



*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.*

## Centre Daily Times

Monday, September 19, 2011

### Thompson should rescind his support of anti-wilderness bill

By Kirk Johnson

A congressman from California wants to put some of Pennsylvania's wildest forests at greater risk, and he has, unfortunately, been joined by a single Pennsylvania congressman.

U.S. Rep. Kevin McCarthy's hostile bill targets millions of roadless acres of American wild lands, including some in Pennsylvania. The bill, HR 1581 (the Wilderness and Roadless Areas Release Act), should be called the Great Outdoors Giveaway because it would strip protections for 25,000 pristine acres in the Allegheny National Forest.

As someone who has spent countless hours hiking through the Allegheny's backcountry, I find this bill to be an insult to the region.

The Allegheny provides anglers with a great place to fish and families with a great atmosphere for canoeing and outdoor recreation. The region's oak, black cherry, hemlock and white pine forests provide hunters with ideal habitat for deer and other game.

Four Allegheny forest tracts that qualify for wilderness designation under the Wilderness Act of 1964 - Allegheny Front, Clarion River, Cornplanter and Tracy Ridge - could be stripped of protections.

Even if one is not concerned with protecting Pennsylvania's wildest places, you may be interested in protecting its bottom line. In 2006 alone, more than 4 million Pennsylvanians went hunting, fishing or wildlife watching, which generated more than \$4 billion for the state's economy.



**Winter hiking in the proposed Clarion River Wilderness – a formally recognized Roadless Area in the Allegheny National Forest under threat by the Great Outdoors Giveaway bill. Photo by R.J. Mauk.**

This anti-wilderness proposal is also an affront to Pennsylvania's conservation legacy: Rep. John P. Saylor, of Johnstown, was an original sponsor of the Wilderness Act of 1964 that has conserved land throughout the country. He was considered the father of the act in the House of Representatives.

A solitary Pennsylvania congressman has abandoned Saylor's conservation legacy and joined McCarthy's efforts. U.S. Rep. Glenn Thompson, R-Howard Township, is a co-sponsor of the Wilderness and Roadless Areas Release Act.

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David J. Saylor, nephew of Rep. Saylor and board member for Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, recently said: "I know my uncle would have rallied good people from both parties to oppose this blunderbuss 'Release Act.' Were he still in the Congress, I am confident he would have persuaded his colleagues from Pennsylvania and around the country that there is a better and more focused way to address these subjects.

"This unfortunate legislation's radical stripping away of vital protection from our precious remaining wildlands not yet officially designated as Wilderness Areas, as he would have explained, is harsh, unprecedented and bad policy for Pennsylvania and the whole United States."

The position of Friends of Allegheny Wilderness is that we would like to see Thompson - and all co-sponsors - rescind support for this misguided bill. Further, we are asking that McCarthy withdraw HR 1581.

For more information on protecting Pennsylvania's wilderness, log on to [www.pawild.org](http://www.pawild.org).

McCarthy's hometown newspaper, the *Bakersfield Californian*, recently editorialized against the Great Outdoors Giveaway bill, noting "the rumbling sound you may have noticed coming from the general vicinity of the Sierra Nevada is Teddy Roosevelt rolling over in his grave."

Roosevelt, of course, was the early 20th century two-term Republican president widely considered to be the strongest conservationist president in our history.

In this day and age of widespread Marcellus Shale development, we should all be working to permanently protect our last remnant wild

areas, not working to open them up to development.

*Kirk Johnson is executive director for the Warren-based nonprofit Friends of Allegheny Wilderness ([www.pawild.org](http://www.pawild.org)).*

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## **Citizens' Wilderness Proposal Online Survey - Some Feedback**

An online survey regarding the special wild areas identified in FAW's *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal for Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest* has been live since February, and the responses keep pouring in. Huge thanks go out to all friends who have taken the time to fill out the survey!

If you have not yet taken this survey, we would love to hear from you. (But please only take it once so as not to skew the results.) Feedback from FAW's legions of supporters is always critical. You are the lifeblood of this organization and campaign.

**To take the survey, go to the FAW website at [www.pawild.org](http://www.pawild.org) and click on "Take the Citizens' Wilderness Proposal survey!" at the top.** (All responses will remain anonymous.)

Many respondents have put a great deal of thought into their heartfelt comments at the end of the survey, in addition to filling out the rankings section. Some examples of the comments people have left so far follow here:

"In 2006, I discovered the North Country National Scenic Trail in the ANF. I first set foot on it where it crosses SR 346, and hiked south towards the reservoir, and up the Tracy Ridge trail system to the campground. I was instantly addicted to hiking/backpacking. I hike the NCT from Allegany SP to State Game Lands 283 along the Clarion River each year. I have logged over 800 miles and countless days and weekends on the trails of the ANF. I hike in the Adirondacks, the Smokies, and even in the Rockies in Colorado. I have hiked the entire LP section of NCT in Michigan, and most of the UP section. I have done a good chunk of the Appalachian Trail as well. However the lush green hemlock

lined valleys of the ANF remain my favorite. Hiking there changed my life with Tracy Ridge and the Minister Creek area closest to my heart. Now I want to give something back."

"The *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal* reminds me of John Muir's writings."

"As a hiker, biker, kayaker, snowshoer, and having been born in Kinzua and lived all but two years of my life in this area, the ANF is a very important part of my life. I fear for the future of the forest and the abuse it will be exposed to in the future. I know of no better protection than wilderness designation."

"At one time or another I have enjoyed all of these areas, and feel they are all equally important."

"I prefer more of an emphasis on wilderness rather than recreation areas. I would also put most of my focus on the largest proposed wilderness area, and also keep in mind connectivity of the wilderness areas. Large tracts of unbroken forest are getting more difficult to come by these days. Keep up the good work, you have my full support."

"For the sake of the health of the system upon which we ultimately rely for our own health, it is imperative that these vestiges of the vast original forest that had for millennia carpeted eastern North America remain as protected from human interference as possible. I say this as one who lives on the edge of these tracts."

"I run a Boy Scout Troop that camps at Hearts Content, Hickory Creek Wilderness, and Minister Valley at least 3 times a year. They are getting crowded due to the deterioration of the rest of the forest [roads, wells, pits, clearcuts]. Late fall one weekend there were four Scout troops camping in Minister Valley - I'm not sure all this use is accounted for. The youth need the opportunity to hike through woods instead of through gas wells, roads, and fenced-in areas. It is no longer possible to hike through the National Forest except in the undisturbed areas. Keep up the good work."

"The rocks along Tanbark near where it crosses East Hickory Creek, in my opinion, is one of the best places to camp in all of the ANF. In the summer, you can camp along the creek under the canopy of old hemlocks and white pines, listening to the stream as it speaks in ancient whispers. Any other time of the year, or in inclement weather, the rocks provide the perfect shelter. Build your fire against the sandstone under the overhang, and sleep on the ledge around the corner (also covered by an overhang). Enjoy peace as the firelight warms the rocks and reflects off the colorful sandstone, transforming a dark, cold rock into an inviting cabin. Climb atop the rocks for a view of the stars, or to listen to the calls of distant coyotes and owls. Hear your voice as it flows across the quiet valley."

Nowhere else in the U.S. have I found rock shelters as good as those in the ANF. In fact, I have not used a tent while camping in the ANF in over 10 years. And this includes camping in the winter and during summer thunderstorms. I would love to see all of these places protected as Wilderness forever. It is depressing to see once beautiful forests chopped into a maze of oil and logging roads, like has happened along Morrison Run Trail and at Gardner's Rocks (private land). There is plenty of room in the ANF for logging and oil/gas development. Why they have to do it on top of these special places is beyond me."

"I've kayaked the Clarion River; a wonderful experience. The Clarion Wilderness addition is crucial to the long-term enhancement of this designated wild and scenic river."

"While I have enjoyed spending time in most of these areas, the Allegheny Front is on the top of my list. Clarion and Tionesta are very high. Hearts Content and the Hickory Creek Wilderness addition, along with Allegheny Front, would begin to put together a significant wild area."

"I have found peace and quiet in the Allegheny from Kinzua Dam to Tidioute, PA all my life. I was raised and still live in Erie, PA, but my father passed on his love of the woods and Allegheny River. We canoed and camped for years. My children & I spent many weekends in the Warren Area and today my Husband & I

have a small cabin on the Allegheny River. My Grand-children are young, but already learning to love and respect our wilderness."

"These are wild areas that my father and mother made sure I visited. I took my sons to all these places and would want to take my grand children as well. Please give these areas the utmost protection. Thank you."



**Hikers in the proposed Cornplanter Wilderness – another Roadless Area threatened by the Great Outdoors Giveaway bill. Photo by Kirk Johnson.**

"I love it all because I live here and will not ever take this great forest for granted!!!"

"I think that the Hickory Creek Wilderness addition is the most important. It is the area that is the closest to the backcountry wilderness of the Western states! A good area to see the native brook trout, beaver activity and to let oneself escape to the thoughts of what it was like in the past and should be saved for our children and grandchildren to share the experience over the generations!"

"I love Minister Creek, with the beautiful rocks and the creeks and so far no oil development like what has wrecked the Morrison trail. I like the Clarion River a lot too. I like Hearts Content but I think some management needs to take place such as planting, fencing to keep deer out."

"I am an avid hiker from the Philadelphia area, and visit the Allegheny National Forest once or twice a year for hikes, and have done so for the last seven years. My favorite area within the forest is Tracy Ridge. Images of those trails are always alive in my mind."

"The southern portion of the Chestnut Ridge area is one of the most beautiful areas in the ANF. Drilling or logging in this part of the forest would greatly damage the wilderness effect that is experienced when hiking there. I have been privileged to have grown up in the area and have been exploring these woods for over 60 years. My hope is that it will be preserved for future generations to enjoy."

"It is extremely important that this entire area be protected and preserved for future generations. We have five grandchildren that we want to enjoy this wild area as much as the past generations of our family have."

"I love the dichotomy between the old growth forest and newly planted areas at Hearts Content. As a photographer, I often show two pictures side-by-side that depict the differences. It's my hope that these two images help preserve future forest land in ANF and elsewhere."

"The only place in PA that I ever saw a black bear was at Hearts Content. I will never forget my first visits to the old growth at Hearts Content and Tionesta Scenic Area back in the early 1970s. They were very unique experiences. Unfortunately beech bark disease has changed these areas drastically."

"Cherish all of it it's not just about the trees it's about the whole area, the scenery, the animals and birds. Once it is gone it is too late."

"This is where I grew up, where I learned of the Seneca nation, of the ancient forest, and what was. We all must have safe zones of forest. And connect them for proper free movement of the animals. Without total protection we will always return to debate with those only interested in cash profit. We profit from forest systems kept wild. For us, for the future, for always."

“The more the better. Ideally we’d have wilderness areas at convenient locations throughout ANF to better facilitate access from the city, town, and country folk.”

“I have spent a good amount of time in the Tracy Ridge and Morrison Run areas. I look forward to more exploration of Minister Valley and Hickory Creek. I feel that the ANF is a valuable resource and should get as much protection as possible.”

“I’m not marking all ‘ones’ just to make it easy. I truly feel that any area that has the possibility to qualify as wilderness is very important. We shouldn’t miss the opportunity to add to wilderness areas for the good of future generations. Thank you.”

“It’s all important! As development continues to increase, we must put forth even greater effort to protect the undeveloped areas. We can’t take it for granted that they will always be there!”

“The Tracy Ridge area is extensively used by hikers and has beautiful stands of mature hardwoods.”

“I spent many childhood moments fishing in the Tionesta wilderness during the times we visited my grandmother in Tionesta. That virgin forest is alive in my memory and continues to delight me. I also love the Allegheny River and enjoyed a reenactment of my father and mother’s canoe trip on it in 2006, camping on wilderness islands and negotiating the beautiful river and enjoying the amazing water birds that appear along with other birds and animals.”

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### **Please Join FAW For Our Next Trail Project November 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>**

In addition to our primary mission of working with local communities to ensure that increased wilderness protection is a priority of the stewardship of the Allegheny National Forest, FAW over the years has also made significant volunteer investments in the stewardship of the Hickory Creek Wilderness trail, ecological restoration of sites within the Hickory Creek Wilderness, and removal of refuse from the Allegheny Islands Wilderness.



**FAW volunteers Spencer Phillips and Jon Wiborg, part of the Hickory Creek Wilderness trail crew from April of this year. Photo by Kirk Johnson.**

**Our next major wilderness stewardship project will be a trail maintenance weekend along the 12-mile Hickory Creek Wilderness trail on the weekend of November 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup>.** We will be leaving from the Hickory Creek Wilderness trailhead on Hearts Content Road Friday evening, November 4<sup>th</sup>, spending two nights in the wilderness, and hiking out on Sunday, November 6<sup>th</sup>.

Minimum tools such as axes and elbow grease are all we will use to remove woody debris and cut back brush from the trail, in order to help perpetuate the rustic wilderness character of the trail. And of course, no power tools such as chainsaws are permitted in wilderness, so there will be no specialized training needed in that regard. Participants will need to bring all of their own camping equipment, and come prepared for the weather conditions.

This is a rewarding way to intimately experience the natural beauty of the Hickory Creek Wilderness first-hand! The wildly popular Hickory Creek Wilderness is a tremendous draw for outdoor recreation enthusiasts from throughout Pennsylvania and beyond, and a wonderful asset to the tourism economy of Warren County, which we know will always be around for future generations. Here’s your chance to give back!

Please contact FAW to register or with any questions at 814-723-0620 or [info@pawild.org](mailto:info@pawild.org).

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**Walleye** (*Sander vitreus*) is native to Canada and the northern U.S. It is a popular sport fish in the Allegheny Reservoir, near the proposed Cornplanter and Tracy Ridge Wilderness Areas, and other FAW-proposed areas. Walleye grow to more than 30", and up to 20 lbs. The largest in PA was caught in the Reservoir in 1980, at 17 lbs. 9 oz. Young walleye feed on invertebrates, such as fly larvae and zooplankton. After 40 to 60 days, juvenile walleye become piscivorous.

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**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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