

Allegheny Forest Alliance

Fall 2006 Newsletter

Inside this issue:

- *November 14 Meeting
- *Landscape Linkages
- *Kudos to Congressman Peterson
- * AFA – FAW Collaboration
- *PL 106-393 Reauthorization
- *Something to Think About
- *State of the AFA

Phone: 814-837-9249

Email: afa@penn.com

Web: www.renewableforests.com

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The **Fall 2006 AFA Board Meeting** will be held at **noon on November 14 at the Olmsted Manor** in Ludlow. All Board members are encouraged to attend the luncheon meeting. At that time the Board will discuss a variety of important issues including agenda items for the annual membership meeting to be held in early to mid January. Traditionally, an annual report is given by the executive director along with comments by the ANF supervisor and Congressman Peterson.



LINKAGES

One of many hot buttons in the *Proposed Land and Resource Management Plan (PLRMP)* established for the Allegheny National Forest (ANF) is the introduction of landscape linkages. The theory behind this proposal calls for the creation of late successional corridors to join together “core areas” dominated by old growth. Six core areas are planned in the PLRMP totaling nearly 60,000 acres. The theory goes on to suggest linkages will promote uninterrupted migration among the cores by selected species.



The current plan provides a similar condition scheduling 101,000 acres to be managed as “forests undergoing succession to mature/overmature hardwood forest” (MA 6.1). It is, however, scattered across the landscape with few cores and no intentional plan for linkages. The PLRMP goes to great lengths to rectify the perceived problem by devoting nearly one quarter of the ANF landscape (123,445 acres) to a newly created management area (MA 2.2) called “late structural linkages,” an unwarranted amount in the minds of many. An additional 14,600 acres in the proposal are maintained under MA 6.1 projecting a whopping total of 175,000 acres (35%) of late structural conditions.

There are at least two concerns with this proposal. First, as everyone is aware, 93% of the subsurface rights are privately owned and are currently being exploited. Many of the areas designed for late structural linkages are and will continue to be compromised by this activity. Tables ES-8 and ES-9 of the *Summary of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)* reflect the fallout of all that activity by predicting there will be little or no change in species viability across the ANF for the next 50+ years.

Second, no such corresponding provision is made for early successional habitat. The amount of such acreage remains essentially the same (7%). When you examine the map provided in the DEIS you find there are no core areas and the identified plots are scattered like a shotgun pattern across the forest. Yet early successional core areas or early structural linkages are nowhere to be found. One must assume species preferring such habitat are unworthy of cores and linkages or do not need migration corridors. Put another way, the cerulean warbler fits because it prefers old growth, but the equally imperiled golden-winged warbler does not because it prefers early successional habitat. Where is the balance in this regard?

Perhaps the statement on page ES-20 of the *Summary* hits the nail on the head. It states, “*In revising the MIS (management indicator species) list, emphasis has been placed on species that are closely associated with habitats of interest.....*” Could that mean the selection of the cerulean warbler as a MIS rather than the golden-winged warbler skews the decision toward old growth habitat? What about the projected de-emphasis on Allegheny hardwoods as late successional habitat is increased? That certainly is another hot button issue.

KUDOS TO JOHN PETERSON

Although the AFA is a non-political, non-profit organization that does not support or promote political candidates, I feel it is appropriate to acknowledge the efforts of Congressman John E. Peterson of the 5th Congressional district in PA because of his steadfast support of issues synonymous with the AFA mission. He has consistently promoted sustainable harvest levels as well as multiple use policies on public lands because of the many benefits to his constituents. He speaks often of wood as our most readily available renewable resource and of its value on the world market.

Congressman Peterson has also vigorously supported private property rights so integral to Rural America and has recognized how vital resources such as natural gas are to a struggling rural economy. His efforts in this regard transcend the region and embrace the entire nation as he pursues drilling under coastal waters. Congressman Peterson has challenged anyone including the President, to open debate on the issue because of his confidence in the merits of the endeavor and his sincere belief that it is the right thing to do.

Just recently, Congressman Peterson addressed a contingent of lobbyists in D.C. who are concerned with reauthorization of **PL 106-393**, another issue affecting many rural municipalities across the nation. He fully understands and appreciates the ramifications of the safety-net legislation and his comments about it were delivered and received enthusiastically.

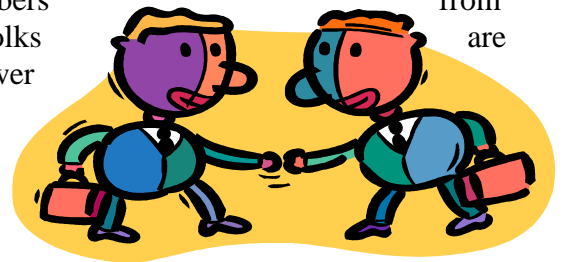
Thank you Congressman Peterson for representing our constituents as well as yours with concern and conviction.

HONEST COLLABORATION

By invitation, I have represented the AFA in ongoing discussions with a group hosted by *Friends of Allegheny Wild* (FAW), the local organization promoting a substantial wilderness increase on the ANF. The intended purpose is to pursue consensus through collaboration. I will confess the atmosphere of these meetings to date is far better than similar ones used by the Planning Team for forest plan revision. The

issue remains highly polarized, however, even though both sides are civil and willing to present supporting arguments.

FAW has brought to the table national and state representatives from the Wilderness Society, state and local representatives from the Sierra Club along with staff members nearly all our state and federal representatives. Forest Service folks also available to corroborate information exchanged and to answer questions germane to the issue. Unfortunately, the elected officials group as well as recreational enthusiasts, both of whom have a vested interest in the outcome of the issue, is conspicuously absent and need to be there before any meaningful solution can be brought forward.



Currently, Sue Swanson (executive director of AHUG) and I are the only ones representing the other side of the argument. We have stressed the one-sided nature of wilderness designation that for all intents and purposes is forever whether or not the forest or future generations truly benefit. The same is not the case for manageable forest land on the ANF, something we continue to insist is central to any agreement.

The experience has, however, afforded us the opportunity to lay out several arguments about why more wilderness is unwise, especially to the staff members who by and large have only heard the other side of the story. An example is the potential impact on oak within the suggested wilderness locations since it is struggling to regenerate effectively. Little else, however, has been encouraging. A case in point was the discussion about the success of various collaborative efforts such as the *Quincy Library Group* in other parts of the country. While efforts seemed laudable, the notion crashed to the floor when the representative for the Wilderness Society stated he was not sure his organization would support such agreements. Upon hearing this, a quote from Sean Connery in the movie *“The Untouchables”* came to mind when he said, “Here endith the lesson.”

In summation, I am gaining an increased appreciation of how the Native Americans felt as “Manifest Destiny” swept across our nation.

FALL FLY-IN

Washington, D.C. was overrun recently by visitors wearing green polo shirts with one thing on their minds; reauthorization of **PL 106-393**. Well over 200 men, women and children from across the nation descended on the nation’s capital where they split up in four person teams and visited every congressional office over a two day period in mid September. The assault appears to have been somewhat successful with a strong indication from the administration to continue the law for one more year provided they can come up with the \$400M.

Yours truly was among the numbers heading up a team that visited twelve PA representatives’ and both PA senate offices. Congressman Peterson has long supported reauthorization and was one of the original co-sponsors. Senator Santorum was also among the two dozen or so co-sponsoring the senate version of the bill. As a result of our visit, Congressman English added his name to the list of co-sponsors as well.

The *Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act of 2000 (PL 106-393)* was authorized for six years. During that time the law has provided federal funding to counties within national forests for roads and schools. For most recipients, the funds far exceeded what would have been received

through the traditional 25% shared receipt payment guaranteed by the *1908 Act*. In short, **PL 106-393** offered a choice for maintaining roads and schools as timber receipts declined precipitously. The gravy train, fortunately or unfortunately, came to a screeching halt at the end of September causing high anxiety for many counties and school districts across the nation, which quite frankly prompted the fly-in.



For those townships and school districts within the Allegheny National Forest, however, the landscape has changed the last couple years. At a market price of nearly a dollar per board foot, timber harvesting (modest as it is) has accrued sufficient money to ensure a 25% payment that exceeds the safety-net provided by **PL 106-393**. As long as the economic landscape does not change dramatically, the current rate of harvest renders the safety-net moot with regard to payments to local municipalities. As a result, reauthorization will only benefit the local situation if it includes an annual opt-out clause and you can be assured that message has been delivered loud and clear from this quarter.

THINK ABOUT IT

Have you ever thought much about the worn out cliché often used by preservationist zealots, “*preserving it for future generations?*” It is often used quite regularly when referring to wilderness issues. It goes something like this, “We need to preserve pristine areas untrammelled by man for future generations to enjoy.” What exactly does that imply? Are those uttering the comment clairvoyant? Do they have some special gift that allows them to see clearly the future? Do they actually know what’s best for future generations? Or is it simply an indication of comfort level?

I visited the Arch in St. Louis recently and an interesting notion occurred to me as I walked through the museum. What if preservationists back in 1804 filed suit against the Lewis and Clark Expedition, arguing to leave the Louisiana Purchase untrammelled by man for future generations to frolic and hike about in their leisure? What a great tourist attraction it would have been, if only one could get there. The President might even promote it as “LP Wild!” or something similar. Native Americans would make millions from those psychologically bruised urbanites longing for solitude.

Absurd? Certainly. Would preserving the Louisiana Territory have been best for “future generations?”



Probably not, except for the possible exception of the Native Americans and the buffalo. One needs only to ask descendants now living in places like Omaha, Bismarck, Missoula, Boise, Portland or Seattle to be sure.

Let’s bring the notion a little closer to home. What if the Upper Allegheny would have been left untrammelled by the Corp of Engineers? The reservoir would not exist, flooding would continue annually the length of the river and generation after generation would petition for relief. Would the flood victims accept the

argument that Tracy Ridge, Cornplanter, and Morrison Run need to remain untrammled for future generations to frolic and hike about? Equally absurd.

So, what's the point? Concern about wilderness designation like all other land management decisions isn't just an emotional issue, but rather becomes very pragmatic when someone's "oz is being gored." As water rises in the basement, threatening to enter the living room, those folks living along the Allegheny in the Pittsburgh area could care less about "pristine" or "untrammled." In fact, touring *Pennsylvania Wild!* would quite likely be the last thing on their minds.

STATE OF THE AFA

The Allegheny Forest Alliance has been in continuous service to its constituents now for nearly nine years. The coalition operates on a floating budget based on the current situation. We have experienced fluctuation between \$75,000 and \$110,000 annually, primarily as a result of our engagement in litigation. I believe most would agree it has been worth the additional expense.

Receipts to the coalition come from three primary sources. First and foremost is the commitment through resolution by all the school districts in the ANF region and many of the townships. That source nets about half the normal expenses of the organization. The second source is general membership dues, which bring in about a quarter of our normal budget needs. The last important source is donations from business and industry. It may be the most vital source of the three because it must balance the remainder of the budget.

So far this year, we have received very few donations despite a letter writing campaign to that effect. The result is a disturbingly low balance for the last quarter of the year and a bleaker picture for the first quarter of next year. Resolution funds do not begin to arrive until mid to late spring. Traditionally, the donated funds have carried the day. Unfortunately, that is not the case this year.

What may be the result? Folding the tent is a strong possibility. Rent, utilities, salaries and required fees such as auditing, accounting and web based services do not allow much budget maneuverability. Travel, postage and the like are about all that can be managed and they are not large budget items.

I will be taking this important matter to the Fall Board meeting to let them decide what the future holds for the AFA. We are incorporated and the Board is charged with determining our fate.

Your membership contribution for 2006 is due. Payment ensures you are represented in advocating for multiple-use management and a sustained yield on the Allegheny National Forest. Thank you.

Allegheny Forest Alliance
22 Greeves Street
Kane, PA 16735

