

# Outside

## It's possible to favor logging and wilderness

By MIKE BLEECH

### *Outdoors Columnist*

Is there room in the debate over wilderness on the Allegheny National Forest for someone who is both staunchly in support of logging and wilderness?

This is where I stand on the issue. And I believe this is similar to the position of most Americans.

Most Americans, I believe, are conservationists. We want to make wise use of our natural resources. This involves some exploitation, some preservation. We can have it both ways, regardless of what extremists on either side of the issue might claim.

The timber industry can be the very heart of good conservation. Trees are renewable resources. If managed properly, as I believe the Allegheny National Forest has done, beautiful, wild forests can coexist with perpetual logging.

But representatives of the timber industry are winning no friends by taking a 'we want it all' stance.

Neither are environmentalists, the extremists whom that term has come to portray, winning any friends by eco-terrorist acts, or by an endless series of

nagging lawsuits.

Even some of the great timber barons, who became wealthy at the expense of the environment, saw the beauty of nature. They are the reason we still have Hearts Content, Cook Forest, and other small remnants of old growth forest. In their time, when most Americans saw our natural resources as endless, they had enough foresight to save something.

The modern timber industry has not stripped the nation of trees. It has used the most powerful incentive in America, profit, to perpetuate our forests.

For many decades, Pennsylvanians have been allowed to use many private forests for various recreational purposes. Today, some of the support gained by that generosity is being eroded by hunting leases which close those forest sections to public use. Most of us understand that landowners must show profit for their investments. If they must lease their land for it to be profitable, that probably is due to excessive property taxes and rising costs of managing the land, and we try to understand.

But closing private forests to public use make average Americans more inclined toward keeping the timber industry off

our public forests.

Fortunately for the timber industry, in the struggle over public support, the environmentalist movement has gotten more radical. Burning the forest experiment station at Irvine destroyed their credibility, if that had not already been accomplished by some of the lawsuits to prevent logging on the Allegheny National Forest.

Most people would have understood an occasional lawsuit, if it were done to preserve something special, or unique. But validity has been lost in the number of lawsuits. All they have accomplished has been to waste tax money, and put even more local folks out of work.

But preservation is not evil. A huge majority of Americans, I believe, want a lot of wild land preserved. They do not, however, want preservation at the expense of our way of living.

Perhaps it is the way of politics that you must ask for all if you want half. Those of us in the middle wonder, though, if the extremists on both sides of this issue might really want it all.

Does a small minority of environmentalists want to revert all of America to wilderness, leaving humans to run naked and root for nuts and berries?

Does a small minority of wealthy landowners want to take every square foot of land to use for their own profit, in any manner they see fit?

Probably the answer to both questions is 'yes'. If either extremist side got its way, life as we know, and enjoy, in America would cease to exist. I hope those who profess either extreme realize this, and really do not want that to happen.

### **Akeley Swamp Project**

The Akeley Swamp Project was placed on the Pennsylvania

Bulletin Dec. 21, beginning a 30-day public comment period. This wetlands habitat effort is supported by a wide range of sportsmen and conservation groups, and individuals. Your support might be critical.

Send your written comments to Bureau of Waterways Engineering, 400 Market Street, Post Office Box 8554, Harrisburg, Pa. 17105-8554.

Comments should be concise. Identify the project by number (D62-033). Include your name, address, and phone number.