

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

After some delay, the Allegheny National Forest's Forest Plan revision should begin soon. Please check the Friends of Allegheny Wilderness website for updates and announcements on the progress of the plan revision and how you can get involved. This issue of the FAW newsletter welcomes several contributions, including that of Mike Bleech -- long time hunter, angler and award winning outdoor writer and photographer for the *Warren Times Observer*. We welcome Mike's attention to engaging the hunting and fishing community in the debate over ANF wilderness. Mike's article first ran in the *Times Observer* in November.

FAW is currently working with Congressman John Peterson's office and representatives of the timber industry within the context of a forest focus group to discuss the possibility of designating new ANF wilderness. Congressman Peterson deserves much credit for his leadership in addressing this important issue, and FAW is grateful to Congressman Peterson for approaching our proposals with an open mind. If you live in Pennsylvania's 5th Congressional District, you may wish to contact Congressman Peterson and thank him for his leadership and courage on this issue over the past year and a half:

The Honorable U.S. Representative
John Peterson
123 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
P: (202) 225-5121 F: (202) 225-5796

Who knows, perhaps before the year is out, or at least before the upcoming 108th

Congress has ended, we will be celebrating a new federal wilderness bill passed for the ANF!

Best wishes for the new year!

--Kirk Johnson

Hickory Creek Trail Cleanup Successful

The Friends of Allegheny Wilderness trail clean-up in the Allegheny National Forest's Hickory Creek Wilderness Area this past October went very well. The crew was able to clear a number of large blowdowns using cross-cut saws and axes, clearing the way for hikers and helping to maintain the integrity of the trail and overall wilderness. Prior to clearing the trail, hikers had created "bootleg" trails around problem areas which cumulatively harm the wilderness resource.



FAW trail crew members clear a passage through an old oak blowdown along the Hickory Creek Wilderness trail, October 12, 2002. Photo by Liana Cintron

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Next spring's trail cleanup will be an overnight trip, with participants signing up in advance. Free backcountry food, cooked by a genuine wilderness ranger/backcountry chef will be provided. This arrangement will allow us to spend two days clearing the trail (and get to spend a night camping in the wilderness as well). We have targeted doing this in late April or early May. More details to come in the months ahead. Please plan to join us if you can!

This work is an important component of preserving ANF wilderness for the permanent good of the whole people, and complements well our priority work of protecting significant additional areas of the ANF as federal wilderness. For more information on our adoption of the Hickory Creek trail please contact Friends of Allegheny Wilderness.

Wilderness: The Ultimate Adventure
By Mike Bleech

A wilderness experience might be the ultimate hunting or fishing adventure.

All hunters and anglers enjoy the outdoors, but relatively few have actually connected with nature in the way that can only be done when one is actually out of contact with civilization. Essential feelings brought out by time in a wilderness can not be adequately communicated to anyone who has not had the experience. The absence of artificial stimuli releases a clearness of the mind, a spiritual awakening.

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness has suggested adding more wilderness area within the Allegheny National Forest.

"I think a lot of people would love to see additional wilderness areas designated," said Kirk Johnson, executive director of FAW.

No areas have been formally proposed, yet. Those under consideration include the National Recreation Areas at Tracy Ridge and the eastern side of the Allegheny River from Charlie Run south to Slater Run, Minister Valley, the Tionesta Scenic and Research Natural Area, the Clarion River Roadless Area, and the areas surrounding Morrison Run and Lamentation Run.

"We're working on using GIS data showing different uses of the land," Johnson said.

Once that is done, a formal proposal will be made available to interested parties.

If there is any shortcoming to the FAW informal proposals, it would be that some of these areas might be too small to provide a genuine wilderness experience. According to federal guidelines for wilderness areas, the minimum size should be 5,000 acres, although there is flexibility, as in the case of the Allegheny Islands Wilderness.

The largest of the areas being considered by FAW is the Tracy Ridge area, about 20,000 to 30,000 acres. This included land on both sides of Route 321, the east side termed Chestnut Ridge by FAW.

"We found a lot of chestnuts in there," Johnson said.

Finding suitable areas for wilderness designation on the ANF can be difficult. According to the Wilderness Act of 1964, wilderness is defined as untrammelled by man, retaining its primeval character, and without permanent improvements or habitation. The imprint of humans should be mostly unnoticeable. It should have outstanding opportunities for solitude.

Only two portions of the ANF fit closely into that definition, Hearts Content and the

Tionesta Scenic and Research Area. These are the only substantial stands of old growth trees.

However, as with size, these definitions have flexibility. The Hickory Creek Wilderness had been logged. The Allegheny Islands Wilderness was farmed.

“In the eastern United States, I think we have to do what we can do,” Johnson said. “If we get too picky, we won't have anything. We have to do what is achievable.”

The wilderness system in the U.S. now includes about 105.8 million acres, 4.4 percent of our land area. More than half is in Alaska. Less than five percent is in the eastern half of the lower 48 states, and about half of that is in the Everglades, Florida, and Boundary Waters, of Minnesota. Less than a quarter-million acres lies in the 11 eastern states that hold about a quarter of the U.S. population.

Here in Pennsylvania, the only wilderness areas in the federal system are the Allegheny River Islands and Hickory Creek. As the only adequately large area of federal land in the state, the ANF is the only place where a new, or expanded, wilderness is practical.

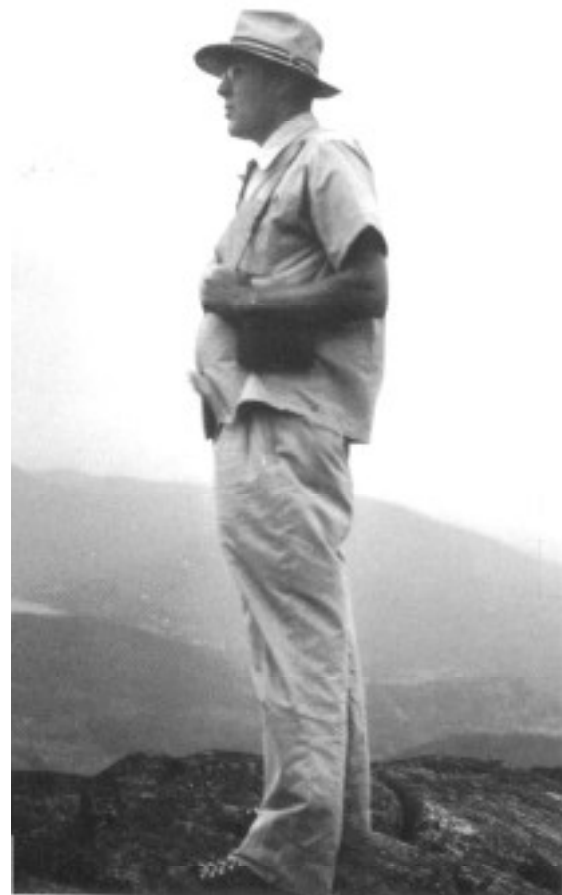
This will be a hot topic in the Forest Management Plan which is currently being revised. Opportunities for public involvement will probably start in January.

Mike Bleech is the Outdoors Columnist for the Warren Times Observer. This article first ran in the Times Observer on November 7, 2002, and appears here with permission of the Times Observer and Mike Bleech.

Editor's note: the Tracy Ridge area is approximately 9,500 acres in size, Chestnut Ridge approximately 5,000 acres. Of the 662 units of the National Wilderness Preservation System, more than 60 are less than 5,000 acres in size. FAW believes there are at least 10 significant areas of the ANF that are essentially untrammeled by man -- suitable for inclusion in the NWPS.

Why Wilderness? **By Steve Trombulak**

Why wilderness? Those who love the natural world wild and untrammeled may feel that they need no spoken or written answer, that the mere existence and experience of wilderness is answer enough. But if wilderness is to expand—in the U.S. and around the world—then wilderness advocates will need to ease the minds of others whose images of the natural world are more dominated by human influence.



Principal author of the 1964 Wilderness Act, executive director of The Wilderness Society from 1945-64, and Tionesta, Pennsylvania native Howard Zahniser.

So why exactly is wilderness needed or wanted? There are many dimensions to understanding the values of wilderness. Its spiritual, psychological, and aesthetic values are, perhaps, those that people feel the

most deeply. People who fight to protect and promote wilderness often do so from a feeling of love for wild nature, a love that is born not from an analytic evaluation of data but from a core belief in its “rightness.”

There are ecological values to wilderness, as well. First and foremost is the fact that by the nature of its designation, wilderness areas are roadless areas. Roads of all types constitute one of the most serious threats to ecological health in all ecosystem types. Apart from the impact of the roadway itself on the organisms that were in its path during construction, the continued presence and use of a road creates additional challenges for the organisms that live in its vicinity. These challenges come in many forms.

- Roads increase mortality due to collision with vehicles. This is an especially serious problem for many large mammals. The reintroduction of lynx into the Adirondack Park in the 1980s failed not because of the conditions of their habitat but because the mortality rate from being hit by motor vehicles was greater than the birth rate.
- Roads cause animals to modify their behavior. Home ranges shift, reproductive success is reduced, and energy spent being more alert and fleeing from disturbance increases, all leading to a decrease in population viability.
- Roads facilitate human access, and therefore may increase the rate of killing of wildlife. Heavier hunting pressure above that recommended by wildlife managers can result in a lower overall population of the target species, or unnaturally skewed age and sex ratios.
- Roads disturb the physical environment. Roads and their adjacent areas compact the soil, increase air temperature, decrease soil moisture, reduce rates of photosynthesis through the raising of dust, and accelerate erosion.
- Roads alter the chemical environment. Increased levels of heavy metals in the soil and roadside vegetation, of salts

and organic pollutants in waterways, and of ozone in the air are all consequences of roadways. Unfortunately, these problems can be transported for a great distance from the road itself.

- Roads provide pathways and favored conditions for the spread of exotic species, many of which compete with native species for the resources necessary for life.

With so little wilderness left in the northeastern United States following the large-scale clearing and colonization of the region in the 1800s, it would be surprising if many wilderness-dependent species remained. Yet studies in New Hampshire have uncovered species of plants and insects that are found exclusively in old-growth forests—a forest age-class not likely to persist over the long term on non-wilderness land—and thus show that wilderness dependent species do exist.

But even beyond those creatures that require wilderness are those that fare better when human influences are at a minimum. Pine martens, northern goshawks, wood thrushes, and a handful of warbler species, for example, can all be found outside of wilderness areas, just as spotted owls in the Pacific Northwest can be found in clearcuts. But their successful reproduction at levels sufficient to keep their populations healthy and viable requires intact forests with limited human disturbance, which again are best provided by wilderness.

Wildlife populations in wilderness areas, therefore, serve as sources of dispersers that can then colonize other areas where disturbance is greater and reproductive success is lower. These source populations are essential to the ecological health of the surrounding landscape.

Wilderness plays a role in allowing ecological processes to operate to their fullest and best extent. Here in the Northeast, for example, forests are important in filtering and regulating the flow of water. Human society in this region supports itself, and the quality of the water is directly related to the health of the forest it flows

through. Simply put, wild forests provide the highest water quality possible.

Finally, wilderness provides a baseline for understanding what the impacts of our land-use practices elsewhere actually are. This is, perhaps, wilderness' most basic scientific value of all.

The ecological values of wilderness are numerous and compelling. Coupled with the other values we hold for wild nature, the answer to the question "why wilderness?" is clear.

Steve Trombulak is a Professor of Biology and Environmental Studies at Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont. This essay first appeared in Visions, the quarterly newsletter of Vermont's Forest Watch.

Leave No Trace Principle 3: Dispose of Waste Properly
By Eric Flood, Wilderness Ranger
Allegheny National Forest
Master Educator in Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics



ANF Wilderness Ranger Eric Flood

Hello again, and welcome to another installment of my column on the Principles of Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics. It's been awhile since my first article explaining just what Leave No Trace and the principles are, and some of you may be new readers of the Friends of Allegheny Wilderness newsletter. I would encourage you to go back and look over the previous issues, but for now let me start by quickly summarizing

what we've already covered. [Editor's note: previous issues of the FAW newsletter are available online in PDF format at www.pawild.org.]

Leave No Trace is a public education program designed to promote responsible outdoor recreation through education, research, and partnerships. The program was originally conceived by the USDA Forest Service and the National Outdoor Leadership School, but now includes a wide range of federal, state, local, and private sector partners. It is managed by Leave No Trace, Inc., a non-profit organization located in Boulder, Colorado. "The Leave No Trace message is more than a campaign for clean campsites. It's a program dedicated to building awareness, appreciation, and most of all, respect for our public recreation places.... Leave No Trace is about enjoying the great outdoors while traveling and camping with care" -From the Leave No Trace Incorporated website (www.lnt.org).

The following seven Leave No Trace Principles are the foundation of the Leave No Trace outdoor ethics program:

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

In the second and third articles, we examined more in depth the first two principles, "Plan Ahead and Prepare", and "Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces". Now for this column we will be turning our attention to Principle Number 3: Dispose of Waste Properly.

To begin, I would like to first address the most prevalent breach of this tenet that I have encountered as a Wilderness Ranger. Fire rings should NEVER under any circumstances be considered a trash receptacle! This is true whether you attempt to burn your trash, or toss it in as though the fire ring were a garbage can. No matter how hot the fire is stoked, some

residual odors from unburned trash or leftover food will remain, attracting bears and other animals into popular camping areas. Besides attracting animals, there is also the problem of pollution from chemicals released by fire from plastics, inks, and treated paper products.

If there were one misconception out there that I could absolutely correct, it is the Myth of Burning Aluminum Foil and Cans. You may think they are gone, consumed by the fire, but once the first rain settles the ashes, they lay as ugly, half-melted lumps of garbage, full of odors attracting hungry porcupines and bears. The bottom line is Pack it in, Pack it out – *no exceptions, and absolutely no burning.* If you made the effort to transport something alien to the back-country environment in with you, then it is incumbent upon you to take it back out.

The best way to avoid littering is by reducing the amount of trash left over from your meal preparation. You can reduce bulk and weight in your pack, and reduce the amount of trash that you must pack out by carefully repackaging your food to reduce excess packaging. The best solution is to store items in recyclable or re-useable containers, preferably ones that may be washed before going back into your pack.

This brings us to the inevitable chore of washing dishes, and also personal hygiene washing. So, what to do with the soapy dishwater? First of all, do all washing, both of yourself and your utensils, at least 200 feet from any water sources. “Biodegradable” soaps are fine to use, but never ever directly in a water source. The term biodegradable can be very misleading, and doesn’t under any circumstances justify using them directly in water sources. Even these soaps are damaging to aquatic life, and it may take them a long time to break down, especially in high-use areas. So just to clarify, the 200 foot rule applies to all washing, even with biodegradable soap.

When the washing is completed, you may dispose of the used soapy water by scattering it over a wide area, again more than 200 feet from water sources. Dishwater should be strained first, and all food

particles removed from the water packed out with the rest of your trash. By scattering the soapy water over a wide area, it will be well filtered by soils and will better allow sunlight to break down the soap deposited on the surface.

And so now we must address the inevitable topic of disposing of human waste. When you urinate, again be sure you are at least 200 feet from water sources. Because urine does not contain pathogens, as does human feces, it is not necessary to pack it out, but it does contain salts and minerals that may attract animals. Try not to urinate on live plants or anything that may be damaged by animals like porcupines chewing on them to get at these salts. Select places well away from the trail or campsites so that the odors of urine will not be bothersome to others, or attract animals into popular camping areas.



Cathole illustration © LNT inc.

As I mentioned in my column on Principle 1: Plan Ahead and Prepare, the golden standard of Leave No Trace ethics and disposing of human feces is to pack it out along with your trash. This requires careful pre-trip preparation because of the sanitary concerns involved. Carrying special plastic bags for just this purpose is advisable, and double bagging of waste and used toilet paper is necessary to protect against the pathogens they contain. To safely and cleanly double-bag waste, simply pull the first plastic bag inside out, use it to pick up the feces and toilet tissue, and pull the bag right side out without coming into contact with the waste. Seal the bag, place it in the second bag and seal it in turn, and then carry it out with your other trash.

Most folks are reluctant to go quite so far as to pack out their own waste. This is understandable, and you should not feel pressur-

ed to attempt this, and may choose to simply dispose of your waste in a cathole instead. Dig your cathole at least 200 feet from water sources and trails approximately 6 to 8 inches deep. When finished, simply fill the cathole back in with soil and disguise the area with down and dead leaf litter.

If you aren't willing to pack out your waste, packing out your toilet paper is a must. Toilet paper "flowers" scattered on the ground or bushes are unacceptable, and it won't biodegrade under a rock or in a cathole. Of course, if you decide to use a cathole, you will need to bring along a trowel for digging. There are a variety of choices, from the popular, top of the line "U-Dig-It" folding backpacking trowel to simple plastic ones like the one I carry. I purchased it at a department store for just 99¢! You should always carry with you soap or hand sanitizer to use after disposing of your waste, and be sure to do all of your washing at least 200 feet from water sources (even if using "biodegradable" soap).

Other items that must be packed out just like "ordinary" trash include feminine hygiene products, baby diapers, and condoms. Remember, if you brought along something foreign to the backcountry with you, you brought it for a round-trip journey back out.

In my next column, we will be looking at Leave No Trace Principle #4: Leave What You Find. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those involved with the 2002 Hickory Creek Fall Trail Crew for all of their help with clearing some massive blowdowns, all with primitive handtools like axes and cross-cut saws. Great work! And so until next time, Happy Trails!

North Country Trail Announcements

The North Country Trail, a National Scenic Trail like the Appalachian and Pacific Crest Trails, runs for 95 miles through the Allegheny National Forest, and through several areas Friends of Allegheny Wilderness are proposing as new federal wilderness under the 1964 Wilderness Act.

There is now a field office for the Pennsylvania chapter of the North Country Trail Association. Headed up by State Supervisor for the North Country Trail Association Bob Tait, the office is located in Butler County at 380 West Park Road in Portersville. Bob has also created a new web site at www.butleroutdoors.com which announces North Country Trail and other Western Pennsylvania outdoor recreation events.



North Country National Scenic Trail in the Tracy Ridge roadless area – a potential new Allegheny National Forest Wilderness Area. Photo by Kirk Johnson.

For more information about the North Country Trail, feel free to contact Bob at (724) 368-3709 or nctpa@zoominternet.net. Or log onto www.northcountrytrail.org



Eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*)

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness
220 Center Street
Warren, PA 16365

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