

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.

Final ANF Plan Weak on Wilderness Time for Congress to Step Up

Though it is disappointing to learn that the new Forest Plan for the Allegheny National Forest (ANF) is far too insubstantial in its wilderness recommendations, all is not lost. It is now up to us as citizens to convince Congress to act decisively by going well beyond the agency's smallish recommendation.

"We are pleased that the revised plan includes two areas recommended for permanent protection under the Wilderness Act of 1964, while at the same time providing for timber production and other important uses elsewhere on the forest," said Kirk Johnson, executive director of Friends of Allegheny Wilderness (FAW). "However, the plan still largely overlooks the desires of more than 80 percent of citizens who sent in comments on last year's draft plan – and who sought wilderness designation for all of the areas we proposed."

The public overwhelmingly supports protecting more wilderness on the ANF. Of the 8,277 public comments the U.S. Forest Service received on the draft plan last summer, more than 6,800 specifically favored the maximum amount of wilderness as outlined in FAW's *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal for Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest*.

The *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal*, published in the fall of 2003 following several years of intense on-the-ground study, identifies eight areas

totaling 54,460 acres as prospective additions to America's National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). Several of these tracts, such as the proposed Tracy Ridge Wilderness Area, are formally recognized Roadless Areas and areas that members of Pennsylvania's Congressional delegation advocated to protect as wilderness in the past. Other Roadless Areas neglected by the plan include Allegheny Front, Clarion River, and Complanter.



Hector's Falls, in the northern end of the proposed Tionesta Wilderness Area. Unfortunately, this area was not recommended for wilderness designation in the final ANF Forest Plan. Photo by Jim DeLong.

The new Forest Plan recommends to Congress just two tracts – Chestnut Ridge and Minister Valley – totaling approximately 13,000 acres as wilderness areas. The final plan surprisingly reversed the draft plan's proposed recommendation of Tracy Ridge – the largest Roadless...

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...Area in the ANF at more than 9,500 acres – for wilderness despite overwhelming public support for that initial proposal.

“We are glad to see portions of the *Citizens’ Wilderness Proposal* recognized by the agency,” noted John Bartlett, the group’s field representative. “However, all eight areas local citizens have recommended for wilderness designation should continue to be considered by the residents of the region and Pennsylvania’s Congressional delegation. Bear in mind the areas that were excluded were done so at the subjective discretion of the Forest Service, and *not* because they don’t qualify under the Wilderness Act.”

“It’s true that almost two-thirds of the special places in the *Citizens’ Wilderness Proposal* have been recognized by the plan as having wilderness characteristics – either as recommended wilderness areas, remote recreation areas, or national recreation areas,” observed Ron Simonsen, a FAW board member and life-long resident of Warren. “We applaud that and the work that went into this process. However, we will continue to ask our members of Congress to truly protect *all eight* places we identified in our proposal as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.”

While the Forest Plan establishes management guidelines that will govern most of the ANF for the next 10 to 15 years or longer, wilderness is the one area over which the Forest Service can only make a recommendation. The final decision

on wilderness designation is Congress’ alone – and therefore the public’s through their elected representatives.

“We will continue our efforts toward meeting the desires of those who favor the maximum amount of wilderness, working with the Forest Service, practical minded stakeholders, and our elected officials,” Johnson said. “**Members of the public should contact their Congressmen and Senators and let them know of their desire for more wilderness.** It’s the Congress that will ultimately be the decider about protecting more wilderness in Pennsylvania for future generations to use and enjoy.”

To date, 21 separate local, regional, and national organizations have formally moved to endorse the *Citizens’ Wilderness Proposal*. The memberships of these organizations represent more than 400,000 Americans. The most recent addition was the Pennsylvania Division of the Izaak Walton League of America, which unanimously voted to join the ranks of the coalition at their state convention in York on March 23rd.

How YOU Can Help

Now that the Forest Plan has been published, the public’s opportunity to participate in the agency’s planning process has concluded. It is now time for wilderness advocates to turn our attention to Congress, who will be the final decider on which areas from the *Citizens’ Wilderness Proposal* will be permanently protected for future generations as part of the NWPS.

Please write to the following decision-makers and **ask them to support wilderness legislation for the ANF that will protect all eight special wild areas in the *Citizens’ Wilderness Proposal*.** For additional information about what to say in your letter, log on to www.pawild.org and peruse our catalog of newsletters, newspaper clippings, and other information posted there.

United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Phil English
Member of Congress
208 East Bayfront Parkway, Suite 102
Erie, PA 16507

The Honorable John Peterson
Member of Congress
127 West Spring Street, Suite C
Titusville, PA 16354

United States Senate

The Honorable Bob Casey
United States Senator
383 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter
United States Senator
17 South Park Row
Federal Building, Suite B-120
Erie, PA 16501

Finally, please send a letter to your own Congressman or woman (if different from Reps. English or Peterson) asking him or her to legislatively support the full *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal* as well. If you don't know who your Representative is, or if you need their mailing address, log on to www.house.gov.



Capitol Building, Washington, D.C. Now that the Forest Plan for the Allegheny National Forest is complete, it is up to the U.S. Congress to permanently protect our wilderness by passing bold new legislation adding ANF areas to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Great news for ANF wilderness supporters!

Some progress has in fact already been made on the Congressional front. In January Congressman Phil English of Pennsylvania's 3rd District wrote to the U.S. Forest Service in support of the full *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal*. **Now Congress-**

man English needs to hear our thanks – loud and clear – for his bold support for wilderness.

Therefore, in addition to the above listed action, please incorporate a specific **thank you** to Congressman English for proactively writing to the Forest Service on this vital issue in your letter to him. Suggested talking points include:

1. Thank Congressman English for taking the time out of his busy schedule to write to ANF Supervisor Kathleen Morse in support of the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal*!
2. Add your own perspective – why is wilderness important to you personally?
3. Politely remind the Congressman that we will need his support once it becomes time to introduce new ANF wilderness legislation in the United States Congress. Send your letter to Congressman English's address listed above.

Sportsman and Former Journalist Joins Friends of Allegheny Wilderness Team

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness is pleased to announce that former newsman and avid outdoorsman John Bartlett of Oil City has joined the non-profit conservation group as its field representative.

John served for more than 30 years as a staff reporter for the *Erie Times-News*, primarily in bureau offices. In addition to regional news, he concentrated on environmental and conservation issues. His professional honors include the 1992 Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation Conservation Communicator of the Year Award.

An avid outdoorsman, backpacker, hiker, and hunter, John has a deep appreciation for the Allegheny National Forest, its multiple uses, and the region's communities. He and his wife Kathy are natives of northwestern Pennsylvania and long-time residents of Oil City. The couple has two adult children, both of whom reside in the region.

"We are extremely excited to have John and his considerable skills and experience come to work for Friends of Allegheny Wilderness," said Kirk Johnson, the group's executive director. "John has a working knowledge of the issues, the people involved, and the communities of the Allegheny region. He is ready to hit the ground running as we enter a very important phase of our campaign, with the Forest Service having now released their Forest Plan."

"I am looking forward to the opportunity to work on a campaign protecting special places for future generations where nature reigns," said Bartlett. "I believe deeply that we should do all we can to ensure that those who come after us can use and enjoy this wilderness as we have – for camping, canoeing, hunting, hiking, fishing, climbing, and so many other activities."

Feel free to drop John a line to say hello and welcome him to the Friends of Allegheny Wilderness family!

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Wilderness Author, Historian Visits
By John Bartlett

Doug Scott, a leading expert on the wilderness movement, brought an important message to the region in a recent tour – the decision on wilderness in the Allegheny National Forest is ours through our elected representatives.

Scott, policy director for the Campaign for America's Wilderness and author of *The Enduring Wilderness*, visited throughout the region the week of March 11 on behalf of Friends of Allegheny Wilderness. His wide-ranging tour included public talks in Bradford, Warren, Erie and Meadville, television and radio appearances and meetings with newspaper reporters and editors.

In his talks, Scott spoke of the development of the Wilderness Act of 1964 and stressed that the Act took the final decision on wilderness out of the hands of Forest Service and other public lands administrators and placed it with Congress.

"Only Congress can decide about wilderness," he said. "And they are going to listen to their own constituents."

Scott's message was well received at the public forums as those in attendance gained a better understanding of how America came to appreciate its wilderness, the diverse movement to protect it, and the process.

However, in Warren on March 13 and again at Allegheny College in Meadville on March 15, Scott was subject to hostile questioning by Arthur Stewart of Warren. Stewart is a vocal critic of any uses of or plans for the ANF that do not maximize the amount of timber that could be cut, sustainable or not.

Stewart seemed more intent on making a point, rather than seeking a clarification or an understanding of the issues involved. Scott took Stewart in stride, refusing to get caught up in a hostile exchange and continued to stress his message that all sides will be heard by Congress as it makes the determination of wilderness designation.

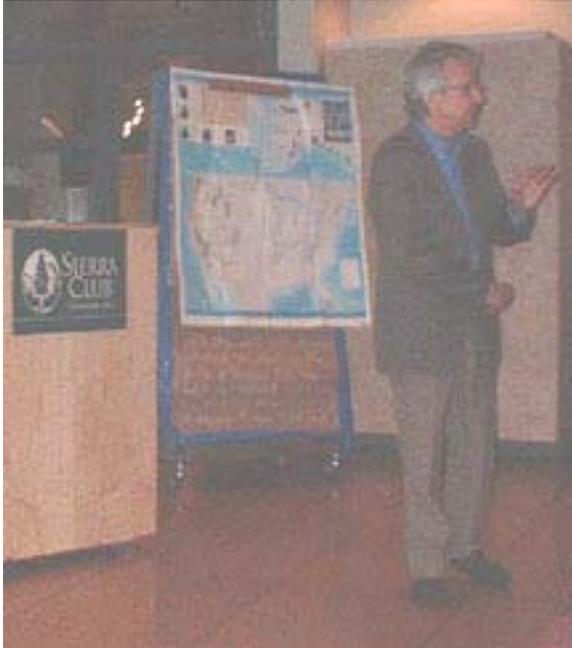
At both settings, Stewart left quickly following Scott's presentations, rather than staying as requested to further discuss the impacts of wilderness designation and related issues.

Leaving the Allegheny College presentation, Stewart turned to a FAW representative and said "You don't want to hear what I have to say." In reality, FAW did. It was Stewart who did not want to hear what others have to say.

Most questions at the well attended forums were based on interest and how to deal with practical issues, such as the private ownership of oil and gas rights on most of the ANF. Scott repeatedly explained there are ways to overcome such problems and creative solutions can

be found. He pointed out that agreements were worked out to obtain the mineral rights beneath the Hickory Creek Wilderness Area in 1984, in part through the involvement of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy.

"These types of things can be dealt with," he said. "These are not new issues."



Doug Scott discusses the history of the American wilderness movement at Erie's Tom Ridge Environmental Center, March 14, 2007. The event was co-sponsored by the Lake Erie Group of the Pennsylvania Sierra Club. A map of the National Wilderness Preservation System is shown behind Mr. Scott. Photo by Kirk Johnson.

Scott said he enjoyed his tour of the region and the opportunity to talk with area residents.

"I learned how deeply the people of the region love their national forest," he said. "I spoke with many who would like to see far more of the Allegheny National Forest designated as wilderness by Congress."

And Scott repeatedly praised the careful analysis and work that resulted in FAW's *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal for Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest*. "It's a well thought-out and fair proposal," he said.

Copies of Scott's book, *The Enduring Wilderness* – an excellent history of our nation's wilderness movement – are available from FAW for a limit-

ed time in exchange for a modest donation of \$10. Contact FAW for more information.

Help us Deliver the Wilderness Message

The best way to gain public support for the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal* is to explain it directly to people. With the Forest Service's final plan for the ANF now released, more than ever we need to get out and outline our proposal in forums throughout the region. We need your help to do that.

Please help line up speaking engagements. No group is too small, no venue too large. Examples include Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions and similar civic clubs, church groups, garden clubs, meetings of environmental and sportsmen's clubs, community forums, and others.

Taking our message directly to people is critical in this phase of our campaign. **Please call John Bartlett at 814-676-4474 or send him an e-mail at jbartlett@pawild.org with possible speaking engagements or contacts for organizations that host speakers.**

We're looking forward to meeting with you face-to-face!

ANF Wilderness Ranger Moving On

Unfortunately, we also report that the ANF's longtime Wilderness Ranger, Eric Flood, is taking on a new assignment with the agency and is leaving Pennsylvania. Since 2001 Eric has been an excellent steward of the Hickory Creek and Allegheny Islands Wilderness Areas. Eric will be moving on to oversee the sprawling 456,705-acre High Uintas Wilderness Area in Utah's Ashley National Forest beginning in May – an exciting assignment indeed for someone in his profession. Feel free to contact Eric at eflood@fs.fed.us to thank him for his years of service here on the ANF, and to wish him luck in the High Uintas. Pennsylvania wilderness aficionados should hope someone as faithful as Eric to wilderness stewardship and Leave No Trace ethics will ultimately replace him here.

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Hobblebush (*Viburnum lantanoides*) once carpeted much of the Allegheny plateau, thriving under the canopy of late succession forest. It grows from 3 to 9 feet high, and its outer branches root wherever they touch the ground. Its fruit is a favorite of many birds, and deer find the bush itself a delicacy, much to the detriment of the species.

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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