



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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Friends of Allegheny Wilderness Travels to Nation's Capital

Wilderness Act's 40th Anniversary Celebrated at Wilderness Week

Warren, Pennsylvania – Supporters of Friends Allegheny Wilderness (FAW) recently returned from a September 18th - 22nd trip to Washington, D.C. to talk to Members of Congress from Pennsylvania about Allegheny National Forest (ANF) wilderness as the nation observed the 40th anniversary of the 1964 Wilderness Act.

Pennsylvanians Joe Hardisky, David Sublette, and Kirk Johnson were among more than 300 conservation advocates from across the country who participated in "Wilderness Week." The FAW supporters walked the halls of Congress, meeting with Pennsylvania's Congressmen and Senators to encourage support for additional ANF wilderness designations. An act of Congress is required to designate wilderness areas under the Wilderness Act.

Last fall FAW published a formal report, *A Citizens' Wilderness Proposal for Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest*, identifying eight potential new wilderness areas in the state's only national forest. The proposal has received broad support within the conservation community.

"My family has owned a hunting camp in the Pigeon area of the Allegheny for decades, so I am very excited about our campaign to add new wilderness designations here," said Joe Hardisky. "The trip to Washington was a chance to look at our government up-close and talk to our Members of Congress about the win-win proposal that FAW is offering," he added.

David Sublette, who is also a leader in the Pennsylvania Sierra Club, was honored in June as a "Wilderness Hero" by the Campaign for America's Wilderness and the Sierra Club for his efforts acting as a liaison between the Club and Members of Congress over the last several years. Mr. Sublette was a special guest of the Sierra Club at a September 19th banquet at the National Press Club celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act. Mr. Hardisky and Mr. Johnson also attended the dinner.

"Wilderness has enjoyed broad bipartisan support over the years, and it was encouraging to discuss that particular aspect of wilderness advocacy during discussions with our elected officials and other long-time wilderness advocates during Wilderness Week," Mr. Sublette said.

“With Forest Plan revision well under way, it is more important than ever to spread the word about permanently protecting the remaining wild places in the ANF,” said Mr. Johnson, executive director of FAW. “Through our wilderness proposals, we are seeking a sensible balance that will complement the other important multiple uses of the Forest for future generations,” he added.

The National Press Club dinner included a filmed appearance by actor Christopher Reeve as well as speeches by actor Robert Redford and former Secretary of the Interior under President John Kennedy, Stuart Udall. Also present were Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia, Congressman John Dingell of Michigan, U.S. Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Mark Rey, and former Pennsylvania Senator Richard Schweiker.

During the early 1970s Senator Schweiker, along with his Pennsylvania colleague Senator Hugh Scott, was a strong proponent of the inclusion of more than 30,000 acres of ANF wilderness as part of the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act. That law, signed by President Gerald Ford in January of 1975, established 16 new wilderness areas in 12 eastern states and 14 national forests, totaling 206,988 acres in all, though the final version did not ultimately include any ANF land.

The Wilderness Act was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson on September 3, 1964, protecting the first nine million acres of wilderness and establishing America’s National Wilderness Preservation System. Today, some 106 million acres of wilderness are permanently protected in the system – yet this represents less than five percent of the nation’s total landmass.

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On the web:

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness: www.pawild.org

Allegheny National Forest: www.fs.fed.us/r9/allegheny

Congressman John Dingell’s press release:

www.house.gov/dingell/documents/press_releases/09-20-04.htm

National Wilderness Preservation System: www.wilderness.net