



Serving All Of Warren County

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MONDAY, JULY 7, 2003

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A Forest Partnership

Conservation group teams with USFS on trail work

By DEAN WELLS

Staff Writer

A local conservationist group has teamed up with the U.S. Forest Service to maintain a hiking trail in a wilderness area of the Allegheny National Forest.

The Friends of Allegheny Wilderness (FAW) have adopted the Hickory Creek Wilderness Trail, an 11-mile loop near Heart's Content. FAW have agreed to provide maintenance for the trail, coordinating with U.S. Forest Wilderness Ranger Eric Flood, who is based in Bradford.

"It's a way of maintaining wilderness resources," FAW director Kirk Johnson says. "Our original priority at this point is significantly increasing wilderness. But it's also important that we appreciate and maintain current wilderness areas."

FAW officially adopted the Hickory Creek trail last fall. Since then, FAW has participated in three maintenance events this year, including tree planting and blowdown cleanup.

Most recently, FAW and Flood, along with members of the Student Conservation Association, spent a weekend in mid-June repairing a marshy area of the trail near Coon



Volunteers work on placing rocks to help clear up a marshy section of the Hickory Creek Wilderness Trail near Coon Run.

Run.

"We tried to create some drainage out of muddy areas and harden it with rock," Flood says. "We tried to make it as natural looking as we could."

In May, FAW and Flood planted trees to reclaim an old logging road near the Heart's Content campground that people were mistaking for part of the trail.

"We naturalized that road as much as we can," Flood says. "It's the remnant of an old wood road. People were

actually maintaining it without a permit. It was causing conflicting interest with the wilderness values and confusions with the trail. It actually does cross the trail."

According to Flood, FAW donated trees for planting in the area of the road.

Also in May, the volunteers cleared blown down trees and limbs from sections of the trail using primitive hand

See TRAIL CLEANUP / A-3



Photo submitted for publication

Trail work

U.S. Forest Service Wilderness Ranger Eric Flood, right, provides instructions on how to plant new trees on an old logging road in the vicinity of the Hickory Creek Wilderness Trail.

Trail cleanup...

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tools.

"It's a 'leave no trace,' area," Flood says. "We try to keep our party size to a minimum. And we use the minimum tools. What that means is whatever I need to accomplish, I use the most minimum tool it takes to accomplish it. Often that means me, on foot, with an ax."

In addition, the volunteers use shovels and mattox to perform repair work on the trail. Chain saws are prohibited.

"Under the Wilderness Act," Flood says, "all motorized equipment is prohibited. That applies to me, as well."

According to Flood, he would like to get in one more cleanup event this year. But there's still work to be done on drainage near Coon Run.