

# ***Allegheny Forest Alliance***

## ***Summer 2003 Newsletter***

*Inside this issue:*

- Contribute to the ANF plan and influence wilderness, ASQ policy. Read more.
- AFA Recommends: Support the Health Forest Restoration Act

### **ANF Planning, Round 2**

#### ***Your Attendance Requested***

The first round of forest planning has been completed. Sessions were held in May with a total of 100 participants having a broad spectrum of views. There was a large preservationist presence promoting familiar themes such as wilderness, old growth, end to commercial logging, etc.

#### **THE NEXT ROUND OF COMMUNITY INPUT IS FORTHCOMING, AND YOUR INPUT IS VITAL!!!**

Times and dates for the next round of planning are as follows:

**AUGUST 14:** Quality Inn and Suites east of Erie, junction of Interstate 90 and US Route 19 (afternoon and evening)

**AUGUST 16:** Holiday Inn, off US Route 6 west of Warren (all day)

**AUGUST 18:** Ramada Inn, off US Route 322, east of State College (afternoon and evening)

Please plan to attend one of these important meetings and express your desire to manage the ANF for multiple uses and a sustainable yield as the law requires.

### **East Side Certification Gets International Recognition**

The **Forest Certification Watch**, a one-stop information source for global forest certification based in Montreal, Canada, recently contacted **AFA** about our Green Tag Certification effort. You will recall we sought and achieved certification of the East Side Project, a high profile management project on the ANF, to counter claims by preservationists of gross mismanagement.

The audit and confirmation report were completed last fall by Keith Horn, Inc., and the certification ceremony was officially conducted on May 12 with

the cooperation of the Marienville Ranger District personnel. The Canadian inquiry questioned the motive for the effort, the process used for the audit and the degree of cooperation by the Forest Service. The article also touched on the ramifications of the East Side lawsuit, particularly with respect to ASQ.

A summary of their analysis can be found in the May 31 (No. 34) issue of the *Forest Certification Watch*, the official newsletter of the organization. Additional information regarding **Forest Certification Watch** can be found on the Internet at [www.certificationwatch.org](http://www.certificationwatch.org).

### **Why Not More Wilderness on ANF?**

#### ***A Logical Forest Plan Proposal***

Additional wilderness within the Allegheny National Forest is unwarranted for several reasons and a case can be made for each. Consider the following as an incomplete set of rational issues justifying this statement of fact.

#### **REASON #1**

"*Wilderness*" is defined in **Webster's New World Dictionary** as "an uncultivated, uninhabited region" and is further described by terms such as "waste, wild, barren, and empty." There is nothing in this description that is harmonious with humankind or incredibly beautiful and pristine. In fact, **The Wilderness Act Handbook** published by the Wilderness Society defines wilderness as "an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation."

Such places may exist on the Allegheny Plateau, but it is doubtful because the presence of humankind is too profound and unlikely to change anytime soon. The current Forest Plan (**1986 Plan**) states that "half the country's population lies within a day's drive of the Forest." Such population density hardly qualifies the region for wilderness in any amount. Areas in Western U.S. may qualify by definition, but Eastern U.S. truly does not.

Whether it is motorized transportation, utility right-of-ways or other legal ventures, the ANF is crisscrossed with manmade corridors leaving the landscape permanently imprinted by human influence. One only needs to fly over the region to fully appreciate the extent. The fact that so many people live nearby and are dependent upon resources from within and around the ANF makes the idea of having any amount of its territory "untrammelled by man" inconceivable. No amount of time will change the situation and indeed will only exacerbate it.

Wilderness by definition is incompatible with the densely populated East particularly, and people generally.

### **REASON #2**

Advocates for more wilderness on the ANF cite a target figure no less than 10% as a reasonable achievement. This figure is an eastern version of the national average that stands at approximately 18%. It is assumed population density plays a key role in the lesser amount for the East. How much of a role, however, is central to the issue. Consider these statistics taken from several information sources.

- The 18% is significantly skewed to the west and therefore irrelevant and directly reflects population density.
- 95.3% of all protected wilderness exists in 12 far western states.
- 56% of *National Wildlife Preservation System* (NWPS) land is in Alaska (the least densely populated state in the Union).
- Only 4.7% of all national wilderness lies east of the 100<sup>th</sup> meridian.
- 7 states have no wilderness including PA neighbors MD and DE.
- PA neighbors OH and NY have less than .01% designated wilderness.

These figures certainly do not substantiate the case for more wilderness on the ANF in our opinion. In addition, the amount of wilderness-like acreage existing in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is nearly 260,000 acres when totaling what already exists on the ANF along with what the state maintains through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).

If the 28,000 acres of severely restricted use lands on the ANF (MA 6.4 and 8) are factored in, the figure reaches nearly 290,000 acres. That is a substantial

amount given the population density – indeed, plenty to serve the limited desires of regional inhabitants.

Wilderness-like acreage that currently exists within the 2.6M acres of public land in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania already exceeds 10%.

### **REASON #3**

Current statistical information from the **Allegheny National Forest Fiscal Year 2001 Annual Report** as well as that from the *National Wilderness Preservation System* do not support more wilderness designation. Consider these figures and information.

- Wilderness attracts less than 1% of the recreational visitors nationwide.
- Wilderness accounts for less than .1% of all recreational visitor days (RVD) on the ANF.
- Only 2% of the population ever visits a wilderness.
- 99% of all RVD are in roaded areas thereby excluding wilderness.
- Typical wilderness visitors (sometimes referred to as "wildernists"):
  1. stay for one day or less.
  2. seldom venture further than one or two miles from a road.
  3. bring their own supplies and do not purchase locally.
  4. are relatively young, athletic, moderately well-to-do college graduates.
- 72% of the visitors to the ANF are 41 years old or older, not fitting the description of a wildernist.
- As wilderness acreage has increased nationally, use per acre has decreased.
- The Federal Government spends over \$100M annually maintaining current wilderness.

While the **Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of 1960** included recreational use as an additional mandate, the figures above conclusively prove that wilderness does not and indeed by its own definition cannot promote this mandate.

### **REASON #4**

Certainly, wilderness means different things to different people. Or, as it has so frequently been stated, "Wilderness, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder..." The following observations by other researchers typify that issue.

- Roderick Nash stated, "Wilderness does not exist. It is a feeling about a place; a part of the geography of the mind."

- Marion Clawson wrote, "Today, relatively natural areas in any ownership of less than 100 acres, which are accessible by easy auto travel, will qualify as wilderness in the popular mind."
- H. Kent Cortell wrote, "On average, there are almost 10 acres of land available per person in the United States, about 1.5 times the world average, perhaps a third of it suitable for experiencing somebody's conception of wilderness."
- True "wildernists" and other activists see the only real wilderness as being that which is congressionally set aside in the NWPS.

Rachel and Stephen Kaplin discerned that what is legislated as wilderness is different from what is perceived as wilderness, the latter being far less constrained. In the majority of instances, wilderness means a place where a person can be at one with nature devoid of human interruption/interference for the day.

A wilderness expectation familiar to most can be found on most forested lands on the Allegheny Plateau without congressional designation.

#### **REASON #5**

The **Organic Administration Act of 1897** is generally considered the law providing for the creation of national forests. The section entitled "Designation and Purposes of National Forests" clearly defines the mission for those administering to or managing all national forests.

"No national forest shall be established, except to improve and protect the forest within the boundaries, or for the purpose of securing favorable conditions of water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States;..."

This charge is completely contrary to congressionally designated wilderness for *there is no management in a designated wilderness*. How can the Forest Service fulfill their mandate to improve and protect the forest or secure a favorable supply of water and wood with no management possibility?

One needs only to examine the western fire situation to fully realize the potential ramifications of little or no management. Fire ravaged areas have not only become scared and of no use to man or beast far into the future, but the erosion that follows over the

next 10-15 years will devastate water shed uncontrollably.

A wise, elderly Forest Service retiree recently wrote, "People want and demand wilderness experience on lands managed for life and forest health, not on congressionally designated wilderness with a life sentence." The vision commonly held for wilderness is pristine woods where the trees are big around, tall and full of leaves, not dead and dying. Professional management is the best chance for creating such a scenario.

Congressionally mandated wilderness means no management and visitors get what Mother Nature alone provides. Most generally it will be unfit for meaningful visitation for long periods of time. Is that the legacy we are to leave to our children and their children as is often cited as a reason for congressionally mandated wilderness?

It is virtually impossible to protect any ecosystem without active management.

#### **REASON #6**

The possibility of rare and endangered or even yet unknown species could certainly exist in a wilderness environment. Preserving their existence is a management priority for the Forest Service. Wilderness, however, is managed only by "benign neglect," hardly an endorsement for preservation. The following excerpt from "**Wither Wilderness?**" best illustrates this point.

Frank Egler concludes, "many preservation societies fail to recognize that the absence of reasonable vegetation management can cause biotic communities to self-destruct." Allowing nature to take its course in wilderness may consign aspen, for example, to extinction. Species diversity can be achieved in the forest, but not by attempting to maintain the now-scientifically discredited "steady-state." The steady state or equilibrium concept holds that ecosystems retaining natural diversity are more stable than disturbed ecosystems. But it has long been known that change, not stability, is the natural state of forest systems. Setting the forest aside does not ensure it will grow to a stable condition, nor one that will provide habitats for all species. Ecosystems never can, as Tucker put it, successfully be "frozen in time."

Ecosystem stability will not and cannot be assured by the creation of wilderness.

## **REASON #7**

Given this information, additional wilderness on the Allegheny National Forest (ANF) would be unproductive, unwise and unwarranted. Little would be gained that would enhance the region socially and economically or promote the "compact" between the Forest Service and local communities. Over the years, this synergy has fostered rural development through occupational opportunity culminating in the development of a unique forest that is envied worldwide. Incrementally dismantling that relationship will benefit neither partner.

Citizens living on the Allegheny Plateau have every right to expect good schools, roads, medical and other services as well as an adequate means to provide for their families. Congressionally designated wilderness assures none of that. In fact, by its very nature it destroys that expectation. No urban dweller expects less nor should the rural dwellers living in and around the Allegheny National Forest.

The "compact" established over a century ago with the creation of national forests must endure.

## **CONCLUSION**

The promotion of wilderness and biospheres on the Allegheny National Forest is illogical and unwarranted. It is an affront to the rural citizens who live here and an abdication of responsibility for those charged with the management of this truly unique and tremendous resource we know as the Allegheny National Forest. History verifies man's ability to successfully seek ways to manage resources responsibly and sustainably through the application of research and science. It makes no sense to mandate the future of this magnificent forest to the whims of Mother Nature.

Congressionally mandated wilderness will surely bring far less benefits to the region and will jeopardize the sustainability of available resources.

## **REFERENCES**

*Webster's New World Dictionary; The Wilderness Act Handbook; Land and Resources Management Plan – Allegheny National Forest (1986 Plan); The Crown Jewel of Pennsylvania – The State Forest System; The National Wilderness Preservation System Website; Wither Wilderness? and How Much is Enough? (The Heartland Institute); The Principal Laws Relating To Forest Service Activities; The Little Red Book (Gifford Pinchot)*

## **Allegheny National Forest Plan for Timber Management: Post-2006**

### **AUTHORITY**

The ANF was created by presidential proclamation in 1923 as authorized by previous laws, namely the **Organic Administration Act of 1897** and the **Weeks Law of 1911**. The first restricts the establishment of any national forest for the following purposes:

"...to improve and protect the forest within the boundaries, or for the purpose of securing favorable conditions of water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States;...."

The second further defines the establishment clause to state:

"...to examine, locate, and purchase such forested, cutover, or denuded lands within the watersheds of navigable streams as in his judgment may be necessary to the regulation of the flow of navigable streams or for the production of timber."

No later laws restricted the purpose for national forests, and in fact, with the passage of the **Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of 1960**, the purpose was bolstered to include management for outdoor recreation, range and wildlife as well.

*Multiple Use* means "the management of all the various renewable surface resources of the National Forests... to best meet the needs of American people;..."

*Sustained Yield* means "the achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of a high-level annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of the National Forests without impairment of the productivity of the land."

### **MISSION**

Without question, the laws authorizing our national forests could not be clearer regarding the Forest Service's responsibility. In large part they are obligated to manage the forest to provide wood for the American people. The U.S. Forest Service's

**mission** encapsulates that responsibility first hand as it states:

"...to have a healthy, vigorous forest providing wood products, watershed protection, variety of wildlife habitats, and recreational opportunities for everyone."

To have a vigorous forest providing wood products is indeed the Forest Service's prime responsibility. As long as forest plans have been written and will continue to be written, planning teams must address this vital issue.

### **FOREST PLANNING**

Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the US Forest Service, saw forestry as "*the art of producing from the forest whatever it can yield for the service of man.*" How does the **1986 Plan** and how should the **Post-2006 Plan** address this Forest Service charge?

### **CURRENT PLAN**

The current plan, published in 1986, set a reasonable annual rate of timber harvesting at 94.5 MMBF for "five succeeding decades." This figure was justified by the following analytical factors.

- The maximum supply potential on the ANF was determined to be 137 MMBF.
- Timber harvesting would favorably supplement other desired outcomes such as dispersed recreation and wildlife habitat.
- **NFMA Rules and Regulations (36 CFR 219.16)** directed each Forest to provide a "non-declining flow of timber volume" from one decade to the next.
- Due to historic development, most of the timber on the ANF would be mature during the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
- Financial maturity (60-90 yrs.) of desirable hardwood timber would crest during this planning cycle.
- The ANF could double its supply of sawtimber and not impact demand adversely.

Two appropriate and profound goal statements were then written in the **1986 Plan**.

- Provide a non-declining flow of total timber volume.
- Increase the sales of high-quality sawtimber, particularly black cherry.

Data resulting from a decade and a half of Forest Service administration indicates that the **1986 Plan** misses the mark considerably with regard to these timber management goals. Not only did the flow of timber decline precipitously over the past 17 years, the amount harvested is significantly less than planned for the period. In fact, timber harvesting from 1986 to the present has only reached 45.7% of the Plan's goal (860.6 MMBF of 1,885 MMBF).

In addition, the **1986 Plan** calls for 245,000 acres to be affected by timber harvesting (clearcuts, shelterwood removal, thinning, and selection cuts) over the two succeeding decades and has only reached 31% (76,431 acres) of that goal.

The timber management Resolution in the **1986 Plan**, stating there would be an increase in timber volumes above current levels emphasizing financial returns from high-quality hardwood sawtimber, has hardly materialized.

Given the condition of timber on the ANF, the window of opportunity is rapidly closing with respect to health and value. The new plan must address this critical situation more successfully than has the current plan if the desired yield is to be achieved and total systemic and sustainable health achieved.

### **POST-2006 PLAN**

The new forest plan scheduled for completion in 2006 cannot ignore the timber volume obligation and output target, or ASQ (Allowable Sale Quantity). Even though it is only part of the overall planning picture, it is integral to forest health and sustainability. Therefore, great consideration must be given to the following.

- Provided harvest volume levels are controlled by the assignment of land to various management areas as reported in the **1986 Plan**, it would unconscionable to reassign lands to zones (management areas) requiring less timber production for two reasons:
  1. The current state of forest health and maturity.
  2. **NFMA** rules and regulations requiring "non-declining flow of timber volume."
- The conclusion in the current plan clearly remains in effect as stated; "The Forest Service would not be managing much of the land for its highest and best use if the

primary harvest method discriminated against black cherry." This conclusion is consistent with **MUSYA of 1960**, which directs the Secretary of Agriculture to "give due consideration to the relative values of the various resources in particular areas." Therefore, it can be reasonably concluded that de-emphasizing even-age management would be irresponsible and indefensible.

- Budgeting concerns can be minimized by the fact that timber harvesting on the ANF has and can again turn a substantial profit.
- As reported just recently in the "Annual Inventory Report of Pennsylvania's Forests," only 11% of current Pennsylvania forests are early successional while 58% are mature. This is by all accounts an unhealthy dispersion of forest types affecting both regeneration and wildlife habitat and must be given serious consideration in the new plan.
- The "Forest-Wide Fact Sheet for 2000," published by the Forest Service reports the annual timber growth rate on the ANF to be 108 MMBF, or approximately 211 board feet per acre forest-wide. The same Fact Sheet reports that wood harvesting only occurs on 327,000 acres considered suitable for sustainable wood production. Given this information, **a credible ASQ would be no less than 69 MMBF annually** just to address annual growth.
- Neglected timber management from the current plan amounts to 1,024 MMBF (54.3% of the 1,885 MMBF scheduled, but not sold, to date.) Dividing this backlog equally over the length of the new plan (15 years) would double the ASQ stated above to a total of **137 MMBF annually**. Interestingly, that figure equals the maximum supply potential expressed in the **1986 Plan**.

## **CONCLUSION**

For all intents and purposes, the **1986 Plan** was properly developed and promoted. The six "topics of primary importance" (management problems) forming the backbone of the plan are certainly well justified and continue to be so. Unfortunately, with respect to "Problem #3-Timber Management," the fulfillment of the plan is a huge failure. This critical situation can no longer be ignored or diminished and must receive foremost attention in the **Post 2006 Plan**. Just as importantly, the new management decision must then be implemented forthrightly.

Further, on March 23, 1908, Congress increased the payment to states from 10 to 25 cents on the dollar for money accrued through activities on national forest lands. The rationale for the increase was the recognition that strong rural communities were essential to national prosperity. This momentous decision is often referred to as the "*Compact*." It forged a lasting relationship between rural forest communities and the Federal Government and emerged from the belief that reserving national forests required appropriate mitigation. In fact, Gifford Pinchot, the father of the nation's forest system, referred to this synergy and rationale as well in **The Little Red Book**.

Current management practices that minimize resource production (the greatest by far of which is timber harvesting) corrupt this agreement substantially. The **Post 2006 Plan** must recognize and renew this important responsibility.

## **REFERENCES**

*The Principal Laws Relating to Forest Service Activities; Allegheny National Forest – Fiscal Year 2001 Annual Report; Land and Resource Management Plan (March 1986); Annual Inventory Report for Pennsylvania's Forests (2002); "Allegheny National Forest Forest-Wide Fact Sheet" (July 2000); Recommendations for Making Payments to States and Counties (2003); The Little Red Book, by Gifford Pinchot.*

## Healthy Forest Restoration Act

*By Jack Hedlund, AFA Executive Director*

The Bush Administration's approach to healthier, more actively managed national forests is weaving its way through Congress as I write. The "Healthy Forest Restoration Act" was passed by the House of Representatives and the same version has made its way out of the Senate Agriculture Committee. It is, however, meeting stiff resistance from Liberal Democrats. These folks have offered up at last count four alternatives to the Bush plan. Leading the charge is Tom Daschel, the Senate Minority Leader, whom you will recall acted unilaterally last year to save his South Dakota forests from wildfire by allowing substantial commercial thinning.

Mr. Daschel and his liberal friends seek continuation of "system gridlock," which creates endless appeals. Most agree this situation has substantially crippled the USFS. These same liberal preservationists want to restrict forest thinning to only the urban interface (except in South Dakota) rather than address forest health issues system-wide. Ironically, these are the very same people who cry foul when threatened and/or endangered species are assumed to be affected by forest management. One can only hope these critters live exclusively in the urban interface so their habitat will be protected as well.

The Bush plan addresses the fuel loading issue throughout the national forest system and also sets restrictions on the endless legal delays. It is not only a reasonable solution, it is also at least a decade overdue. Please fax or call Senate leaders including Senators Specter and Santorum and urge their support of this important piece of legislation.

# ***AFA Action Alert!***

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**QUARTERLY CALL TO ACTION:** Many of the articles appearing in this quarter's AFA newsletter encourage readers to influence their legislators in understanding the position of school districts, communities, citizens and businesses utilizing or relying on the ANF as a "land of many uses." The AFA can help you formulate a response, letter, email or phone call. Just contact the AFA for assistance.

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**Reminder: Keep your membership current. Payment helps to ensure that your voice is represented in advocating multiple use of the Allegheny National Forest and other public lands. Thank you!**

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