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 April 1, 2011
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Wilderness groups join forces

By DEAN WELLS

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A local wilderness preservation society has joined forces with the fledgling National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance (NWSA), an organization designed to bring together wilderness conservation groups across the country.

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness (FAW) executive director Kirk Johnson attended the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance's national conference in Las Vegas on March 10-13.

According to David Cantrell, NWSA

board president, his organization has been working with Friends of Allegheny Wilderness over the last six months. NWSA specializes in "trying to get organizations together to share resources and cooperate."

Cantrell said the feeling that there was a need to put these groups in contact with each other resulted in the creation of NWSA and the founding of a national conference.

"There are local regional groups

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Wilderness groups...

spread all throughout the country," Cantrell said. "We had a meeting last March and decided we needed some sort of national organization."

The national conference held earlier in March in Las Vegas included expert panels on wilderness, workshops designed to provide organizations with information to assist federal land

management agencies in wilderness stewardship, and keynote speakers.

Cantrell was impressed with the turnout for the conference. "We'd hoped for 75 people," he said. "We had 120. It was groups from every corner of the country, from Alaska to Georgia. It was a good gathering."

Johnson was awarded a full scholarship from NWSA

to attend the conference.

Johnson has been the director of Friends of the Allegheny Wilderness since 2001. The organization's primary goal is to increase wilderness designation in the Allegheny National Forest, in addition to providing stewardship for the ANF's existing Hickory Creek and Allegheny Islands Wilderness areas.