

Allegheny Forest Alliance

Winter 2002 Newsletter

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ANF: Green Tag Certified?

The AFA has contracted with Keith Horn, Inc of Kane, Pa., a member of the "Association of Consulting Foresters," to conduct the **Green Tag Certification** of the East Side Project. The **Alliance** feels strongly that proper procedures were followed and preparation made to move forward with this project. In addition, the **AFA** disagrees with the notion the ANF is the #1 among most endangered national forests in the U.S. It is believed the certification process will help dispel this biased notion reported by a national preservationist group.

At the summer board meeting in August the directors voted unanimously to explore third party certification for the Allegheny National Forest. In light of the well-publicized charges leveled by a national environmental group that put the ANF at the top of list for endangered forests, the directors felt it was important to seek an unbiased evaluation of planning and management processes relative to the ANF.

The certification study has begun and with the awarding of some contracts in mid December, it is anticipated the evaluation will include not only preparatory activities by the FS, but also culminating activities by contractors.

Green Tag Certification involves a review of compliance (laws and plans), monitoring and reporting procedures along with planning and management expectations that exceed applicable laws, field operations and socio-economic impact. Hopefully, we will be prepared to report on this endeavor early this spring.



Senate Passes 'Son of CARA'

Remember CARA, the "Conservation and Reinvestment Act"? This initiative would have given federal preservationists \$1 billion annually for 15 years to purchase land "from willing sellers." Several problems contaminate this package. First, more land would be taken off the tax rolls and subject to Payment In Lieu of Taxes, which Congress traditionally only funds at a small fraction of the property's value. Secondly, private holdings within current federal boundaries would come under intense scrutiny for condemnation in order to become federal property.

Three Senate proponents pulled a fast one on the last day of the congressional session in December. When nearly all the Senators recessed, a "Son of CARA" was passed by unanimous consent. This bill provides \$3 billion over five years to acquire land with no right to resist condemnation. Those with private in-holdings in the ANF beware.

Vigilance by all may encourage the House to show a little more wisdom and a lot more restraint when the new Congress convenes this month. Certainly, the AFA will continue monitoring this important bill.



AFA Holds Annual Meeting

The Alliance held its annual membership meeting at the Kane Area High School on January 9, 2002. Arthur Stewart, the AFA President opened the meeting with introductory remarks that included a recap of the East Side

Project litigation and the involvement of the Environmental Law Center at the University of Pittsburgh in the case. He, along with the Executive Director Jack Hedlund also reviewed other 2001 highlights including the response to the Secure Rural Schools Act, National Forest Counties and School Coalition (NFCSC) involvement, and the report sent to the County Payments Advisory Committee. In addition, Green Tag Certification for the East Side Project, the wilderness issue, CARA legislation and promotion efforts were also discussed.

Members were encouraged to provide input regarding goals for 2002. Although legislative relief has been and remains the goal for the Alliance, success does not appear on the horizon. Efforts, however, in that less costly direction will continue, but in the meantime the AFA will defend our position vigorously in every arena.

New leadership was elected with Terry Hawk (Mead Township Supervisor) elected president; Dr. Francis Grandinetti (Superintendent of the Ridgway School District) elected vice-president; and Edward Sleeman (Sleeman & Sleeman Accountants) as treasurer. Additionally, Arthur Stewart and Mark Conolly were re-elected for three-year terms to fill the two vacant seats on the Board of Directors.

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AFA President Seeks Answers

Arthur Stewart, president of the AFA, has written a letter to Chancellor Mark Nordenberg of the University of Pittsburgh stating his displeasure with the activities of Environmental Law Center. Although funded in large part by the Heinz Foundation, the Center is providing legal services to the Allegheny Defense Project (ADP) in their lawsuit to halt management activities on the East Side Project. Most disconcerting is the fact that legal services are being provided pro bono. Stewart clearly sees this activity as being outside the scope of the University's mission.

In addition to a request to discuss the matter with Chancellor Nordenberg, President Stewart (who happens to be a Pitt Law School graduate) asks that the University adhere to its mission statement by include other departments in the pursuit of truth. He suggests an examination by the history department of the historic roots of the ANF and sociology department of the population migration out of Northwestern Pennsylvania. Included also should be studies by the biology department relative to applicable science associated with multiple-use management as well as the economics department regarding the economic impact of limited profit from the ANF. In addition, the economics department could also analyze the hardship brought on by repeated lawsuits filed by the Environmental Law Center.

The letter has been widely circulated to government officials and University board members. Time will tell whether a more cooperative approach can be reached.

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ADP Challenges Forest Service

Motions for the East Side litigation were filed in late November. Responses to those motions were to be done this month and the judge has scheduled to begin hearing the case sometime in February. You will recall the suit was filed in late May 2001. It will be nearly one year of "paper monkey-wrenching" before the case is heard.

The plaintiff's main argument seems to be that the Forest Service is violating its responsibility to provide diversity by promoting only black cherry on the ANF. The endangered species issue seems to have been moved to the back burner, at least temporarily. We should be better prepared to report on this important issue in the spring **Newsletter**.

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AFA Participates in University Panel Discussion

By Jack Hedlund, AFA Executive Director

Don Hopey, noted editorialist for the **Pittsburgh Post Gazette**, instructs a class in Pitt's Geology Department. The title of the class is "Topics in Environmental Studies: Forests and Parks." Both undergraduate and graduate students attend. Mr. Hopey has established a forum for discussion by arranging for several speakers to present various sides of this complex issue. The list of presenters among others included Kevin Elliott, Allegheny National Forest Supervisor; Ken Kane, Forestry Consultant; James Kleissler, director of the Allegheny Defense Project; and AFA Executive Director Jack Hedlund.

Since there was no sharing of notes among the presenters, one can only assume the breadth of discussion. It was clear during the presentation, however, that students harbor mixed emotions. While they wish to "save the world," an appreciation of the complexity of issues is muddying the water.

The AFA's portion of the presentation focused primarily on the need for multiple-use management to maintain forest health and economic stability of the region. There was lively discussion regarding the need for harvesting timber, especially "clear cutting." Although some remain convinced Mother Nature is the only true steward, others realize that man's intrusion has created needs that may supercede the natural process.



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Biomass Co-Gen Considered

Robert McKinstry, Goddard Chair at Penn State University visited the region last fall with several Ag Department dignitaries. During a discussion luncheon held in Johnsonburg, Mr. McKinstry wondered why there had been little or no exploration of biomass co-generation in the region. The general response was that such a process was not cost effective. The production of wood material to burn for power generation would far outweigh the cost for heat and electricity under current conditions.

With the recent downturn in the economy coupled with the closing of International Paper as well as pending changes at Willamette Industries, the issue has resurfaced and is receiving considerable attention. Congressman John Peterson arranged a presentation by Fraunhofer USA Center for Energy and the Environment, based in Pittsburgh, to discuss the potential for building a biomass co-generation plant in Northwestern Pennsylvania. AHUG also sponsored a work session at North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission in Ridgway recently to explore prevailing conditions and potential solutions, one of which is co-generation.

And finally, the Kane Area School District, with the help of Congressman Peterson, is applying for consideration for a small bio-powered co-generation unit through the USFS. The purpose for the unit (only six will be sponsored nationwide) is to study the feasibility of this means of energy production in given locations where raw material appears to be plentiful and cost effective. Perhaps Mr. McKinstry had more foresight than originally thought.

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