

Allegheny Forest Alliance

Fall 2001 Newsletter

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ANF Certification Sought

At the summer Board meeting in August the directors voted unanimously to explore 3rd party certification for the Allegheny National Forest. In light of the well-publicized charges leveled by a national environmental group that ranked the ANF 1st among the nation's 10 most endangered forests, the Directors felt it was important to seek an unbiased evaluation of planning and management relative to the ANF.

A committee was appointed that included David Martin as chairman, Mark Conolly, Terry Hawk, David Morgan and Jack Hedlund. Several organizations were explored with primary concern given to 3rd party verification. It must be noted that forest service personnel nationwide are forbidden by policy to pursue certification. Therefore, the committee needed to find an organization willing and capable of conducting an audit independent of the Forest Service.

The Committee is pleased to announce it is putting the finishing touches on a contract with an organization that would result in an audit of part of the ANF. The Board needs to be briefed regarding the situation at its fall meeting (October 31) before details can be released.



East Side Project Status Grim

On September 7 Arthur Stewart, President of the AFA, Susan Swanson, AFA director and Executive Director of AHUG and I met with Kevin Elliot, supervisor of the Allegheny

National Forest. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the status of the East Side Project.

To put it mildly the meeting was disheartening. Mr. Elliot outlined the process for site preparation. He described a three-stage process, two of which needed to be done before the end of summer in order to let prescribed areas for bid. Most missed the mark and will not be ready until next fall. Only two were let and they were not awarded because of a regulation called the "Furnish Memo."

It seems James Furnish, then deputy chief of the Department of Justice, issued a memo in 1999 that directs the FS to suspend all activities on projects being litigated. Since suit was filed on the East Side in May, no action has been taken on the project and further more won't be taken until the suit is settled or the "Furnish Memo" rescinded.

Why is this decision so damaging? School districts and townships within three counties of the ANF were hanging their hats on the success of the East Side Project to significantly bolster 25 percent payments. Indeed, the FS sent a letter on May 23 to all school districts and municipalities suggesting a 26 percent increase in subsidies for 2001 based on projected sales of approximately 34.5 MMBF. When asked how this decision to suspend activity will impact that projection, Mr. Elliot said the amount would more likely come in at 15-18 MMBF.

The long and short of it is those school districts and townships could lose an additional 30-40

percent in reimbursement for 2001 over the 2000 figure. Mr. Elliot did say that his office was preparing a letter to be sent to D.C. through the regional office appealing for relief from the memo based on extenuating circumstances. He originally stated that there might be an answer by mid October. He since has changed that prediction to the first of December. In either case relief would not impact this fiscal year, which ended September 30.



Law Center Under Attack

*Editorial Commentary by Jack Hedlund,
AFA Executive Director*

Has Justice taken off her blindfold? In a recent article published in a number of syndicated newspapers, the Environmental Law Center was served with a \$62,559 bill from the mother institution, the University of Pittsburgh, for "administrative and overhead costs." Now that puts a serious dent in the Law Center's \$102,000 annual budget. In fact, it was stated the clinic could go bankrupt in 18 months.

It seems Tom Buchele, lead attorney for several environmental suits not the least of which are the East Side and Mon-Fayette Expressway Projects, has maintained a different interpretation of pro bono. In doing so he upset some influential folks including state senators and a Supreme Court judge. The end result was that state legislators in June added a line item to the budget bill prohibiting the university "from spending tax money on personnel or operations of the law clinic." Buchele contends the school had told him "there was nothing to worry about because any administrative costs were incidental."

I would hardly call \$62,559 worth of expenses incidental.

I wonder if Tom Buchele still considers Senator Scarnati's budget treats as "silly stuff, ticky tack stuff" as he had stated earlier this year?



Roadless Comments Considered

The AFA and others have joined suit with the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) to set aside or amend the Roadless Initiative hatched by the last administration. These rules/regulations affect management of 58.5 million acres, nearly 1/3 of the entire national forest. The suit was filed in the Washington, DC district where Judge Jackson suspended action pending a decision from the ninth circuit. Currently, that appeals court is hearing a case that originated in Idaho, where a district court judge (Edward Lodge) suspended the rules/regulations based on inadequate comment and the need for local input.

In addition, the Bush Administration suspended the Roadless rules last spring contingent upon analysis of comprehensive input missing when the package was initially drafted. The comment deadline was September 10. Mark Rey, newly appointed under secretary for natural resources and environment for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, reported earlier this month that comments were being analyzed and a decision is unlikely before the end of the year. Rey stated "The principle task before us is to get them (the rules/regulations) to a point where they're implementable." He further stated that they had "too much process and needed simplification."

The outcome of AF&PA's lawsuit will likely hinge on the ninth circuit decision and the public comment analysis.



Penn State Dean Tours Region

On October 9th and 10th, Robert Steele, Dean of the School of Agriculture at Penn State University, toured the region, visiting various ag-related facilities and hosting information

gathering and dissemination meetings. The party of PSU dignitaries included Robert McKinstry, newly appointed Goddard Chair, Dr. Chuck Strauss, interim director of the School of Forest Resources, Mary Wirth, newly hired director of Industry and Government Relations and several others.

Of particular interest to the AFA were the receptions at Westline and Johnsonburg where members had the opportunity to express concerns related to sustainable forest management. Although PSU sentiment appears to be more closely aligned to conservancies, recreation and fossil fuels there was a general consensus that "zero-cut" was unrealistic, especially in light of the potential for biomass co-generation.

It is the AFA's opinion that the entire PSU group left the area with a more comprehensive view of issues facing rural Americans in the 21st century.

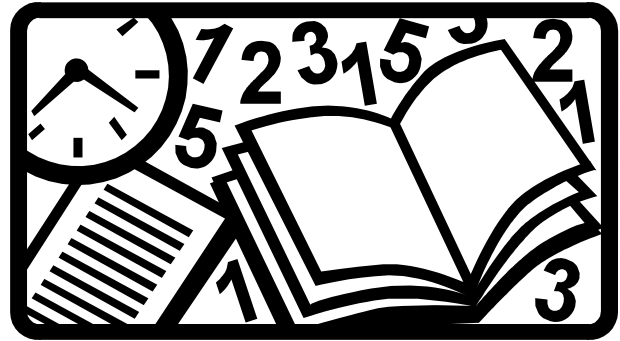


Annual Meeting in Planning Stage

Each new year begins with a meeting of the Allegheny Forest Alliance (AFA) membership. During that meeting several important business matters are brought before the members. Included in that list are the election of three Directors, a financial report, a status report regarding pending issues and an opportunity to discuss items from the floor.

The date for the 2002 meeting will be set at the fall Board of Directors meeting on October 31 and members will be notified accordingly. Check your local newspaper or the AFA webpage for this information.

[VISIT THE AFA WEBSITE:](http://www.renewableforests.com)
www.renewableforests.com



Recommended Reading

The **Washington Post** recently reviewed Bjorn Lomborg's book called *The Skeptical Environmentalist, Measuring the Real State of the World*. As stated, "Lomborg found on close analysis that the factual foundation on which the environmental doomsayers stood was deeply flawed: exaggeration, prevarication, white lies, and even convenient typographical errors had been absorbed unchallenged into the folklore of environmental disaster scenarios." The reviewer further stated, "his richly informative, lucid book is now the place from which environmental policy decisions must be argued." Perhaps we all should read it.

Reminder: Members who need to renew membership will be sent notices from our Kane office. 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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