



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.

Harrisburg Patriot News

Sunday, April 29, 2007

Saving a forest: Expand wilderness protection for Allegheny

The U.S. Forest Service has released a final 10-year management plan for Allegheny National Forest that doesn't go far enough in setting aside wilderness areas.

Only 2 percent of Pennsylvania's only national forest has protected wilderness status, one of the smallest percentages of any national forest.



Members of the Sierra Club prepare for a walk into the proposed Tionesta Wilderness Area. Photo by Roger Knacke.

The new plan would add 12,379 acres in two parcels for possible wilderness designation, which requires an act of Congress, on top of the existing 8,979 acres already protected. While any additions to the wilderness system are welcome, the plan excludes protection for the largest remaining old-growth forest in the state.

On average, 18 percent of a national forest is designated as protected wilderness, where trees cannot be cut and motorized vehicles cannot be used, with nature left to take its course. Most eastern national forests fall below that benchmark because, for the most part, they are utilized for timber, oil, gas and mineral extraction.

Nevertheless, the local non-profit advocacy group, Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, has identified eight additional areas consisting of 54,500 acres, suitable for wilderness designation. We urge Pennsylvania's congressional delegation to finish the job, and protect what little wilderness is left to protect in the commonwealth.

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How YOU Can Help

Now that the new Forest Plan for the Allegheny National Forest has been published, as noted in the above *Harrisburg Patriot News* editorial, the public's opportunity to participate in the planning process has concluded. It is time for wilderness advocates to turn our attention to the Congress, who will be the final decider on how much of the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal for Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest* will be protected for future generations under the Wilderness Act of 1964 as part of America's National Wilderness Preservation System.

Please write to the following decision makers and ask them to support wilderness legislation that will permanently protect all eight special...

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness
220 Center Street
Warren, PA 16365
814-723-0620
www.pawild.org
alleghenyfriends@earthlink.net

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness
Oil City Field Office
304 Mayer Street
Oil City, PA 16301
814-676-4474

...wild and wonderful areas in the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal*. For ideas about what to say in your letter, log on to www.pawild.org and peruse our catalog of newsletters, newspaper clippings, and other information.

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
17 South Park Row
Federal Building, Suite B-150
Erie, PA 16501

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 as well (if different from Reps. English or Peterson) asking him or her to legislatively support the full *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal*. If you don't know who your Representative is, log on to www.house.gov.

Oil Boom Threatens Proposed Wilderness

By John Bartlett

The bright pink ribbon is jarring amidst the greens and browns of Chestnut Ridge on a summer's day. Most jarring is what it portends – placement of an access road and new oil and gas wells in one of the eight areas recommended for wilderness designation by Friends of Allegheny Wilderness.

The ribbon makes clear that the remaining roadless and most natural areas of the Allegheny National Forest are not immune from an increasing frenzy of oil and gas development.

Think of the Allegheny National Forest as a layer cake. An estimated 93 percent of the subsurface rights on the forest are privately owned. We the People only own the surface layer, or the icing on the cake. The rich layers beneath the icing are owned by private individuals or companies. They have the right to access and use it just as we all do with our property.

That lack of subsurface ownership is a tremendous threat to the preservation of wilderness values. "It is critical for those who desire successful wilderness designation to understand that acquisition of subsurface rights is paramount," Allegheny National Forest Supervisor Kathleen Morse said.

Oil and gas development here has a long history. In fact, it is one of the world's first oil fields, with the early wells drilled shortly after Col. Edwin Drake's sinking of the first commercial oil well near Titusville in 1859.

Currently, there are more than 9,000 active oil and gas wells on the Allegheny National Forest. To support those wells there are more than 2,000 miles of oil and gas roads, which are in addition to the standard Forest Service road network. Each well requires a cleared area averaging ¼ to 1/3 acre in size.

And more is coming. The Forest Service anticipates drilling applications for more than 2,000 new wells will be received this year. Those additional wells will require an estimated 500 miles of new road, 50 miles of new pipeline and more than 1.6 million cubic yards of sandstone for road surfacing material dug from the Allegheny National Forest, requiring 35 to 50 new rock pits.



Oil workers installing a new pumpjack near the Morrison Run hiking trail in the proposed Morrison Run Wilderness Area. Photo by Jessica Ley.

Already 15 wells have been drilled near the Morrison Run trail in the proposed Morrison Run Wilderness. Forest Service officials estimate as many as 500 to 800 wells will be planned for within the Morrison Run area within the next one to three years. Those wells will reach far into the interior, largely blanketing the entire 6,800-acres of the proposed wilderness area.

Although there are no known development proposals for within Tracy Ridge – the largest roadless area remaining on the ANF – the threat is great. It is directly in the path of the current wave of oil and gas exploration/development, Forest Service officials said.

Right now, it appears only the Cornplanter, Hickory Creek Wilderness addition, and Clarion River proposed wilderness areas are safe from near term oil and gas development. However, that could change at any time.

The Forest Service is doing all it can to lessen the impact of oil and gas development, but can not stop it and is limited in what it can require of

developers. Fortunately, most developers have been willing to work with the Forest Service to locate roads and well pads to meet aesthetic and environmental considerations.

But any development is inconsistent with wilderness and clearly the threat is great to our proposed wilderness areas. The only solution is acquisition of the mineral rights. The cost will be great, but it can be done. Morse herself said “it is not a pipedream,” citing the model used to obtain the mineral rights beneath the existing Hickory Creek Wilderness.

The campaign for wilderness designation is the only way to focus sufficient national attention on the areas to generate the funding necessary to obtain the mineral rights. That means our campaign is more important than ever and requires a renewed effort and commitment.

Helen Zahniser Snyder, 1920 - 2007

This issue of our newsletter is respectfully dedicated to the memory of Helen Zahniser Snyder, 87, who died on May 14 at her home in Philadelphia. She was the wife for over 50 years of Lee L. Snyder, emeritus professor at Philadelphia University. She was also the last living sibling of Tionesta native and Wilderness Act author Howard Zahniser.

Helen was a seventh-generation descendent of Matthias Zahniser, who in 1754 came from Rhineland Germany. In her formative youth and teen years she lived on Bridge Street in Tionesta, where her father Archibald H.M. Zahniser served as the district elder of the Free Methodist Church. Helen was a social worker most of her life for Family Services in Philadelphia.

Helen and Lee attended an August 13, 2001 Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission marker dedication in Tionesta for Howard sponsored by Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, making the trip all the way from Philadelphia. Helen was extremely proud of her older brother's lifelong work for wilderness preservation in his role with The Wilderness Society.

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness
220 Center Street
Warren, PA 16365



Pinxter azalea (*Rhododendron periclymenoides*) Usually the first to bloom of the native azaleas, the pinxter has an elongated set of five stamens and one long pistil. The blossoms are pollinated by insects that hit the long anthers of one flower and then brush past the even longer sticky-tipped style on the next. A flowering pinxter azalea is a stunning sight in the springtime of the Allegheny National Forest. Photo by Tessa Campbell.

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.

Name _____
Address _____

Phone _____
Email _____

Send to:
Friends of Allegheny Wilderness
220 Center Street
Warren, PA 16365