



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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Business Community Lines Up Behind Allegheny National Forest Wilderness Protection More Than 100 Regional Businesses Endorse Citizens' Wilderness Proposal

WARREN – More than 100 businesses from throughout the region and across the state have joined in the call for Congress to designate additional wilderness in the Allegheny National Forest (ANF).

These businesses have formally endorsed the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal for Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest*, stating their support for the wilderness campaign led by the pro-multiple-use non-profit organization Friends of Allegheny Wilderness (FAW), based in Warren.

FAW and its supporters seek Congressional wilderness designation of an additional eight areas totaling 54,460 acres in the ANF, which is Pennsylvania's only national forest.

"The business endorsements speak to the depth and breadth of support for Congressional wilderness designation of the special areas outlined in the *Citizens' Wilderness Proposal*," said John Bartlett, field representative for FAW.

Ellen Holleran, marketing director of Appalachian Outdoors in State College, an outdoor clothing and equipment store that has been doing business since 1974, said the decision to endorse was an easy one.

"We at Appalachian Outdoors appreciate the unique backcountry recreational values of wilderness, but most of all the importance of protecting our most natural areas," she said. "We are not only about getting people into the outdoors, but making sure we have those special places for them to visit."

Wilderness designation is the highest level of protection that can be given federal public lands, leaving them in their natural condition by law in perpetuity.

"Business owners are quick to grasp that wild and natural areas play a significant role in our quality of life and the health of our regional economy." Bartlett said.

Judy Knapp, owner of Tuck'd Inn Farm, a guest lodge in Cooksburg, said protecting the remaining wild places in the ANF is important to her personally, and to her business. It is the natural beauty of the region that draws many of her visitors.

"Nature's beautiful gifts to northwest Pennsylvania are forever significant. The beauty of wild places is our heritage to receive from our ancestors, and our legacy to bestow on our descendants," Knapp said. "My parents first brought me to these woods when I was a toddler and I have been returning all the years since. The best part of being a business owner here is seeing how much folks enjoy their visits to the Allegheny wilderness."

Today only two areas – the 8,600-acre Hickory Creek Wilderness and the Allegheny Islands Wilderness composed of seven islands totaling 368 acres in the Allegheny River – are designated wilderness. That is less than two percent of the 513,200-acre ANF.

On average, 18 percent of all national forest lands are designated wilderness – part of the National Wilderness Preservation System established under the Wilderness Act of 1964. FAW's proposal would bring the total on the Allegheny National Forest to about 12 percent, which would be commensurate with other national forests in the eastern United States.

"Permanently protecting the remaining qualifying areas here as wilderness would protect the best of the diverse values of the Allegheny National Forest, provide for the region's economic needs today and tomorrow, and leave a wild legacy for future generations," said Kirk Johnson, executive director for FAW. "It would be a strong long-term investment, and bring real balance to the overall stewardship of the Commonwealth's sole national forest."

The endorsing businesses range from small, family-owned stores in the heart of the ANF to major manufacturers.

The entire list of endorsing businesses, which grows daily, can be found at www.pawild.org under the "supporters" button at the top of the home page.

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Download the Economic Benefits of ANF Wilderness report (823 K):

www.pawild.org/pdfs/ANF_wilderness_economics.pdf