



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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Volunteers clear the way on Hickory Creek Wilderness trail

By ROB ANDERSEN
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Over the past 14 years, dozens of volunteers have helped the Friends of Allegheny Wilderness keep the Hickory Creek Wilderness Trail clear and open.

On Aug. 15 and 16, four volunteers made the 13-mile hike, and used only rudimentary hand tools. No power tools are permitted on wilderness trails. The four were Kirk Johnson, FAW executive director; Luke and Alex Bobnar of Ridgway, and Chris Garback of Pittsburgh.

“The FAW trail stewardship crew has primarily worked to help keep the Hickory Creek Wilderness trail clear and open,” Johnson said. “However, we have on occasion worked on the Minister Valley trail, the Tanbark Trail, portions of the North Country Trail, portions of the Tracy Ridge trail system, and others.”

The 13-mile Hickory Creek Wilderness trail was first opened by the U.S. Forest Service in 1978, which predates the area’s designation as wilderness by about six years. The northern half of the loop runs along the plateau between East Hickory and Middle Hickory Creeks. The southern half climbs in and out of

several small stream valleys feeding East and Middle Hickory Creeks, such as Coon and Jack’s Run, he said.

Thousands of people hike the Hickory Creek Wilderness loop trail every year. Johnson said it is difficult to know exactly how many because not everyone who hikes the trail necessarily signs in at the trailhead sign-in sheet before heading out. Also, many people enter the Hickory Creek Wilderness from various points around its perimeter and simply hike off-trail, cross-country.



Luke Bobnar of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy gets a close-up of the abundant Chicken-of-the-Woods (*Laetiporus sulphureus*) the FAW trail crew encountered. Saturday evening, the group dined on some fresh samples, roasted over an open campfire.

“The work last month involved clearing downed trees and brush that were blocking the trail,” said Luke Bobnar, Watershed Technician, Upper Allegheny & Lake Erie, with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy Watershed Conservation Program. “Axes and hand pruners were used, as motorized items...

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...are prohibited in wilderness. Not all trees were removed, only ones that made it extremely difficult to navigate over/through/around. In the case of large (20-inch or more diameter) trees, often a notch would be cut with axes so that hikers could pass over it. Leaving some of the step-overable trees on the ground helps preserve that untrammelled nature of the HCWA, as well as discourages prohibited uses."

"The event was not a Western Pennsylvania Conservancy sponsored event," he said. "However, we do have a strong working relationship with Friends of Allegheny Wilderness and supported their efforts with volunteer time on this weekend. That being said, the event and the approach do dovetail with WPC's watershed work. Overall, we have a view towards managing watersheds at the landscape scale. This starts from the moment a raindrop hits the ground, even if it's at the top of a hill. WPC's Watershed Conservation Program mainly focuses our restoration efforts in the riparian zone, the crucial 300-foot corridor on either side of a body of water that is the 'last line of defense' of a stream, as far as water quality is concerned."

"In the upslope forested landscapes, leaving some of those downed trees that you can step over creates natural water bars on the trail. This slows the water down early and begins the process of infiltration, helping prevent erosion that leads to sedimentation and lower water quality downstream. Personally, I like the trails management in HCWA. Instead of constructing water bars that have to be maintained and removing every piece of woody debris that falls on the trail, leaving it

in place reduces maintenance costs, improves water quality, and makes the trail more sinuous, ultimately helping to preserve the wilderness character of HCWA. I've worked in several other wilderness/backcountry managed areas including Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness and TN/NC's Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and nowhere is it done quite like it is here in our own HCWA."

"All in all, it was a great excuse to get out for the weekend and see an incredible part of the ANF," he said. "Even though it was 'work,' my wife and I really appreciated the opportunity to experience the peace that comes when one enters wilderness. Stress from everyday life and the hustle and bustle of the modern world seem to melt away when you're in one of these special places, and you simply exist as you in the world. Additionally, there's a peace and satisfaction that comes when you only use a hand tool (ax) that's existed for centuries, and see, smell, and hear the fruits of your labor before you. It humbles you, connecting you to history, nature, and your place in the universe. I'd like to express my thanks again to FAW for having us out, and we look forward to the next adventure."

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Richard Schweiker, Former Pennsylvania Senator and Staunch Wilderness Advocate, Passes Away

R.I.P. to former Pennsylvania Senator Richard Schweiker, who passed away on Friday, July 31st at age 89. While in office, Senator Schweiker was a staunch supporter, along with former Pennsylvania Senator Hugh Scott, of protecting wilderness in the Allegheny National Forest under the Wilderness Act of 1964. He was a cosponsor of the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act (EWAA) of 1975, which designated more than 200,000 acres of wilderness in Eastern national forests.

In the Allegheny National Forest, Senators Schweiker and Scott sought wilderness designation for the Allegheny Front, Hickory Creek, Minister Valley, and Tracy Ridge areas. On September 21st, 1973, Senator Schweiker wrote to local wilderness advocate Helen McGinnis in support of the inclusion of these four wild, untrammelled tracts under the EWAA:



Camping along Jacks's Run in the Hickory Creek Wilderness, Saturday, September 19th, during a FAW/Pennsylvania Greenways & Trails Summit backpacking trip into the area. Photo by Wesley Wohlford.

"I share your concern about designation of the Allegheny National Forest areas, and will give this legislation my close attention when it is reported from the Interior Committee to the full Senate, to be sure that Pennsylvania is not overlooked."

Senator Scott likewise wrote to McGinnis: "You will be pleased to know that Senator Schweiker and I have asked the Senate Interior Committee to add the following areas: Hickory Creek, Minister Creek, Tracy

Ridge and Allegheny Front. I am hopeful that the Committee will support our recommendations."

Though the Senators' amendment was included in the Senate version of the bill, it unfortunately was not retained for final passage of the EWAA in 1975. The Hickory Creek Wilderness was finally designated in 1984.

Let's all do Senator Schweiker's memory proud, and see to it that his vision for designating Allegheny Front, Minister Valley, and Tracy Ridge (and other qualifying areas) as wilderness areas comes to fruition!

Major Victory For America's Wilderness! *Idaho's Boulder-White Clouds Protected*

Wilderness designations have in general been few and far between in recent sessions of Congress, but in August Congress finally passed legislation that designated more than 275,000 acres in the Boulder-White Clouds area of Idaho as wilderness under the Wilderness Act of 1964.

The Idaho Conservation League and others have been working diligently for 40 years to have this important wild area protected as part of America's National Wilderness Preservation System, and now their long-fought campaign has finally come to fruition! Idaho Congressman Mike Simpson especially, and Senator James Risch, played instrumental roles in shepherding this landmark legislation through Congress.

This wilderness victory should without question also encourage all Pennsylvania wilderness aficionados. Friends of Allegheny Wilderness has been working with all of you for more than a decade to permanently protect all qualifying areas of the Allegheny National Forest as wilderness. ***Know that we will win too, even if it takes us 40 years like it took the***

Idaho Conservation League 40 years to secure protection for the Boulder-White Clouds.



Some of the participants from the FAW and Pennsylvania Greenways & Trails Summit hike to the Minister overlook in the proposed Minister Valley Wilderness, Sunday, September 20th. FAW volunteer David Johnson was the hike leader. Dave reports that the “hikers thought the forest was amazing and the view without buildings, roads, or radio towers needed to be preserved.”

Boulder-White Clouds – It's Done! We Did It! YOU Did It!

Tuesday, August 4, 2015

By Rick Johnson, Executive Director
Idaho Conservation League

Today the U.S. Senate passed a Boulder-White Clouds wilderness bill. The U.S. House has already done so. Now the bill will go to the President's desk to be signed into law! Yes, it has happened. A Boulder-White Clouds wilderness bill has really happened....

With the greatest of understatement, this is an amazing story – decades long. This isn't the place to tell it, but as many of you know, this path has been as twisty and steep as any mountain trail, complete with its share of blowdowns and washouts. It's a journey that reached its right resolution because of tireless work on the part of many, many people, literally over generations. But beneath it all, success came because the Boulder and White Cloud Mountains are such amazing places.

“Working to preserve in perpetuity is a

great inspiration,” the Wilderness Act's lead author and champion Howard Zahniser wrote over 50 years ago. To be sure, the Boulder-White Clouds have inspired. Generations of people have been awed by their beauty, recreation challenges and fragility. Finally, we have created protections worthy of the place.

A wilderness bill, decades in the making, would never have happened without thousands of grassroots efforts over many, many years. For that, I thank you.

It also would never have happened without steadfast leadership from Rep. Mike Simpson, an Idaho leader I've come to know well over these 15 years. I cannot count the number of times he's stuck his neck out for this special place. We've hung together through thick and thin. No one deserves credit for this success more than Mike. And on behalf of everyone at ICL, I offer my congratulations and thanks. We are grateful.

Sen. Jim Risch also deserves tremendous credit, providing heavy lifting where and when it was needed. Risch famously stopped the process years ago, saying that the bill needed more compromise. More compromise brought in more stakeholders – and earned Risch's support. As he's shown before, when Risch is your champion, you've got the Energizer Bunny on your side.

Fascinating as the politics can be, let's put that aside. Right now, I go to the place, this wonderful place. Sunset glow on the Boulders. Mountain goats on the side of Castle Peak. Elk calves in the Bowery. The sound of the wind. Falling water. The rustle of an aspen. The Boulder-White Clouds are now wilderness. A protected wilderness. Thank you.

*Excerpted from the August 4th blog post of Rick Johnson and the Idaho Conservation League:
<http://tinyurl.com/ps8dza3>*

Battle of Thompson's Island Archaeological Project Progressing

The Battle of Thompson's Island archaeological project that we first reported on in the March issue of *FAWN* ("Into the Wilderness!: The Search for Thompson's Island") is in full swing and on schedule.

Several public meetings have been held so far, and we are on the lookout for any information and/or artifacts that people may have with respect to this Revolutionary War battle – the only such battle to have taken place in northwest Pennsylvania. Field work will begin later this fall.



South end of Thompson's Island looking north up the National Wild and Scenic Allegheny River from a point on the west shoreline of the river. This view today may indeed be very similar to the view of Brodhead's contingent as they made their way north up the Allegheny, encountering the Seneca contingent at approximately this location. Today Thompson's Island is of course part of the 368-acre Allegheny Islands Wilderness, which in turn is part of America's National Wilderness Preservation System.

Lead archaeologist Chris Espenshade asks that anyone interested in the project, anyone with information about the battle or anyone who has found artifacts in the area contact him. "It can be anonymous," Espenshade

said. Sometimes people "get nervous that we're going to take their artifact or get them in trouble. All we care about is the information."

Locally, individuals can contact Friends of Allegheny Wilderness Executive Director Kirk Johnson. "If people want me to go down there with them so they can show me what they know, I'm willing to go on field trips," he said.

Espenshade can be contacted by phone at (517) 788-3550 or at cespenshade@ccrginc.com.

Johnson can be reached at (814) 730-3629 or at kjohnson@pawild.org.

***FAWN* Dedication: Dorothy Harris**

This issue of *FAWN: The Official Newsletter of Friends of Allegheny Wilderness* is dedicated to the memory of Dorothy Harris of Warren, who passed away in June at age 93 – made possible by a generous memorial donation to FAW by Dorothy's friend Dr. Julie Lindblom Boozer of Scandia.

Julie informs us that Dorothy was "inherently curious and held a deep appreciation for nature, both flora and fauna, and was interested in FAW to provide more opportunities for people in the east to experience the peace and wonder of our pristine Pennsylvania forests, 'untrammelled by man.'"



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Indian pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*) is a native herbaceous plant, unique in that it does not contain chlorophyll and so is white in color. It grows on fungi that are dependent on trees, drawing its energy through the fungi, from the photosynthesis of the host tree. It is often associated with beech trees (*Fagus grandifolia*). Indian pipe is somewhat rare, but if you have spent time hiking in the ANF's wilderness, you will have undoubtedly seen it any number of times.

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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