which extends into the northwestern counties of Forest, Warren, McKean and Elk.

The law also designates 23,100 acres as a National Recreation Area, a designation that allows limited development subject to environmental precautions and safeguards.

In addition, the bill authorizes the use of \$2 million to purchase subsurface oil, gas and mineral rights at Hickory Creek. The money was appropriated this year in another bill.

The Allegheny wilderness and recreation areas, located within a day's drive of 92 million people, took 11 years to become a reality because of conflicts among conservationists, developers and the state's congressmen.

The compromise was sponsored in the House by Reps. Bill Clinger, H. Warren, and Peter Kostmayer, D-Bucks. In the Senate, it was introduced by John Heinz, R-Pa., and Arlen Specter, R-Pa.

"There were so many divergent views and so much polarization, I'm not surprised it took this long. I wasn't sure we'd ever resolve it," Clinger said in a telephone interview from Oil City, where he was campaigning.

"It's been a long haul and now we can get on to something else — like an election," he said.

Heinz expressed satisfaction with sponsoring legislation that will benefit generations of Pennsylvanians.

"This historic legislation ... is an effective balance among the competing commercial, environmental and recreational benefits to be derived from the area," he said.

Specter said, "This is not only a great day for Pennsylvania but for our entire nation."

In addition to signing the Pennsylvania Wilderness Act, the president Tuesday signed into law legislation setting aside as wilderness areas more than 1 million acres of federal land in Wyoming, Tennessee, Virginia, Texas and New Mexico.

The president's action has these effects:

—Wyoming: Designates 884,129 acres of National Forest Service Land as wilderness and requires an Agriculture Department study of an

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additional 180,540 acres for inclusion at a later date.

—However, a far larger tract of land — 2.7 million acres — was released for multiple use management until 1990.

—Texas: Designates 34,346 acres of Forest Service land as wilderness and encouraged the Agriculture Department to acquire by exchange some 2,735 acres of land within the wilderness areas.

—Tennessee: Designates 24,942 acres of National Forest Service Land as wilderness, designates two additional tracts to be studied for possible inclusion and releases still other land for multiple use.

—Virginia: Designates 55,984 acres of forest service land as wilderness and requires the study of an additional 25,075 acres.

—New Mexico: Designates 27,840 acres of forest service land as wilderness, bans mining and mineral leasing in an additional 2,720 acres of public land in the state and requires acquisition of state and Indian land by exchange. The Agriculture Department also is required to sell 5,711 acres of public land to New Mexico State University for \$2.50 per acre.