



Friends of Allegheny Wilderness seeks to foster an appreciation of wilderness values and benefits, and to work with local communities to ensure that increased wilderness protection is a priority of the stewardship of the Allegheny National Forest.

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Coalition aims to make part of the ANF wilderness

By Amanda Nichols, Era Reporter
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Six conservation groups in Pennsylvania have joined forces to form the Pennsylvania Wilderness Coalition, a concerted effort to compel Congress to designate roughly 10 percent of the Allegheny National Forest as wilderness.

With combined memberships, the coalition consists of nearly 65,000 citizens across the Commonwealth in support of the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal* – a report developed by Friends of Allegheny Wilderness (FAW) in 2003 identifying 54,460 acres of particularly wild Allegheny National Forest lands to be permanently protected.

Supporting organizations include Friends of Allegheny Wilderness; The Sierra Club, Pennsylvania Chapter; Pennsylvania Division, Izaak Walton League of America; Pennsylvania Trout Unlimited; The Wilderness Society; and the PEW Environment Group.

“These six groups have endorsed the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal* for a long time,” said FAW Executive Director Kirk Johnson on Monday. “It’s no longer just a formal endorsement, they will be working in the campaign in a direct, concerted way and actively contributing staff, volunteer time and resources.”

Johnson said after more than a year of discussions, the groups decided to turn the

campaign into a “statewide effort to the greatest degree possible to protect parts of Pennsylvania’s only national forest.”

“It takes an act of Congress to designate wilderness,” he continued. “Those areas then become part of the National Wilderness Preservation System and are required by law to remain in their natural condition.”



Brent Silvis of the Erie Outing Club stands next to a large toppled tree deep in the interior of the proposed Chestnut Ridge Wilderness. The tree fell in full view of hikers during a June 13 FAW excursion into the area – and yes it did make a sound!

Johnson said that the proposal has now been signed by 67 leading scientists in the fields of ecology, biology and the like who recognize the urgency of such a designation given the growing pressures of industry and development in the areas.

“National forest land is managed for multiple uses, but it’s good to establish a balance of use across the forest,” Johnson explained. “A designation for the proposed areas would allow us to establish an important kind of wildlife habitat, highly natural and undisturbed.”

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He said it took two years of field studies to choose the nearly 54,000 acres which were decided upon due to their being “relatively untrammelled by man — unrestrained by the acts of man with few roads and oil wells — the most natural and pristine areas that still exist in the area.”

There are currently approximately 9,000 acres protected as wilderness in Pennsylvania that are no longer open to logging, road building or development, according to Johnson.

“Eighteen percent of all national forest land in the country is currently designated wilderness and in the east it’s more like 11 percent,” Johnson said. “If we were to get all of our areas in the proposal designated by Congress, that would really bring wilderness representation in the Allegheny up to something that is commensurate with other eastern national forests.”

John Bartlett of the Izaak Walton League of America said his group supports the campaign in order to “set aside a legacy that will live forever for generations to come and preserve the very best of what we have of our natural heritage.”

According to Johnson, conserving wilderness is a kind of long-term investment that protects those proposed areas that are of far more value as they are than they would be once exhausted for the short term gain of a few by their conversion into marketable goods.

“Designating wilderness areas precipitates a myriad of economic benefits for people that extend far into the future,” he said. “Some of those are increased property values, growth in outdoor recreation industries and quality of life, as well as ecosystem services which are indispensable and would be nearly impossible to replicate by society.”

“The ANF belongs to everyone equally,” Johnson added. “It is federal public land and everyone’s tax dollars — whether you live in Pennsylvania or Hawaii — contribute to the stewardship of the forest so everyone should be able to use the ecological services and other benefits there. You don’t have to pay a fee to enter the wilderness.”

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Two Narratives of American Conservation

By Ed Zahniser

Today there are two main narratives of the origins of our persistent American determination to protect some of our great legacy of public lands. The first and more familiar narrative begins with the New England Transcendentalists: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Margaret Sarah Fuller.

This is the public lands protection narrative that arises from the Romantic Movement that Emerson, Fuller, and—to some extent—Thoreau translated from German Idealist philosophy. They translated this thinking into the Self-reform movement and the high valuation of wild nature for which Thoreau is known.

The second narrative of the origin of our American valuation of wild nature and our concern to perpetuate our public lands legacy grew out of the idea of the commons. There is still open space in downtown Boston called the Boston Commons. This was land set aside and protected from private ownership for common use, usually for grazing livestock or harvesting timber in Colonial America.

But the commons idea expanded. Rivers were declared public highways, so that no private interest could prevent their use for transporting produce, goods, or raw materials. And the annual spawning runs of sea-run fish up rivers and streams were declared commons, too. Spawning runs could not be restricted to exclusive private use or ownership.

Several historians say this *commons* marks the origin of our American valuation of wild nature. It launched our nation’s determined history of trying to protect some remnant of our public lands legacy—in which you now labor for your

special places, the wilderness areas on the Allegheny National Forest.

These conservation narratives are not mutually exclusive. Both undergird your advocacy for the public lands you champion in the Allegheny National Forest. At heart we Americans have desired, from the get-go, that our descendents should inherit cornucopias, not just lands worn out by unrestricted human avarice.

And history has taught us that forming *systems* of protected natural areas is crucial to preserving any *given* area—like *your* special place—within that system. The National Wilderness Preservation System is the ideal protection for Allegheny National Forest wilderness areas.

Ed Zahniser, a long-time supporter of Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, is a writer and a poet. He lives in West Virginia.

Take Action to Protect Wilderness!

As covered previously in this issue of *FAWN*, Friends of Allegheny Wilderness has joined with five other conservation organizations to form the Pennsylvania Wilderness Coalition and advocate for additional Congressionally designated wilderness in the Allegheny National Forest – Pennsylvania’s only national forest.

Some of Pennsylvania’s most magnificent wildlands are at stake and our coalition aims to keep them just like they are. Special places like Chestnut Ridge, Minister Valley, Cornplanter, Tracy Ridge, and others could gain permanent protection.

We need the help of all Pennsylvanians to make this a reality. Wilderness designation is the highest level of protection that can be given to federal lands, keeping them wild for current and future generations to enjoy.

The coalition supports the *Citizens’ Wilderness Proposal for Pennsylvania’s Allegheny National Forest*, which identifies 54,460 acres of wilderness quality lands on the ANF. Details can be found at www.pawild.org.

Take Action!

Please take the time to write Senators Arlen Specter and Bob Casey along with your local

Congressman or woman urging them to support wilderness designation for the remaining qualifying lands in the ANF. A convenient template letter is available on the FAW website:

www.pawild.org/FAWSupportLetter.doc

Please download and edit this letter as you see fit to personalize it and explain why wilderness is important to you!



Bill Burdsall (right) and friends enjoying the proposed Tracy Ridge Wilderness. The group is wont to frequent Tracy Ridge, and supports wilderness designation for the area. Photo courtesy Bill Burdsall.

Print several copies of the letter, each with the proper salutation for the following members of Congress. One copy each should go to Senator Arlen Specter and Senator Bob Casey. The primary targets in the U.S. House are Congressman Glenn Thompson and Congresswoman Kathy Dahlkemper. Mailing addresses are listed on the front page of the FAW website. If you do not live in their districts, address the letter to your own U.S. Rep. with copies to Reps. Thompson and Dahlkemper. Find out who your representative is by visiting www.house.gov.

Joining with Friends of Allegheny Wilderness in forming the Pennsylvania Wilderness Coalition are: Sierra Club, Pennsylvania Chapter; Pennsylvania Division, Izaak Walton League of America; Pennsylvania Chapter of Trout Unlimited; The Wilderness Society; and the Campaign for America’s Wilderness.

To keep up with the Allegheny National Forest wilderness campaign, sign up for our email listserve at www.pawild.org. Just type your email address into the “Subscribe to our Email List” box, and click “Submit.”

Thank you!

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Shagbark Hickory (*Carya ovata*) is a common hickory throughout the East. It can grow 150' tall, and live 200 years or more. Mature shagbarks, as the name implies, have very shaggy bark. Their nuts are eaten by a wide variety of birds and mammals. Shagbark hickory trees are never cut in the ANF due to their wildlife habitat value, especially for the federally endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*).

Your contribution to Friends of Allegheny Wilderness goes directly to saving wilderness!

Yes, I want to support Friends of Allegheny Wilderness and help protect Pennsylvania's Wilderness.

Yes, I want to contribute! Here is my donation of (circle one):

\$20 \$35 \$50 \$100 \$500 \$1,000 \$_____

Please make checks payable to "Friends of Allegheny Wilderness." Friends of Allegheny Wilderness is an IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Donations are tax deductible. The official registration and financial information of Friends of Allegheny Wilderness may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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