



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.

From the Director

The first Friends of Allegheny Wilderness newsletter of 2002 finds us gearing up for the Forest Plan revision scheduled to begin this fall. We need to complete our surveys of wilderness candidate areas in the Allegheny National Forest, and are looking for volunteers help! Thanks to a recent generous grant from the Norcross Wildlife Foundation, we will be able to purchase the requisite hardware and software needed to prepare our recommendations. If you would like to volunteer, your best first step would be to come to our Training Weekend April 12-14. A summary is provided in this issue of the newsletter. Please come down to Powdermill Park east of Pittsburgh with us and help rekindle the Pennsylvania-West Virginia Wilderness tradition!

--Kirk Johnson

The Wilderness Society Highlights Tionesta Old-Growth

As part of their "Big Oil's Energy Plan" report profiling 18 natural areas around the country threatened by oil and gas drilling, The Wilderness Society has highlighted the Allegheny National Forest's Tionesta Scenic and Research Natural Areas. Other areas highlighted in the report include the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, Big Cypress National Monument in Florida, and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah.

The Forest Service owns the mineral rights under the Tionesta Research Natural Area portion, but not the Scenic Area. Oil and gas drilling in this valuable 4,100-acre remnant old-growth forest continues to this day. The solution is to implement the Friends of Allegheny Wilderness Tionesta Wilderness Area proposal.

To read the report, go to www.wilderness.org and click on the "Big Oil's Energy Plan" icon.

If you would like to help protect the Tionesta old-growth, please write a letter to Allegheny National Forest Supervisor Kevin Elliott at 222 Liberty Street, Warren, PA, 16365. Please ask him to be sure that the FAW's Tionesta Wilderness Area proposal is fully examined during the Forest Service's upcoming Forest Plan revision, which is scheduled to get underway this fall.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette December 27, 2001

Green vs. green: A sensible path to Allegheny Forest wilderness

In northwest Pennsylvania lies the Allegheny National Forest -- 513,000 acres of woodland used by hunters, hikers, campers, loggers and oil and gas explorers. About 75 miles from Pittsburgh, the land is a natural resource in Forest, Elk, McKean and Warren counties whose many uses under the law deserve strong protection and wise stewardship.

The U.S. Forest Service, as required by law, will revise within the next few years its resource management plan, the blueprint that determines how the forest will be used in the future. If the new plan has any value, it will significantly expand the forest's wilderness area.

"Wilderness" is a technical designation given by Congress to specific tracts of federally owned land for the purpose of preserving, or allowing it to return to, its natural state. In practical terms, that means a wilderness area in Allegheny National Forest may not be logged or drilled for oil or natural gas. Its roads would not

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only be closed but also obliterated. It would not contain a building or structure, though visitors would be welcome to hunt, fish, hike and explore. In short, it would exist -- and be experienced -- only in the way that the first humans found it.

Although the United States has vast wilderness areas -- as of July 2000, 105 million acres -- only two-tenths of 1 percent of them can be found in the 11 eastern states between Maine and Maryland. In the Allegheny National Forest, about 9,000 acres (less than 2 percent), is designated as wilderness. That compares with 18 percent of federally owned lands nationwide and 10 percent of federal lands in the East.

Friends of the Allegheny Wilderness, the Sierra Club and other groups are promoting a plan that would ask Congress, when it comes time to approve the next forest management plan, to expand the wilderness area to 8 percent of total acreage.

The proposed wilderness would include some old-growth forest that has never been logged, habitats where animal populations would benefit from less human activity and other tracts that would provide primitive recreation opportunities.

On paper and in theory, the wilderness expansion plan is a good one -- and Pennsylvania's two senators and U.S. Rep. John Peterson, the Venango Republican whose House district includes the forest, should give it due consideration. But it will take additional study before Pennsylvanians can be sure of the plan's environmental and economic impact. Those results must also be factored into the equation.

Since federal law reserves national forests for a variety of uses -- some of them economic and some which, quite frankly, sustain whole communities -- we see no reason to take an extremist position when multiple tracts and thousands of acres are involved. Some could easily, and deservedly, become wilderness; others will not go without a fight from lawyers and lobbyists.

In the end, it may take a negotiated compromise -- one that balances the acres most worthy of protection with those most valuable for mineral extraction -- to get Congress to act on a wider wilderness designation. With Rep. Peterson and Friends of the Allegheny Wilderness willing to weigh the competing interests, the proposal is off to a promising start.

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FAW Volunteer Publishes Paper on Allegheny River

Bob Stoudt (rstoudt@stargate.net), a member of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Sierra Club, and Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, along with professor Mark Cowell of the University of Missouri - Columbia, have co-authored a study entitled "Dam-Induced Modifications to Upper Allegheny River Streamflow Patterns and Their Biodiversity Implications," published in the February 2002 issue of the Journal of the American Water Resources Association.

Following up on work completed for his master's thesis, Bob studied the effects on Allegheny River water flow that the Kinzua Dam, constructed in the 1960s, has had. While his thesis focused on Crull's Wilderness Island, the new study looks more broadly at the effects on the Allegheny River. Bob and professor Cowell found that the Kinzua Dam has created significant reductions in peak flow while augmenting low flow during the growing season. This reduction in flow variability has important biodiversity implications. The area downstream from the dam is home to numerous state and federal threatened and endangered species, many of which are sensitive to the type of habitat modifications produced by the dam.

The American Water Resources Association can be found online at: www.awra.org.

YOU ARE INVITED!

Please join us for the Pennsylvania-West Virginia Wilderness Training Weekend!

APRIL 13-14, 2002

Sponsored by Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, and The Wilderness Society

Mark your calendars and plan to join fellow Pennsylvanians and our neighbors to the south to learn what you can do to help protect the Keystone State's remaining wildlands! The weekend event will feature an overview of conservation issues on the Allegheny and Monongahela National Forests, workshops on wilderness, and a "Wilderness Celebration" on Saturday night!

Where: Powdermill Nature Reserve, near Rector, Pennsylvania.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner on Saturday and breakfast and lunch on Sunday will be provided to all participants.

Lodging: Rustic cabins with beds, running water and bathroom facilities available at Powdermill. Those spaces will be filled by those who register first! Overflow lodging will be provided at cabins in nearby facilities. A limited number of tent sites are also available at Powdermill.

Directions: Powdermill Nature Reserve is located 3 miles south of Rector on Route 381 in Cook Township, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania 55 miles east of Pittsburgh, just off the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Take the Pennsylvania Turnpike to the Donegal exit (Exit 9). Turn left onto Route 31 East and drive approximately 3 miles to Jones Mills, where you turn left onto Route 381 North. Continue for 6.6 miles to the Powdermill Nature Reserve (on your left).

AGENDA PREVIEW

Friday, April 12

5:00 p.m. - Arrivals, registration (Dinner on your own - kitchen facilities available)

7:30 pm - Informal reception and speaker

Saturday, April 13

8:00-9:00 - Breakfast

9:00 - Welcome and Introductions

9:30 - 10:30 Learning about the Forest Service, forest planning and Wilderness.

10:45-11:45 - Overview of conservation issues on Allegheny and Monongahela NF.

12:00-1:00 Lunch

1:15-5:30: Three concurrent workshops - you choose what you want to go to! Topics will include: how to get involved with Forest Planning; Winning Wilderness - case study from successful Virginia campaign and developing your own wilderness efforts; Economics and Wilderness; Mapping and inventorying wildlands

6:30 - Dinner

7:30 - Wilderness Celebration! Music, dancing and storytelling! Special guest speaker will be Ed Zahniser, son of Wilderness Act author and Tionesta, PA native Howard Zahniser.

Sunday, April 14

8:00-9:00 - Breakfast

9:30-11:00 a.m. -Saturday recap. Identify issues of greatest concern and divide into groups for more in-depth discussions

11:15 - Feedback from smaller group discussions. Opportunity to share ideas & learn how you can continue to be involved in PA or WV wilderness.

12:15 - Lunch

1:15 - Conference ends

TO REGISTER: Please send your name, address, phone number, and email address along with a \$20 check made out to The Wilderness Society to Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, 220 Center Street, Warren, PA, 16365. Feel free to use the registration form provided on the back of this newsletter. Call (814) 723-0620 or email alleghenyfriends@earthlink.net for further information.



Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) along the Allegheny River south of Irvine, February 2002. Photo by Kirk Johnson

**PENNSYLVANIA - WEST VIRGINIA WILDERNESS TRAINING WEEKEND REGISTRATION
FORM - PLEASE COMPLETE, DETACH AND MAIL TO ADDRESS BELOW**

Name: _____

Address: _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Enclosed is my \$20 registration fee made payable to The Wilderness Society
Registration fee covers lodging and meals. **Registration and travel scholarships are available*

Yes, I will need lodging: Friday night Saturday night

All meals on Saturday and breakfast and lunch on Sunday will be provided to all registered participants.

Please check here if you prefer vegetarian meals

Please mail your registration form to:

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, 220 Center Street, Warren, PA 16365

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