



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.

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More wilderness, more jobs, says advocates' study

By CHUCK HAYES
Staff Writer

More wilderness would translate into more jobs and more revenue for communities within the Allegheny National Forest, according to a recently released study.

The author of the study is Spencer Phillips, senior economist for The Wilderness Society. The study was performed by The Wilderness Society and Friends of Allegheny Wilderness.

Both groups have endorsed the creation of considerably more wilderness areas than the U.S. Forest Service proposed in its revised Forest Plan for the Allegheny National Forest.

In all, the groups have supported designating 54,460 acres of the 520,000-acre forest as wilderness area.

The report concludes that the additional wilderness would not significantly diminish timber harvest revenues and would have a small impact on timber supply and the forest products industry.

The report states, "If sawlog stocking on the proposed wilderness acres is about the same as on the 279,000 other acres slated for even-age

management, then the wilderness proposal could affect as much as four-tenths of one percent of sawlog supply in the ANF region or



A bow hunter utilizes a portable tree stand in the Allegheny National Forest. A 2005 Pennsylvania Wilds study found that as many as a third of all Pennsylvanians utilize a protected forest area, such as a wilderness area, for outdoor recreation at least once every year. Photo by Mike Bleech.

four one hundredths of a percent of Pennsylvania's sawlog supply." As for the wood products manufacturing industry, the report...

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...concludes, "If the tiny shift in timber supply that could accompany further wilderness designation does affect the forest products industry at all, the relatively small size of the industry suggests that impact on the overall regional or commonwealth economy would be small."

The reduction in timber supply caused by additional wilderness, said the study, could be compensated for through the use of private forest lands and process efficiency improvements.

"There is no significant conflict between timbering interests and new wilderness protections," Phillips said.

The report stated that payments which local governments receive from the national forest are now based on acreage rather than timber harvesting and Secure Rural Schools Act payments are also not tied to timber harvest figures.

More wilderness, the study states, provides more recreational experiences closer to home and Phillips said that one "very tangible economic benefit" is that the value of private property in the area increases.

In the Green Mountain National Forest of Vermont, said Phillips, land values are 18.7 percent higher and land values decrease .33 percent with every kilometer a township is removed from the wilderness boundary.

Higher property values, said Phillips, help keep taxes lower, which can help attract additional residents and businesses. Studies in the Adirondacks and in Maine, he said, show towns with more protected open space have lower tax rates.

Qualities such as scenic beauty, recreation and environmental entities were among the criteria which resulted in Warren County being rated the second "Best Place to Live in Rural America" by *Progressive Farmer* magazine earlier this year, Phillips observed.

A 2001 study, Phillips said, found wilderness in the eastern United States provides about \$4 per acre in "passive use" benefits. In the case of the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal* for eight wilderness areas on the ANF, he said, that would translate into \$218,000 in economic benefits generated each year "even before the first angler casts a fly into a wilderness-nourished stream or the first hiker steps onto a wilderness trail."

The 2001 study cited by Phillips estimated the value of eastern wilderness in terms of visitors is about \$44 per acre and each visitor generates an additional \$44 per acre in spending in nearby communities. That level of spending would support one job for every 550 acres of wilderness, he said. If 54,460 acres of additional wilderness were designated on the ANF, said Phillips, that could be expected to support nearly 100 new jobs in the region.

Kirk Johnson, executive director Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, said the study demonstrates that wilderness designation would be an "investment."

"Permanently protecting these areas would bring real balance to the management of the national forest," said Johnson, "and would be a tremendous long-term investment in the economy of the region."

John Barlett, field representative for Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, said, "Wilderness

protection is a critical component of the multiple use management of our national forests. While we recognize the importance of timber production and other uses of the ANF to the region's economy and way of life, it must also be acknowledged that there is an acute shortage of protected wilderness here."

While the Forest Service can recommend areas for wilderness study, the final decision on what areas are included in the wilderness system is made by Congress.

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You Are Invited!

To our Allegheny National Forest wilderness training conference

Come learn first-hand what you can do to help permanently protect the remaining wild areas of the Allegheny National Forest in beautiful and historic Parker Dam State Park!

**Parker Dam State Park
Clearfield County**

Friday April 11 through Sunday, April 13, 2008

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness training conference schedule (tentative):

Friday, April 11

4 p.m. and on – Registration and welcome

5:30 to 7:00 – Food and fellowship

7:00 – Evening program: David Saylor, nephew of former Pennsylvania U.S. Rep. John P. Saylor (R – Johnstown), will discuss his uncle's tireless work for the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act of 1975.

Saturday, April 12

7:30 to 8:30 a.m. – Breakfast (provided)

9:00 – History of the wilderness movement

9:30 – 10 minute break

9:40 – *The Citizens' Wilderness Proposal for Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest*

10:30 – 10 minute break

10:40 – The message: serving as a FAW spokesperson

11:00 – Lobbying skills – how to make the case to elected officials, and preparation for a lobbying trip to Washington, D.C. Also, small group role playing.

12:30 p.m. – Lunch (provided)



A group of hikers in the proposed Clarion River Wilderness Area during a fall 2005 FAW training conference.

1:45 – Community organizing and volunteer opportunities

3:00 – 15 minute break

3:15 – Effective letters to the editor and other media tactics, or giving the FAW PowerPoint slideshow & other public presentations

4:15 – 15 minute break

4:30 – Open discussion of sessions and future individual goals

5:30 – Optional hike to places of interest at Parker Dam State Park

6:30 – Dinner (provided)

Sunday, April 13

7 to 8:30 a.m. – Breakfast (provided)

8:45 to 9:45 – Personal wilderness action plan discussion

10 – Outing to the proposed Clarion River Wilderness Area

If you are interested in attending this exciting and informative conference, please use the enclosed form to register and submit your registration fee of \$30 for the weekend. We hope to see you there!

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness
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Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), also known as a seahawk, fish hawk, or fish eagle. Medium-to-large fish eating bird of prey, able to live almost anywhere there are safe nest sites and shallow water with abundant fish. In the ANF, the osprey uses the Allegheny Reservoir area as habitat. The osprey is listed as threatened by the state of Pennsylvania.

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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