

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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From the Director

As mentioned in the September issue of *FAWN*, 2011 will mark the 10th anniversary of the establishment of Friends of Allegheny Wilderness. Not only will 2011 mark *our* 10th anniversary, however, it will also mark the 100th anniversary of the Weeks Act of 1911! This landmark legislation is what enabled the federal government to establish the Allegheny National Forest (ANF) in 1923, as well as many other important national forests throughout the East. The below article from the most recent issue of *Wilderness* magazine from The Wilderness Society provides a good overview of the profound significance of this invaluable legislation.

In other news, the 2010 elections are over and the people have spoken. U.S. Rep. Glenn Thompson won reelection to his PA-5th district seat. (The 5th district encompasses the vast majority of the ANF.) U.S. Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper was defeated in her reelection bid to her PA-3rd district seat by Mike Kelly of Butler. Congressman Joe Sestak was defeated by former Congressman Pat Toomey in the race for Senator Arlen Specter's seat. Senator Bob Casey was not up for reelection this year as he is still serving the six-term he won in 2006. (He will up for reelection in 2012.) The importance of all of this is that an act of the U.S. Congress is *required* to designate wilderness under the Wilderness Act of 1964. Therefore, Congressman Thompson, Congressman-elect Kelly, Senator Casey, and Senator-elect Toomey will be the primary decision-makers with respect to designating wilderness in the ANF in the 112th Congress, which opens in next month.

Check the FAW website at www.pawild.org in early 2011 for contact information for new members of Pennsylvania's Congressional delegation. See you on the trail! – Kirk Johnson

Wilderness The Magazine of The Wilderness Society 2010-2011

A Centennial for Our Eastern Forests By Doreen Cubie

John Wingate Weeks grew up in New Hampshire's White Mountains in the 1860s and loved the woods. So he was devastated as he watched large swaths of those forests clear-cut.

When he got to Congress, Weeks did something about it. A Republican representing a Massachusetts district, he introduced a bill that would permit the federal government to buy land to establish public forests.



The proposed addition to the Allegheny National Recreation Area along the southwest shore of the Allegheny Reservoir, as seen from the Jakes Rocks overlook. Billies Run drainage can be seen in the center. Photo by Kirk Johnson.

Up to that point, Congress had failed to pass more than 40 forest purchase bills. Opposition ranged from the potential cost to the...

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...constitutionality of the bills.

The Weeks Act, however, made it all the way through Congress and was signed by President William Howard Taft on March 1, 1911. Today, as we approach its 100th anniversary, there are 48 national forests that owe all or a major part of their acreage to this far-sighted legislation. "It was such a significant milestone," says Brent Martin, The Wilderness Society's Southern Appalachian Program director. "We wouldn't have a National Forest System in the East without the Weeks Act."

And without our eastern national forests, Americans would have far fewer outdoor recreation opportunities. "These forests are ideal for escaping the rat race, and that's important to more and more people these days, especially in the East's crowded urban corridors," says Martin. "If you like to hike, watch birds, bike, kayak, fish, hunt, or camp, it's hard to do much better than a national forest." These forests average about eight million visits a year.

The push to protect U.S. forests had started in 1891, when Congress passed the Forest Reserve Law, allowing the government to set aside parts of the public domain as federal forest reserves. In the East, however, virtually all of the land was in private hands, so when the forest reserves became known as national forests in 1907, there was not a single acre east of the Great Plains.

Another hurdle was the continuing debate about whether the federal government even had the authority to buy land from the private sector for public conservation purposes. Eventually Weeks and his allies prevailed on that point. The U.S. Constitution gives Congress the right to regulate commerce, and since the interstate commerce of the period was dependent on navigable rivers, it was deemed the government

could purchase property for forests if the land contained the headwaters of navigable rivers.

Protecting these headwaters was also crucial to preventing devastating floods caused by excessive clear-cutting. "Downstream flooding was a major driver for the Weeks Act," says Christopher McGrory Klyza, professor of public policy, political science and environmental studies at Middlebury College. "When passed," says Klyza, "the Weeks Act was hugely significant for two main reasons. First, it set the constitutional precedent that the federal government could purchase land for conservation. Second, it set the precedent for all government conservation land purchases—in national parks and wildlife refuges as well as national forests—in the East, Midwest, Southeast, and the West."



U.S. Congressman John Wingate Weeks (R – Massachusetts), father of the Weeks Act of 1911.

The first acreage bought under the act was near Old Fort in western North Carolina: 8,100 acres that would eventually become the core of Pisgah National Forest. A group of activists in New Hampshire was not far behind. For some time they had been trying to protect what was left of the White Mountains, after years of clear cutting. Their first purchase was the beginning of today's 700,000-acre White Mountain National Forest.

Eventually, the legislation Weeks hammered through Congress created a truly national forest system, one that stretched from coast to coast.

“Much of the land acquired was completely cutover, burned over, and eroded,” says Michael Francis, director of The Wilderness Society’s National Forests Program. In addition to being cut, it had often been further degraded by poor agricultural practices. “The success in restoring these places gives us confidence that it will be possible to repair ecological damage in western forests, too. Such restoration is now a top Wilderness Society priority.”

In most cases, the owners of eastern tracts were glad to sell this “land nobody wanted” to the federal government for three to six dollars an acre, especially during the Great Depression, when much of the property was obtained. In contrast, the desirability of such parcels today is reflected by the lofty sums that developers offer to acquire adjacent parcels for construction of vacation homes.

One of these Depression-era purchases became South Carolina’s Francis Marion National Forest in 1936. When the Franklin Roosevelt administration authorized its purchase, the forest’s old-growth longleaf pine had been logged, and subsistence farmers were trying to eke out a living on depleted soils. Today, 70 years later, more than a quarter-million acres of longleaf pine savannas, cypress swamps, tidal creeks, and even salt marshes are found in this forest. Located just north of the burgeoning coastal city of Charleston, the Francis Marion harbors wildlife ranging from black bears to red-cockaded woodpeckers.

Other national forests that acquired land via the Weeks Act include Florida’s Apalachicola, Ocala, and Osceola; Minnesota’s Chippewa and Superior; Missouri’s Mark Twain; Kentucky’s Daniel Boone; Mississippi’s Delta; Vermont’s Green Mountain; Virginia’s George Washington and Jefferson; and **Pennsylvania’s Allegheny**. “If you look at the Appalachian mountains today, all of the highlands are in public ownership because of the Weeks Act,” says Francis.

“In a sense, the Weeks Act was a century ahead of its time in terms of protecting ecosystem benefits” such as water regulation, cultural and spiritual values, and refuge for endangered species, says Spencer Phillips, vice president of research for The Wilderness Society.



Replanting the cut-over and decimated lands of the ANF, not long after its 1923 establishment under the Weeks Act of 1911. The sign reads: “Part of 1,708,000 trees for reforesting in Allegheny National Forest Pennsylvania.”

“These forests also store carbon that otherwise would worsen our climate problems. These things will become even more important as time goes by.”

“The Weeks Act will continue to be relevant,” agrees Francis. “For one thing, it allows us to expand the boundaries of the national forests and take on development interests eager to subdivide nearby tracts.” In fact, the Forest Service has estimated that nationwide, on an average day, 6,000 acres of open space are lost to development.

Expanding national forests by purchasing additional land may also help mitigate some of the new threats facing eastern national forests, which range from invasive plants to climate change. In its second century the Weeks Act may turn out to be even more important than it was during its first 100 years.

Journalist Doreen Cubie of Awendaw, South Carolina, also writes for National Wildlife magazine and Audubon. More of her work is at www.doreencubie.com.

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A Day Hike on the Minister Trail

By David Saylor

Wilderness experiences come in different shapes and sizes. I can testify that a few hours trampling through a 7,000-acre NW Pennsylvania woodland – at a fast pace but stopping frequently to soak up the sights and silences – is perfectly fine in a pinch. It does the body and the soul a lot of good.



Friends of Allegheny Wilderness Board of Directors near Highland Corners, Elk County, September 18, 2010. Photo courtesy of Bob Stoudt.

Up from the Nation's Capital for a Friends of Allegheny Wilderness (FAW) Board of Directors meeting, I couldn't wait to head off into FAW's Minister Valley Proposed Wilderness Area in Allegheny National Forest. It was a Saturday afternoon in September and perfect weather. As we sat around a picnic table beside our Board President's cabin discussing important business, my hiking boots were getting anxious. Then, our work was done, congenial good-byes were said, and I was off down the road in a hurry. Motoring along a single lane shortcut across the Forest at top speed, I was brought up short by several drilling rig hauling vehicles blocking the way. As they slowly maneuvered around to make way for me, I muttered a few ungenerous thoughts to myself. Since I was headed to "Minister" Valley, I then asked the Good Lord to ensure that their explorations find success outside the Forest and not in those marvelous places where wilderness values should reign supreme.

Before long I parked just below the Minister Creek Campground where Route 666 meets the Minister Road. Seeing dozens of cars, I feared my wilderness experience would be at risk. But *Homo sapiens* were not a problem. On the entire 7.3 mile loop hike, I saw maybe seven people and heard a few more in nearby tenting areas. I took the east side trail up Minister Creek, connecting for a while with the North Country National Scenic Trail at the northernmost end of my hike, then south on a hillside above the Creek, eventually reaching the big rocks and the overlook, and then down the switchbacks to the Creek and the parking lot. Four-plus hours, some sweat, lots of photos, but out before twilight.

Minister Creek is a pretty little gem, plenty of shade, ample flow even in September, a fair number of shallow pools, and a rapid enough tumble over the rocks to help oxygenate the water. I kicked myself for not bringing my 3-weight fly rod as there looked to be some fine casting opportunities into the occasional deeper holes – but also plenty of overhanging trees to challenge the angler. I encountered only one fisherman, clothed in camouflage, about half way through my hiking loop, well up Minister Creek. He reported catching four brook trout on small flies and had another hour of casting time left. I was jealous.



Yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*) roots cling to a boulder along the Minister Trail. Photo by David Saylor.

If you take this hike, you will encounter a wonderfully diverse variety of terrain and flora. The fields of fern amidst widely-spaced mid-size timber are a delight to the eye. Towering trees,

mostly oaks, maples, beech, and cherries, are plentiful. I saw some fine specimens of survivor trees – you know, the semi-stunted ones whose roots go all the way around big rocks and reach into the furthest crannies for just a touch of earth and a drink of dew. There were bunches of pretty white-petaled, yellow-centered wildflowers – I can't recall the name. Same for mushrooms of which I saw several interesting specimens. There were a dozen varieties of rock lichens and very photogenic red, yellow, orange and white tree fungi. I had my binoculars for birds, but spotted only a few woodpeckers and sparrows; longer stops would have brought more interesting sightings I suspect.

A meadow lies near where the North Country Trail splits off and heads northwest. Several lucky folks were tenting there along the stream. The only place I got slightly tangled up and almost headed the wrong way was in this area. Soon, thanks to the trail sign and metallic tree "blaze" diamonds, I was trudging uphill on course and heading south. The hillside is littered with some very large and even cabin-size boulders. High up on the ridge were what looked like cliffs and I was delighted the trail took me there. It is an amazing spot as the path winds through these giant rocks. I made my way through narrow defiles among the gigantic rocks, thinking of Native Americans who surely trod this route eons ago. If there are petroglyphs, I did not see them. But the helpful modern painted arrow marks kept me on the safest route, as I turned my shoulders and ducked my head a couple times to squeeze through.

Around one bend and up the steep hill and I was soon at the rocky overlook enjoying quite a view to the south and east over Minister Valley. A nice young lady camped nearby snapped my obligatory victory photo. Descending to the valley floor hastily so as not to be stumbling in the approaching dark, I could hear some very happy campers back of the lookout spot engaged in boisterous shouting and joking. Presumably their tents were set up and perhaps a reasonably cold brew was being sampled. For a moment, mine wasn't a classic "wilderness" experience, but I forgave them that. Soon it was

just me and the forest once again in complete solitude.



Article author David Saylor at Minister overlook on the west side of Minister Valley in the proposed Minister Valley Wilderness Area.

Driving out of the area at dusk, with slightly sore leg muscles from 400 feet of climbing, I felt satisfied. I had seen a worthy potential addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System, a system that my farsighted uncle Pennsylvania Representative John Saylor helped Congress establish way back in 1964. My mind drifted forward in time to the day when our lawmakers finally protect worthy eastern wilderness areas like the ANF's Minister Valley. I snapped out of this optimistic reverie when a big hen turkey scampered across the road. Evidently she was roused from her roost as the sun was setting over Allegheny National Forest. I was far happier to see her than those drilling rigs that blocked my path five hours earlier.

David Saylor is a four-year member of the FAW Board of Directors. His uncle, John P. Saylor (R-Johnstown) was a 24-year member of the U.S. House of Representatives, and perhaps the staunchest advocate for passage of both the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act of 1975 in the entire Congress.

Partial list of FAW 10-year accomplishments

Over the last nearly ten years, FAW and our many supporters throughout Pennsylvania and beyond have made great strides toward permanently protecting new wilderness in the Allegheny National Forest. We have all of *you* to thank for that. Your letters to the U.S. Forest

Service, to elected officials, and to others over the years have clearly had a large impact.

Some of our collective accomplishments include:

- A thorough inventory of the ANF from 2001-2003 to identify just prior to the Forest Service's Forest Plan revision every last parcel that could potentially be added by Congress to America's National Wilderness Preservation System.
- The publication of the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal for Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest* in 2003 to coincide with the Forest Plan revision. It precisely and meticulously identifies eight areas totaling 54,460 acres of potential wilderness using the latest Geographic Information System technology.
- Wide distribution of the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal* to agency personnel, elected officials, members of the media, conservation organizations, libraries, and many others. Nearly 6,000 hard copies have been distributed to date, and as of this writing the electronic PDF of the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal* has been downloaded from our website, www.pawild.org, more than 13,000 times!
- In response to the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal*, the agency identified four possible wilderness areas in their Draft Forest Plan in 2006: Allegheny Front, Chestnut Ridge, Minister Valley, and Tracy Ridge.
- Of the 8,200 total public comments received on the Draft Plan, more than 6,800 (*greater than 80 percent* of the total) specifically supported FAW and the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal*. It was hard work generating all of those correspondences for wilderness, and it was all of *you* that helped make it happen!
- In the final Forest Plan, published in 2007, two wilderness areas were recommended to Congress as a direct result of the advocacy efforts of members of FAW and our supporting organizations: Chestnut Ridge,

and Minister Valley. Congress may ultimately designate even more than that.

Check back in the March issue of *FAWN* for additional 10-year accomplishments. We have *a lot* more to talk about as our decennial anniversary approaches! To be continued...

The Bradford Era

Wednesday, December 8, 2010

Audubon Pennsylvania joins coalition to protect ANF

WARREN – Audubon Pennsylvania has joined with six other conservation organizations as part of the fledgling Pennsylvania Wilderness Coalition, which was formed earlier this year.

The mission of the coalition is to support the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal for Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest*.

National Audubon Society opened its Pennsylvania State Office in 1997 as the organization's tenth state office. Today, Audubon Pennsylvania has more than 24,000 members across the Commonwealth. Its mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and biological diversity in Pennsylvania.

"The Allegheny is located in the northwest corner of the state, but as Pennsylvania's only national forest, it belongs to all of us," said Phil Wallis, executive director for Audubon Pennsylvania. "Wilderness designation, under the Wilderness Act of 1964, for the most unbroken forest canopy tracts in the Allegheny will leave a permanent natural legacy benefiting future generations of bird populations, and indeed all native Allegheny Plateau wildlife species."

Wilderness designation by Congress is the strongest protection that can be given to federal lands, adding them to America's National Wilderness Preservation System. They are areas where by law natural processes are permitted to run their course in perpetuity, and where people are just visitors – using the areas to hunt, fish, hike, backpack, and for other forms of low-impact recreation.

The charter members of the Pennsylvania Wilderness Coalition were: Friends of Allegheny Wilderness; Sierra Club, Pennsylvania Chapter; Pennsylvania Division, Izaak Walton League of America; Pennsylvania Trout Unlimited; The Wilderness Society; and the Campaign for America's Wilderness of the Pew Environment Group.

With the addition of Audubon Pennsylvania as the seventh member organization, the coalition now collectively represents more than 75,000 Pennsylvanians. The Coalition supports the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal for Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest*, crafted by Friends of Allegheny Wilderness in 2003, which identifies 54,460 acres of wilderness-quality lands.

Only two areas in the Allegheny National Forest are currently protected as wilderness – the Hickory Creek Wilderness with about 8,600 acres, and the Allegheny Islands Wilderness, totaling fewer than 400 acres. That is less than two percent of the 513,300-acre Allegheny National Forest.

“Clearly there is a shortage of designated wilderness in Pennsylvania,” said Dave Rothrock, president of Pennsylvania Trout Unlimited. “The areas identified in the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal* are the most roadless and most undeveloped remaining portions of the Allegheny National Forest. They are one of our greatest public assets and provide refuge for naturally reproducing brook trout. We need to ensure they remain wild for our children and grandchildren.”

“This is an issue for all of us who call Pennsylvania home,” said David Sublette, federal public lands chair for the Sierra Club's Pennsylvania Chapter. “We have but one national forest. It is heavily used – more than a third of the nation's population is within a day's drive. If we do not move quickly to protect these undeveloped areas, they will be lost as the natural areas they are today.”

Bob Stoudt, board president of the Warren-based Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, noted that 70 leading ecologists, biologists, and economists have signed a letter supporting

wilderness designation for the areas identified in the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal*.

“Many of us fully appreciate the aesthetic and even spiritual values of wilderness, but these scientists understand and stress the ecological and economic benefits to wilderness designation,” Stoudt said. “They make it clear that permanent protection of these lands is important to maintaining the state's habitat types and biodiversity.”

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FAWN dedication: Stuart Zahniser

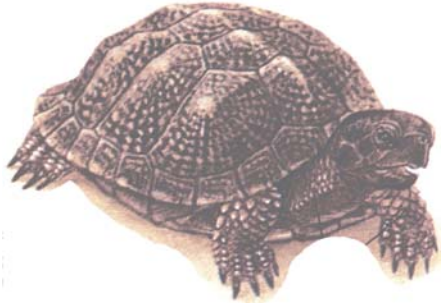
This issue of *FAWN* is dedicated to the memory of long-time member of and frequent donor to FAW, Stuart Zahniser, who passed away at age 97 on October 17th, 2010. Born in Mercer County, PA on September 24, 1913, he was the son of William Verne and Margaret Downs Zahniser.



Stuart Zahniser during a three-day, two-night FAW sojourn on the Allegheny River, August 2004. Photo by David Zahniser.

Stuart was a true outdoorsman. In August of 2004 FAW embarked on a three-day canoe trip down the Allegheny River to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, which was written by Stuart's cousin Howard Zahniser. Stuart, 90 years old at the time, paddled his own canoe solo the whole way and reveled in setting up camp each night on the Allegheny Islands Wilderness. Everyone who was on that trip fondly remembers Stuart's presence and contributions. Even through thunderstorms and torrential downpours Stuart was great company!

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Wood Turtle (*Glyptemys insculpta*) reaches a length of 14 to 20 centimeters. It mainly stays in or close to water, preferring shallow, clear streams. Wood turtles are in decline, resulting from habitat destruction, farming accidents, and road traffic. They are also illegally collected for the pet trade. The Forest Service considers the wood turtle a species with viability concerns in the ANF. This time of the year wood turtles hibernate in small to medium-sized hard-bottomed streams.

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 \$_____

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