



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.

Volume 11, #4 *FAWN: The Official Newsletter of Friends of Allegheny Wilderness* December 2011

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Monday, October 24, 2011

A legacy too precious to destroy

By David J. Saylor

There are many iconic places cherished by the people who call Pennsylvania home. For me it is the forests and wild areas that I was raised to respect and grew to love. As a child, I watched my uncle – former Republican Pennsylvania congressman John Saylor – work tirelessly to protect our natural heritage for future generations by pioneering passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964 and other important outdoor legislation. The citizens of Penn’s Woods have always had a love affair with our state’s beautiful mountains, fields and streams, their animals and fish.

For my family, being wise stewards of our wild and scenic lands and waterways was not a Democratic or Republican principle. It was fundamental to the American spirit and a nonpartisan legacy rooted in the leadership of President Theodore Roosevelt and other farsighted individuals in both political parties. My uncle devoted his service to ensure that the places Teddy and other great conservationists first protected would remain that way.

When my uncle was in Congress, reaching a sound consensus on public policy was easier. The Wilderness Act of 1964 passed just shy of unanimous consent. I personally worked to pass the Eastern Wilderness Act of 1975 – and was always delighted to find strong support in both political parties. Just two years ago, the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 passed with more than 70 votes in the Senate.

Thanks to my uncle and many other leaders who had the foresight to conserve our vanishing wilderness, we have a natural wilderness legacy that is the envy of many people around the world. Pennsylvania enjoys two National Wilderness areas – Allegheny Islands Wilderness and Hickory Creek Wilderness – but there are other places in Pennsylvania that are worthy of Wilderness designation.

Unfortunately in recent months, a bipartisan, widely supported national public policy favoring wilderness protection has become a gambling chip among political partisans. Today, the sanctity of places we love are at risk due to deep spending cuts for critical programs and legislation that would abruptly and unwisely open up millions of wild lands to commercial polluters, including nearly 25,000 acres here in Pennsylvania.

Most of the 25,000 acres that would be lost are located along the banks of the Allegheny Reservoir and along the Allegheny Wild and Scenic River. These forest areas – Cornplanter, Tracy Ridge and the Allegheny Front – help provide clean water and clean air, plus provide innumerable recreation opportunities, including hunting and fishing.

The legislation threatening these lands, the Wilderness and Roadless Area Release Act, has been aptly described as a “Great Outdoors Giveaway” that will expose our air and drinking water to industrial-style pollution. The proposed legislation is dangerously out of balance, putting an incredible 88 percent of our National Forests and Bureau of Land...

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...Management lands in the hands of those who prefer commercial development and profits over human and environmental health.

The Great Outdoors Giveaway is based on a simple but frightening proposition: no more wilderness! If passed, this legislation would open roughly 60 million acres of wilderness-caliber lands to destructive, unchecked development. These are lands that thousands of people have been enjoying for wonderful wilderness experiences. This astonishing bill would prohibit the Forest Service and BLM from protecting our wildest places - areas such as Cornplanter, Tracy Ridge and the Allegheny Front - and from preserving the ability of these lands to be designated as formal Wildernesses down the road. Once the wilderness character of these precious lands is despoiled, the damage will last for generations.

Sadly and, I believe, misguidedly one of Pennsylvania's own congressional representatives - Rep. Glenn Thompson - is a co-sponsor to this imprudent legislation. Mr. Thompson represents the most rural district in Pennsylvania. With all due respect to the congressman, what America's and Pennsylvania's predominantly rural communities really need is outdoor recreation-focused businesses near protected wilderness lands to provide sustainable and economically fulfilling jobs that will be there for generations to come. The outdoor recreation industry contributes \$730 billion annually to the U.S. economy and supports nearly 6.5 million jobs. Surely we should not contemplate the passage of radical legislation that will greatly lessen the outdoor appeal and job-sustaining nature of our wild forests, fields and streams.

Support for this bill is out of touch with the legacy built by public servants like President

Roosevelt and my uncle who committed their lives to preserving America's natural legacy for future generations.

Some time ago a Pennsylvania newspaper named my uncle "one of the greatest conservationists ever to serve in Congress."

"John Saylor," said a leading conservationist of the time, "stood as tall as the Redwoods he spent so much of his life to protect." I'm proud of that heritage and humbled by his example.

It's time to turn back the "Great Outdoors Giveaway" and stand up for the wilderness that is the legacy of both parties, and that forever belongs to the American people.

David J. Saylor, a board member for Friends of Allegheny Wilderness (www.pawild.org), grew up in Johnstown and maintains a home in Fulton County.

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A Message From the President

As 2011 rapidly draws to a close, I would like to thank each of you for your continued support. Without the ongoing backing of individuals with a shared passion for protecting wilderness in the Allegheny National Forest, FAW would never have been able to celebrate our tenth anniversary this year. We have been honored to meet many men and women from Pennsylvania and beyond who share our commitment to protecting those wild places that still remain. While I would like to take this opportunity to report 'mission accomplished', the truth is sadly far from that goal.

I recently spent the opening day of the 2011 Pennsylvania antlered deer season hunting in the ANF with my dad and my eight-year old son, Ben. This was Ben's second year in the woods with us and he was very much looking forward to the day. Both my dad and I were anxious to introduce to Ben the forests and streams we've loved to hunt, fish and hike for as long as either of us can remember.

As daylight dawned that day though, we found ourselves in a forest dramatically changed from

what we'd remembered from only earlier this year. In the place of the large hillsides of black cherry and other species that we were expecting, we were greeted by a new network of logging roads zig-zagging back and forth up the hill, as well as pink, red, blue, and white ribbons, flags and paint in every direction. While I tried to hide my disappointment from Ben and put my best face forward, I knew he understood that something was wrong. We ended up heading for home early that day, partly because my dad was fortunate enough to shoot a very nice buck around lunchtime, but also partly because I was too disappointed by what we'd found to really be fully committed to the hunt. We spent the drive home on US-219 and Interstate 80 dodging the various water tankers and oil/gas drilling trucks that are now so much a part of our state's landscape.

Let me be clear about a few things: I know that I need the wood, the oil and the gas that come from our state's lands. I like the truck that I drive, the home that I live in and the heat that our furnace provides. I am glad that our friends and neighbors can find good, well-paying, close-to-home jobs in the oil and gas industry where just a few years ago there were none. I know that the portion of the ANF in which we were hunting is part of what is designated as Management Area 3.0 – even aged management – where harvesting is allowed. I know that the loggers need roads, trucks, and other tools to produce the wood that I may eventually buy. I know that the forest will eventually recover from the ugliness of today.

However, as much as accept those things, I also know this: I need areas to exist where the obvious influence of man is not found and I need to know that those areas will continue to exist for my kids and generations yet unborn. I need these areas to help recharge my mind and soul after extended periods of living in the fast-paced, human-made environment. I need to be able to visit places where the only sights, sounds and smells are those of the natural world; where I can sit beside a small stream and close my eyes, smell the stream, pines, ferns and leaves, hear the bubbling of the stream beside me and the rustling of the leaves above me and

feel a gentle cool breeze on my face – to be somewhere that I can imagine, if only for a short time, that I might honestly be the only person for miles around.

I know that with each passing day, the remaining wild areas are reduced in size and number and exposed to new threats that we may not even be aware of today. I know that I am not alone in my love of these wild places or my conviction to see them protected. I know that my fellow FAW members are likely our best chance to save what remains of these natural treasures. We have done a great deal of work in the last decade, through times that can be described as challenging at best.

Please rest assured that FAW operates on the leanest possible budget, spending money only when absolutely necessary. While we once received generous grants that supported our mission, those sources of funding have become more scarce in today's economy. As a result, we must rely on our members for the lion's share of our operation revenue. Our economic reality dictates that we operate on a mostly defensive basis today – reacting to new threats as they develop and advocating for wilderness protection at every possible opportunity.

But, if FAW is to continue to exist and especially if we are to play more of a proactive role in protecting areas not yet adversely affected by development, we urgently need your support. Please, if at all possible, consider making a year-end tax-deductible contribution to FAW today. We understand that your personal budget is likely as tight as that of FAW, but if you find yourself in a position to make a donation, your money will be well spent. We have much to do in 2012 and in the years ahead, but we can only do so with your support.

On behalf of the FAW Board of Directors, thank you to all of our members for your tireless efforts in support of wilderness. May the new year bring time for each of us in those places 'untrammelled by man' and brighter prospects for our shared mission.

– Bob Stoudt, President, Board of Directors

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Rhododendron (*Rhododendron maximum*) is an evergreen shrub native to eastern North America growing to 13'. It is often found in later-successional forests, such as within wilderness areas. It flourishes in shaded areas, preferring low light conditions for optimum growth. In the ANF, a great place to view rhododendron is within the proposed Clarion River Wilderness Area above the Clarion River.

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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