

## **GRAND OPENING**

The "Grand Opening" of the **Allegheny Forest Alliance** office on October 25<sup>th</sup> was well received. Several Board members, **AFA** members and interested persons attended and were pleasantly surprised with the location and its accommodations. Door prize winners included Roberta Sankner, Linda Harris and Becky Lucia. If you were unable to attend, Linda and I would encourage you to stop and pay us a visit. The location of the **AFA** office is 22 Greeves Street in Kane. We are scheduled to be open from 8:00 AM until Noon, Monday through Friday, but are generally available the entire day and occasionally on Saturday. We would be glad to share our perspective regarding forestry issues as they relate to the Alliance's mission.

## **SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS & COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION ACT of 2000**

As you are no doubt aware, Congress enacted and President Clinton signed H.R. 2389/S.1608 at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour in late October. The law guarantees full payment to municipalities equivalent to 80-85% of the average of the top three years for 25% payments (generally, FYs 1996-1998). The law provides this window of opportunity for six years allowing for counties to opt in every two years. Once opted in, however, the county must remain in for the remaining years of the cycle.

School districts and townships need to make hard decisions regarding this funding package. Certainly, the guaranteed amounts will nearly double receipts received each of the last two years. But, few entitlements come without a price and this one is no exception. Should municipalities choose full payment, it is almost certain their intervenor status in pending litigation will be jeopardized. If the Indiana Bat et al. prevails, the socio-economic ramifications could be far greater over the long haul than the immediate loss of revenues. Additionally, the matter of the remaining 15-20% of the full payment would need to be resolved if the county opts in.

Seminars for municipalities are currently being planned that will provide information on both sides of this important issue. Precious little time is available for the counties to determine which course to take. All need to be apprised of the issues in order to make an informed decision, one that best meets the needs of their constituents.

## **SEMINARS PLANNED**

The **AFA** is organizing information seminars targeting county commissioners, township supervisors and school district officials within the four county region encompassing the ANF. The focus of the seminars is to present information regarding the new forestry payment option presented by the "Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-

Determination Act of 2000." Municipalities must decide whether to continue to receive 25% payments, reflecting a quarter of USFS revenues for the each fiscal year or choose a full payment amount guaranteed by the new legislation. Under **SRSCSDA- 2000**, school districts and townships could net 80-85% of the average of FY receipts for the top three years from 1986-the present. Generally, that amount would roughly double the amount received each of the last two years.

The seminars are scheduled to be presented in two locations. The first will be held on **February 7** at the Career Education Center on the Warren High School campus. The second will be held on **February 13** in the Kane Area High School. Both will be at 7:00 PM. Dr. Francis Grandinetti, superintendent of the Ridgway Area School District, will present the 25% payment scenario and I will give the full payment version. All affected parties are encouraged to attend one of the two seminars.

### **ANNUAL MEETING REMINDER**

**AFA** members and other interested parties are encouraged to attend the annual meeting of the Alliance to be held at the **Kane Area High School Auditorium on Thursday, January 25 at 7:00 PM**. The agenda will include a brief review of issues during 2000 and an indication of what we may expect for 2001.

### **ROADLESS POLICY & RULES**

The US Forest Service issued its roadless policy and rules on January 4. President Clinton is expected to add his blessing prior to inauguration in order to enhance his environmental legacy. As predicted, the policy and rules effectively stop road construction in nearly 60 million acres of inventoried roadless areas and severely restrict similar activity on the remaining 130 million acres of the National Forest. In a nutshell, these regulations move to diminish the National Forest to a state of wilderness, contrary to existing law requiring the resource to supply wood.

For a detailed review of the policy and rules, contact the Forest Service directly or visit their web site at [www.fs.fed.us/news/roads/policy.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/news/roads/policy.shtml).