



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.

President Declares Wilderness Month

In late August, President Obama formally declared September 2010 to be “National Wilderness Month” (see below), in celebration of America’s National Wilderness Preservation System, established with the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964.



Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*)

Every president since Lyndon Johnson has signed multiple wilderness bills into law during their time in office, steadily growing the NWPS and permanently protecting some of the nation’s most significant natural areas for future generations to use and enjoy.

President Carter holds the record for most acreage protected as president, while President Reagan holds the record for most wilderness bills signed (including the Pennsylvania Wilderness Act of 1984). The totals are as follows (acreage figures are approximate):

- Johnson:** 6 bills, 9.9 million acres
- Nixon:** 12 bills, 1.6 million acres
- Ford:** 12 bills, 3.1 millions acres
- Carter:** 14 bills, 66.3 million acres
- Reagan:** 43 bills, 10.6 million acres
- Bush, GHW:** 10 bills, 4 million acres
- Clinton:** 13 bills, 9.5 million acres
- Bush, GW:** 4 bills, half a million acres

Obama: 1 bill, 2 million acres

~A Proclamation~

For centuries, the American spirit of exploration and discovery has led us to experience the majesty of our Nation’s wilderness. From raging rivers to serene prairies, from mountain peaks slicing the skyline to forests teeming with life, our Nation’s landscapes have provided wonder, inspiration, and strength to all Americans. Many sites continue to hold historical, cultural, and religious significance for Indian tribes, the original stewards of this continent. We must continue to preserve and protect these scenic places and the life that inhabits them so they may be rediscovered and appreciated by generations to come.

As we celebrate America’s abundance of diverse lands, remarkable wildlife, and untamed beauty during National Wilderness Month, we also look back on our rich history of conservation. It was over 100 years ago that President Theodore Roosevelt marveled at the stark grandeur of the Grand Canyon and declared, “the ages have been at work on it, and man can only mar it.” Since that time, administrations have worked across party lines to defend America’s breathtaking natural sites. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Wilderness Act in 1964, and many Presidents have since added new places to this great network of protected lands so that millions of acres of forests, monuments, and parks will be preserved for our children and grandchildren.

Following in the footsteps of my predecessors, I signed the Omnibus Public Land Management Act last year to restore and protect more of our cherished wild...

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...spaces. In April of this year, I established the America's Great Outdoors Initiative to develop a community-based 21st century conservation agenda that can also spur job creation in the tourism and recreation industries. My Administration will continue to work closely with our State, local, and tribal partners to connect Americans with the great outdoors.

This month, we renew our pledge to build upon the legacy of our forebears. Together, we must ensure that future generations can experience the tranquility and grandeur of America's natural places. As we resolve to meet this responsibility, let us also reflect on the ways in which our lives have been enriched by the gift of the American wilderness.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 2010 as National Wilderness Month. I invite all Americans to visit and enjoy our wilderness areas, to learn about their vast history, and to aid in the protection of our precious national treasures.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirty-first day of August, in the year of our Lord two thousand ten, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-fifth.

The Least But Most Specific Thing

The least but most specific thing
you know or observe can turn
this smallish bird about the size
of a plump sparrow (but rounded)
into a black-capped chickadee

Or that beautiful evergreen
with the almost shaggy bark
into a Port Orford cedar.

You learn their song
or souging wind sound.
You begin to speak with them
in hushed tones.

—Ed Zahmiser

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Concerns in the Allegheny National Forest

By Darrin Youker

Faced with new interest in natural-gas drilling, Friends of Allegheny Wilderness is trying to secure federal protection for pristine areas in Allegheny National Forest. Staff and volunteers with the non-profit organization are lobbying federal lawmakers to protect eight tracts (a total of 54,000 acres) under the Wilderness Protection Act [Wilderness Act of 1964]. They also hope to purchase mineral rights in key areas of the Allegheny Forest to prevent drilling in ecologically sensitive areas.

For the past three years, energy companies have focused on Pennsylvania, seeking to tap a vast underground reservoir of gas called the Marcellus Shale formation, the largest untapped reserve of natural gas in the country.

Though the federal government owns 513,300 acres of forest land in northern Pennsylvania, it does not always own the mineral rights, said Kirk Johnson, executive director of Friends of Allegheny Wilderness. Gas companies that own those mineral rights can drill on public land without seeking federal approval.

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness has been researching the need to protect certain critical areas inside the forest since 2001. A federal designation as wilderness would keep the forest in a wild state, prohibiting logging, road building, and motorized recreation.

Currently, less than 2 percent of the Allegheny Forest is protected as wilderness, but the addition of these eight areas would bring that up to 12 percent, Johnson said, adding that this is in line with other national forests.



More importantly, it protects old-growth forests, pristine waterways, and excellent wildlife habitat. "It is the highest level of protection we can give to our natural lands," he said. "You can still go hiking, hunting, fishing, and backpacking, but you go in on your own two feet."

Johnson has been in contact with Pennsylvania's congressional delegation to gain support for the designation. So far, there's been an interest in pursuing federal designation, said Tina Kreisher, a spokeswoman for Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-PA), whose district includes the forest. However, environmental and natural-gas interests must both be met. "There must be a consensus between the industry and Friends of Allegheny Wilderness to move forward," she said. "At this point, we are not seeing that."

Even if the Allegheny tracts gain federal protection, drilling could still occur. When the federal government purchased land for the

forest in the 1920s, there was little acquisition of mineral rights, so the owners of those mineral rights can still come in and drill for oil and gas. That's why the Friends of Allegheny Wilderness is seeking to buy the rights in these eight sensitive areas. Doing so, however, would cost several million dollars—more than the group could afford, Johnson said. So it is seeking grant money, and trying to partner with larger environmental organizations.

"We run on a shoestring budget, but we're trying to keep our campaign rolling. Our goal is to make the public aware that these areas urgently need protection."

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Friends of Allegheny Wilderness 10th Anniversary Approaching!

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness was established in June of 2001 with the help of the Sierra Club Pennsylvania Chapter, The Wilderness Society, The Wildlands Project, the Pew Wilderness Center, and many others.

The mission statement of FAW was then, and is still 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.*

We have come a long way and made a lot of progress for the Commonwealth's sole national forest. We are still going strong, thanks to the support of thousands of wilderness aficionados all across Pennsylvania and beyond. Now the time to pause and celebrate our collective work over the last ten years is fast approaching.

June of 2011 will offer activities and events associated with FAW's 10th Anniversary, so keep your calendar clear. And please feel free to send in your ideas for how this important milestone could be celebrated. From hikes, to river trips, to a benefit concert, to a volunteer appreciation dinner, we are considering everything, and look forward to your participation!

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Blackburnian Warbler (*Dendroica fusca*) a small migrant songbird breeding in eastern North America, and wintering in Central and South America. Their primary breeding habitat is mature coniferous or mixed forest. The blackburnian warbler is far more abundant in later-successional forests, such as in wilderness areas, than in surrounding younger managed forests.

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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Send to:
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