



*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 16, #1

FAWN: The Official Newsletter of Friends of Allegheny Wilderness

March 2016

## **Please Help Save the Proposed Tracy Ridge Wilderness Area!**

Please take action by asking the U.S. Forest Service to not allow bicycling on the hiking-only trails of the proposed Tracy Ridge Wilderness in the Allegheny National Forest – the largest inventoried roadless area, and perhaps most obvious wilderness candidate area in the entire ANF! For extensive background information on the Tracy Ridge area, and this important issue, please check out the following article in the December, 2015 issue of *The Keystone Hiker*:

<http://tinyurl.com/keystonehiker>



See also the below letter to the ANF from Keystone Trails Association executive director Joseph Neville for more information, and for ideas for what you might write in your own letter. Click the following link to send a respectful email to the ANF outlining your position: <http://tinyurl.com/ANFcontact>

## **The Keystone Hiker: the Newsletter of the Keystone Trails Association**

March 2016 Edition

### **Executive Director Seeks Protection of Proposed Tracy Ridge Wilderness**

By Joseph Neville, KTA Executive Director

February 10, 2016

Rich Hatfield, District Ranger  
Bradford Ranger District  
Allegheny National Forest  
29 Forest Service Drive  
Bradford, PA 16701

Dear Mr. Hatfield,

I am writing on behalf of the Keystone Trails Association (KTA), a 60-year-old non-profit organization whose mission is to provide, preserve, protect and promote recreational hiking trails and hiking opportunities in Pennsylvania.

KTA has a long history of advocacy for the protection of backcountry hiking and backpacking opportunities throughout Penn's Woods. This includes our endorsement in 2005 of the Citizens' Wilderness Proposal for Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest – including the 9,700-acre proposed Tracy Ridge Wilderness Area – published by Friends of Allegheny Wilderness.

KTA's then president, Hugh Downing, stated at the time that "Keystone Trails Association and Friends of Allegheny Wilderness share the

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...same values when it comes to preserving land for minimal-impact recreational purposes. One of the nation’s premier hiking trails, the North Country Trail, traverses the ANF. That’s just one of the reasons Keystone Trails Association is happy to join Friends of Allegheny Wilderness in advocating the preservation of these unique areas of the ANF.”



**Backpacking the remote, narrow, undeveloped hiking-only trails of the proposed Tracy Ridge Wilderness Area during a June, 2011 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FAW backpack trip. Converting these trails to accommodate bicycles would necessitate widening of the trails, and “extensive shoring up of sideslopes and hardening of the tread with additional surfacing material,” which would be “expensive and likely to change the character of” of these special wild trails, according to the U.S. Forest Service itself. Photo by Kay Thompson of FAW.**

KTA has learned of a new proposal to open the hiking-only trails of the proposed Tracy

Ridge Wilderness Area to bicycle use. We are disappointed, further, to learn that your agency evidently is giving some serious consideration to this proposal.

Please understand that KTA is opposed to the idea of mountain biking in Tracy Ridge because it would pose a perpetual threat to the North Country Trail – which like the Appalachian Trail in eastern Pennsylvania is a much-beloved national scenic trail. We feel this is a threat because of the perpetual erosion issues caused by running mountain bikes on trails that are meant for foot traffic, because of the user conflict concerns that would be a constant presence in this area where hikers and backpackers have always been accustomed to not having to contend with competing user groups, and because mountain biking as a mechanical use is (correctly) not allowed in designated wilderness areas.

Establishing mountain biking at Tracy Ridge would undermine efforts to have the U.S. Congress designate the entire Tracy Ridge area as part of America’s National Wilderness Preservation System under the Wilderness Act of 1964, which is a conservation priority for KTA.

For these reasons, and others, KTA respectfully requests that mountain biking ideas no longer be entertained for the proposed Tracy Ridge Wilderness Area. I am confident that you will be able to employ your professional judgment in order to identify more than suitable mountain biking opportunities elsewhere in the ANF that are not located in proposed wilderness areas, inventoried roadless areas, or other such rare and treasured Keystone State wildlands.

Sincerely,

Joseph Neville, Executive Director  
Keystone Trails Association

*Reprinted with permission.*

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## **Bobnar Joins Friends of Allegheny Wilderness Board of Directors**

### **Western Pa. Conservancy Ridgway Rep. Latest Addition to Local Group's Leadership**

The Warren, Pennsylvania-based non-profit organization Friends of Allegheny Wilderness (FAW) is pleased to announce the recent addition of Luke Bobnar to its board of directors.

FAW 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 (ANF) - Pennsylvania's only national forest.

Bobnar is currently employed as a watershed technician in the Upper Allegheny region for the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) in Ridgway, on the outskirts of the ANF. He, his wife Alex and their two sons live outside of Ridgway south of the National Wild & Scenic Clarion River near FAW's proposed Clarion River Wilderness.

"My wife and I became involved with FAW in the fall of 2009, when FAW director Kirk Johnson came and gave a presentation to our Clarion University Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society," Bobnar noted. "That sparked our interest in joining a FAW winter backpacking trip in February of 2010, and subsequent related activities."

"Having someone with Luke's qualifications, job experience and background join our board will be a tremendous asset to our wilderness advocacy program," said FAW board president Bob Stoudt of Danville, Pennsylvania. "We look forward to benefitting from Luke's skills and wisdom."

Bobnar's wilderness stewardship began more than a dozen years ago on a trail crew in the

Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee. After graduating from Clarion University in May of 2010 with a bachelor's degree in biology, Bobnar spent time collecting grizzly bear hair for a population study in the one-million-acre Bob Marshall Wilderness in Montana, as well as monitoring streams and wetlands in southwest Pennsylvania, before taking the WPC Ridgway position in early 2014.



**Luke Bobnar and family during a Friends of Allegheny Wilderness backpacking trip in the Hickory Creek Wilderness in July of 2014.**

"I am happy and honored by this opportunity. I look forward to working with FAW to enhance wilderness appreciation, and toward establishing more protected Allegheny wilderness under the Wilderness Act of 1964 for current and future generations to use and enjoy. I thank the board for inviting me to join," Bobnar concluded.

"Members of the FAW board of directors represent a wide variety and depth of experience in aspects of conservation, wilderness advocacy and recreation," stated FAW executive director Kirk Johnson. "Luke's addition only increases that valuable diversity. It's great to have him and his strong appreciation for wilderness values on board."





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**Black-throated blue warbler** (*Setophaga caerulescens*) is a small passerine bird of the warbler family whose coloration is sexually dimorphic. Its breeding habitat is located in forest interior areas of eastern North America. Predominantly insectivorous, the black-throated blue warbler supplements its diet with berries and seeds during winter. Since the black throated blue warbler requires large, unbroken forest areas for nesting, its numbers are declining.

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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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