

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.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Thursday, September 3, 2009

**Wild and wonderful
45 years ago, a blow was struck for conservation**

With suburban sprawl encroaching on many parts of America and the pressure for oil drilling threatening others, it is worth pausing to appreciate the nation's wild places where nature has not succumbed to development – and to praise those who protected them. The great stretches of wilderness that sit as jewels on the American landscape were not saved by accident.

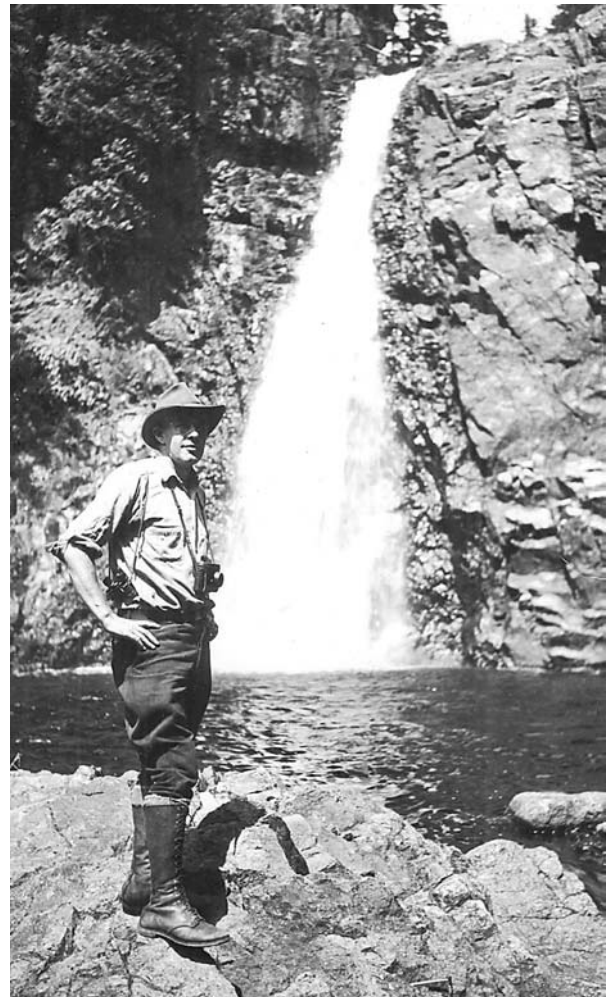
Forty-five years ago on this date, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Wilderness Act, which not only protected the first 9 million acres in 54 statutory wilderness areas but also set the stage for other milestone wilderness legislation in the decades to follow.

President Johnson had strong bipartisan support for the bill and, while the environment has not always been every politician's friend, the support for wilderness has occurred under both Republican and Democratic administrations. Indeed, as the Campaign for American Wilderness points out, President Ronald Reagan was particularly active, signing wilderness laws affecting 22 states in a single year.

Western Pennsylvania can take pride in what was done 45 years ago today. The late U.S. Rep. John Saylor, a Republican from Somerset County, was a prime sponsor of the Wilderness Act, which was drafted by the late conservationist Howard Zahniser from

Venango County. Whole forests stand as testaments to their memory.

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Wilderness Act of 1964 author Howard Zahniser at Hanging Spear Falls in the Adirondack Mountains, August, 1946. Zahniser was a native of Tionesta...

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...Pennsylvania in the Allegheny National Forest and went on to become a primary architect of the National Wilderness Preservation System as executive director for The Wilderness Society. Photo provided by Dave Gibson of Protect the Adirondacks.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Sunday, August 30, 2009

The Flatlander and the Backhoe

By R. Alan Klenovich

Folks in the Allegheny National Forest region could accurately term me a "flatlander." Some might refer to me as a "mup-ear."

Well, I am a mup-ear. And I have been coming up here since I was 12 years old. In the past 50 years I have made over 550 trips to the forest from Mercer County at around 250 miles per round trip. That comes to 137,500 miles or the same as circling Earth 5.5 times. So, yes, I guess you could say this flatlander is a true mup-ear.

Our family owns a home within the forest, about a mile back in the woods on a private road. I have spent weekends, holidays and vacations there with friends and family most of my adult life.

Now that I am retired I spend much more time in McKean County than I do in Mercer County. My wife is not necessarily what you would call an outdoors person, but she has never begrudged me a moment of time in the mountains. And even though she does not share my passion for the hills she understands the lure which the area has always had for me. We even spent our honeymoon at Dewdrop Campground on the Allegheny Reservoir.

My family, friends and I have hunted, hiked, picnicked, cross-country skied, bicycled, ATV'd, snowmobiled, motorcycled, swam, fished, canoed, boated, water-skied, photographed and visited historical sites throughout the Allegheny National Forest and its environs. I used to tell my father I would like to live up here full time. Pap always said I would get tired of it. Well, my Pap was right about a lot of things, but he was wrong about that. I have never tired of the area and seriously doubt I ever will.

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A couple of years ago on a cold, snowy day in February, I decided to hike the Morrison Run trail along Route 59 near Rimrock Overlook. It was a still, ideal winter day, and there were no footprints leading into the woods.

About a half hour into my hike I was brought up short by a loud noise which at first I thought to be gunfire. I continued on and several moments later I heard the same sound again. This time I correctly identified the noise. There was a backhoe being operated nearby and the loud reports were the result of the operator shaking sticky mud out of the backhoe bucket.

Although the sound was annoying in the otherwise stillness of the forest, I continued on for three or four hours, completing the trail loop. The backhoe bucket continued to bang the whole time, somewhat as a bell would toll. I won't say that the noise ruined my hike, but it did get me to thinking in a new direction.

Up until that point in my life I had never considered myself to be any sort of environmental activist. And for many years my wife has accused me of being, politically, slightly to the right of Attila the Hun. I grew up around the excavating business and have shoved over a good number of trees with a bulldozer and burned a lot of brush piles. I even spent a short stint after Vietnam as an oiler on a dragline in a strip mine and as a driller's helper on a drilling rig. Mother Nature would never proclaim me as being innocent of ravaging some of her lands.

However, I began to reflect on what had changed in the 50 years since I began visiting the area. Years ago I could hike from my home to the village of Westline, a distance of about three miles and cross one or two forest roads. Today there are probably 14 or 15 roads crisscrossing that same area.

Not long before my father passed away I took him for a ride along some of the new roads. My father had been intimately familiar with the area, but in less than 10 minutes he was completely lost. Pap had not been in the area for five or six years. He was bewildered that so many roads had been built in so short a time. He became quiet and I could feel his disapproval.



Installation of a new oil well along the Morrison Run trail, December 2006. Photo by Jessica Ley.

I guess it had never really occurred to me that the oil and gas drilling could get as close to Morrison Run and Rimrock as they are. I was shocked and more than a little disappointed. I began to visualize what the area might soon look like. I also imagined how proposed wilderness areas like Tracy Ridge and Chestnut Ridge could change.

It finally came crashing down upon me that a lot of the Allegheny National Forest has been drilled, and the pristine and scenic recreation areas have been left for last. I now realize that these areas can be roaded and drilled as well. I realized how close those activities were as I continued to hear the backhoe bucket banging. To me it was like a wake-up call.

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I will not tell you that I became a born-again environmentalist that day. I will say, however, that the experience changed my mind set. From that point on I subconsciously began looking for ways that we may be able to save pristine areas of the forest.

Shortly thereafter I became aware of the efforts of Friends of Allegheny Wilderness and their *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal for Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest*. At that time I could not have given you a good definition of the word

wilderness. Now I do know what a wilderness is and I also have learned that lands can be designated as wilderness by an act of Congress. That designation protects land in perpetuity...forever.

The Allegheny National Forest has changed dramatically since its inception. When it was established in 1923, there was no Kinzua Dam, no Jakes Rocks, no Rimrock Overlook. There was no Red Bridge, Kiasutha or Dewdrop Campgrounds. There was no provision made to protect these areas because they were not yet envisioned. Had members of Congress in those days had a crystal ball I feel almost certain that they would have purchased the mineral rights in these areas so that the U.S. Forest Service could have total control over their destiny.

However, that did not happen. So, now these areas are threatened and there does not seem to be a whole lot we can do about it unless the mineral rights are purchased.

This type of thing has been done before. As Friends of the Allegheny Wilderness has repeatedly pointed out, mineral rights acquisition was done with the Hickory Creek Wilderness designation in 1984 and it can be done again.



Scenic winter view within the proposed Morrison Run Wilderness Area. Photo by Jessica Ley.

I would challenge anyone reading this to look to the future. Try to imagine what these proposed wilderness areas will look like after they have been roaded, drilled and logged. Your imaginings may startle you. If so, you may want to consider doing something about it.

The Allegheny National Forest is a “multiple-use” forest. The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 recognizes that “the establishment and maintenance of areas of wilderness are consistent with the purpose of the provisions of this act.”

I am sure many of you reading this share my passion for the beauty and pristine nature of these special areas. If you would like to help save them, please visit the Friends of Allegheny Wilderness at www.pawild.org and get involved.

There are 28,682,880 acres in the state of Pennsylvania. The Friends of Allegheny Wilderness proposes designating only 54,460 acres as wilderness. That is slightly less than 2/10ths of 1 percent of the state. You be the judge. Is that asking too much?

R. Alan Klenovich is retired after working as a real estate broker, elected tax collector, and corrections officer. He lives in Greenville, (raklenovich@yahoo.com)

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Write your members of the U.S. Congress

Designating wilderness in the Allegheny National Forest requires an act of the Congress. Of the 8,200 public comments the U.S. Forest Service received on their draft Forest Plan in 2006, more than 6,800 (over 80 percent) specifically supported FAW! Urging your members of Congress to now legislatively support this public mandate is critical. Here’s how to do it:

Go to our website at www.pawild.org and download the draft letter (in Microsoft Word format) that urges support for the *Citizens’ Wilderness Proposal*. The link is on the right-hand side of the front page. Fill in the date, add your return address, and put your name at the bottom. If you like, edit the letter as you see fit to reflect your own style and to express your personal feelings and perspectives about wilderness and the Allegheny.

Print several copies of the letter, each with the proper salutation for the following members of Congress. One copy each should go to Senator Arlen Specter and Senator Bob Casey. The primary targets in the U.S. House are Congressman Glenn Thompson (5th District) and Congresswoman Kathy Dahlkemper (3rd District). If you do not live

in their districts, address the letter to your own U.S. Rep. with copies to Rep. Thompson and Rep. Dahlkemper. Find your representative at www.house.gov.



U. S. Capitol, Washington, D.C. during Wilderness Week, September 2008. Photo by Kirk Johnson.

Almost done! Just sign each letter, seal them in appropriately addressed and stamped envelopes (addresses are below), and drop them in the mail.

Thank you for helping to support permanent protection for the last remaining wild areas of the Allegheny National Forest for future generations to use and enjoy!

The Honorable Glenn Thompson
United States Representative
127 West Spring Street, Suite C
Titusville, PA 16354

The Honorable Kathy Dahlkemper
United States Representative
208 East Bayfront Parkway, Suite 102
Erie, PA 16505

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

Networking, Electronic Communications

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness has in recent years joined the "social networking" craze online. We now have MySpace, YouTube, and most recently, Facebook pages established.

Please stop by our pages on these networking sites and get involved. Watch the *Keystone Wilderness* campaign film and other related videos, "favorite" our videos, send us a "friend request," post a message, or send us an email. We would love to hear from you! Also, please spread the word to friends and family who you network with about our sites and invite them to join as well. We must spread the good word about wilderness any way we can.

You can find links to each of our three networking pages from the **Links** page on the main FAW website, www.pawild.org.

Also, we have discontinued mailing hard copies of this newsletter through the regular mail, now sending by email only. Therefore, please subscribe to our email listserve if you haven't already done so. Simply log on to www.pawild.org and enter your email address where it says "Subscribe to our Email List." Your email address will not be shared or sold outside FAW.

Finally, this tight economy has been no friend to small non-profit organizations like FAW. Please consider mailing a tax-deductible charitable donation to us **TODAY** to help keep our crucial wilderness work moving forward. Your generous support will be absolutely critical to our success. Even \$25 helps! See the convenient donation form on the back page.



Eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*)

Join Robert Redford and FAW to Celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Pennsylvania Wilderness Act

When: Thursday, October 29, 7:00 p.m.

Where: Slater Room, Warren Public Library, Warren, PA, free and open to the public

What: *Forever Wild: Celebrating America's Wilderness*, preceded by the 16-minute campaign film *Keystone Wilderness*

The Pennsylvania Wilderness Act, which designated the Hickory Creek and Allegheny Islands Wilderness Areas in the Allegheny National Forest, was signed into law by President Reagan on October 30, 1984.

Forever Wild is a 60-minute documentary hosted & narrated by Robert Redford capturing the glory of undeveloped, wild places and the passionate tales of America's modern wilderness volunteers who have spent countless hours working to ensure that wild places are preserved for generations to come under the Wilderness Act of 1964. In Colorado, Idaho, Utah, Montana and New Hampshire, these are tales of vision and dedication by Americans who work to preserve a legacy of wilderness. *Forever Wild* also features the sage insights of long-time wilderness advocate and historian Doug Scott, policy director for the Campaign for America's Wilderness.



Keystone Wilderness is a campaign film highlighting the efforts of Friends of Allegheny Wilderness and our many supporting organizations for the Allegheny National Forest.

R.S.V.P. is requested, but not required to 814-723-0620 or info@pawild.org

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness
220 Center Street
Warren, PA 16365



Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*): North American bird of prey, feeding primarily on fish but also on carrion. The species is coming back from the brink of extinction in the 1960s. The Allegheny Reservoir area provides high quality habitat for the bald eagle, therefore by designating the Cornplanter, Tracy Ridge, and Morrison Run areas as wilderness we would protect bald eagle habitat in perpetuity.

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