

# *Allegheny Forest Alliance*

## *Spring 2002 Newsletter*

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### **ANF Plan Looks at Forest Management**

**T**he **Warren Times Observer** recently ran an article announcing the Forest Service's projected timeline for the new forest plan. The current plan was completed in 1986, was scheduled for revision in 1997, but was delayed due to funding cuts. The process will resume this fall and is scheduled for completion by 2006. The focus will be: "What needs to change in forest management?"

Public comment will be critical at all stages of the plan's development. Management policies regarding timber, oil and gas, soils, water quality, recreation, habitat, preservation and the like will be determined for the next 10-15 years through this process. It is incumbent upon all that are concerned about future management of the ANF to provide comment. Please do your part to ensure that ANF managers remain committed to multiple-use and sustained yield, the vehicles necessary for future success of our rural economy.

### **Bush Policy Encourages Land Donation**

**P**resident Bush's budget includes a **conservation tax credit** giving a 50 percent capital-gains-tax break on land sold to the government or land-trust group. The administration is marketing the idea as a "cost effective, non-regulatory, market-based approach to conservation." It appears President Bush may be further left than centrist.

In any event, The **AFA** believes this new concept is bad for private property owners, particularly in rural America. We are constantly under attack by proposed initiatives that ultimately remove taxable property from the role. This is yet another. Should citizens chose to sell

their land to the government or a conservancy, they would be given a huge tax break that would not be afforded to land deals sold to private concerns. Interestingly, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania very recently instituted a similar policy.

Land trusts, usually sponsored by environmental groups or concerns, normally transfer purchased land to government agencies for safe keeping, thus adding it to the dole. As of 2000, the federal government already owns 635 million acres in North America. So, how much is enough? If affected counties are lucky, they may realize a PILT (payment in lieu of taxes) payment that could reach 20 percent of the value that would had been received had the land remained a private, taxable holding. Get the point?

Not only is it un-American (anti-free enterprise), it gives the government and non-profit agencies an unprecedented advantage compared to the private sector. More importantly, this policy along with what the state has already introduced will further erode the rural tax base making it harder to provide necessary services. Contact your legislators and inquire about this unfair policy as soon as possible.

### **5th Annual National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition Conference**

**T**he 5th annual NFCSC Conference was held in Reno, Nev., on April 20-23. Jack Hedlund, **AFA** Executive Director and member of the NFCSC Executive Committee, Linda Hedlund, **AFA** Administrative Assistant, and Doug Carlson and Dale Anderson, **AFA** board members, represented the organization.

The conference was well attended and packed full of information. Presentations along with discussion were made on a variety of topics including effective use of Title II and III money and Resource Advisory Council planning as part of PL 106-393, achieving goals through intervenor status, restoring historic forests, surviving the Wildland Project, reforming ESA and many others.

“Forest County Payments Committee” activities received considerable attention at the conference as well. You may recall this group is charged with the responsibility of recommending to Congress a permanent reimbursement solution for schools and counties after PL. 106-393 sunsets in 2006. Doug Carlson presented effective testimony on behalf of rural schools and townships in the ANF. On behalf of the **Alliance**, Jack Hedlund also submitted comments to the Committee earlier this year. The thesis of those comments focused on maintenance of sustainable forestry and avoidance of decoupling. Both are consistent with the “Principles” of the NFCSC and the **AFA** mission.

The conference, much like the four previous ones, was informative and worthwhile for those attending.

## Membership Dues - 2002

**M**embership in the **Allegheny Forest Alliance** runs on a calendar year basis. General member dues can be paid anytime after the first of each year. County payments to schools and townships are transferred during early spring for the preceding year, and bills from the **AFA** are calculated and sent to all ANF municipalities by late spring.

Dues payments afford the **Alliance** the opportunity to continue working to promote sustainable forestry and a multiple-use perspective. Intervening in lawsuits continues to be very costly, but the success rate has far outweighed the cost. Advocating from strength-in-numbers enhances our effectiveness.

## Spring Creek Project Comments Due

**T**he Marienville Ranger District is seeking public comment on the Draft Environmental



Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Spring Creek Project. The Project is located in Elk and Forest counties and consists of approximately 56,093 acres – the entire Spring Creek Watershed. Only 39,685 acres belong to USFS. The remaining 16,408 acres are owned privately or by the state. The Project involves a variety of management activities including timber harvest, recreation enhancement, and habitat, road and watershed treatment.

This project could easily be the next “East Side Project” and for that matter alone deserves your attention. Please request information about the DEIS and offer comment. Information can be accessed at the Forest Service website by clicking on “Spring Creek.”

[www.fs.fed.us/r9/allegheny/forest\\_management/project/index.html](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/allegheny/forest_management/project/index.html) is the Internet address. **May 20 is the deadline for comments.** Please forward them to: Ridgway Ranger District, RD#1, Box 28 A, Ridgway, PA 15853.

## Wilderness To Be?

*By JACK HEDLUND, AFA Executive Director*

**F**ollowing an informative and cordial meeting with Kirk Johnson recently, I have a better understanding of the wilderness issue facing folks on the Allegheny Plateau. The current forest plan maintains 9,031 acres of wilderness in the ANF. Mr. Johnson and his group, “Friends of Allegheny Wilderness” are strongly advocating for a 40,000-acre increase under the new forest plan scheduled for completion in 2006. Some serious issues need to be considered before relenting to this notion.

Studies indicate that less than 1 percent of the population uses National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) lands. Additionally, land areas most heavily used for outdoor recreation are within a half mile of a road, and recreationalists favor NWPS lands least among available natural or wild lands. Certainly, these facts do not foster a compelling argument for more wilderness. Consider as well the economic ramifications of such designation. Congressional action

necessary for the creation of wilderness would close the land to all activity except foot travel. No economic benefit whatsoever would be accrued from such land – only aesthetic pleasure. Sounds like a scheme for “the person who has everything.”

Given the fact that there is nearly a quarter of a million acres of natural and wild state lands just east of the ANF, one must seriously ask whether enough is enough. Further wilderness designation would offer no socio-economic benefit to the residents living in and around the ANF. If you agree, consider the pending forest planning process beginning this fall and actively oppose this issue with appropriate comment.

### Reading Room Picks



Danish economist, Bjorn Lomborg's new book, *The Skeptical Environmentalist, Measuring the Real State of the World*, has been branded

as heresy by preservationists around the globe. They cannot condemn the work fast enough, writing numerous reviews defending their exaggerations, lies and errors. That fact alone begs your attention.

Lomborg addresses the “litany” of misinformation perpetrated by environmental doomsayers over the past several years. His compelling research leaves little doubt about the false claims of pending environmental disaster. Indeed, his claim that citizens of this planet are better off than ever in their history, is well-founded. Evidence clearly shows that more is being done to address environmental issues, particularly in civilized countries; as countries around the globe become more civilized, still more will undoubtedly be done.

*The Skeptical Environmentalist* is the most significant work to challenge radical preservationist lies in years. Check it out.

### Pitt Students Organize Debate

Natalie D'Amora and Cathy Wittmeyer, environmental law students at the University of Pittsburgh Law Center put together a debate on

February 21 titled, “Beyond the Rhetoric: Multiple-Use Challenges on the Allegheny National Forest.” The event was moderated by Robert McKinstry, Goddard Chair at Penn State. Participants included Congressman John Peterson; Arthur Stewart, Esq., AFA Board Member; and Ken Kane, Forest Consultant for Keith Horn, Inc. of Kane. On the other side of the debate were James Kleissler, Forest Watch Director of the ADP; Stephen Farber, Ph.D., environmental economics professor at Pitt; and Andy Mahler, co-founder of Heartwood.

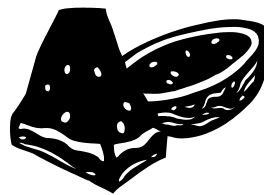
Opposing views of forest management problems were presented with little if any common ground. Strong emotional appeal along with the “zero cut” message were played by the preservationists while rural economic ramifications and sound science were the focus of the proponents for multiple-use management.

Getting beyond the rhetoric was not achieved, but the event marked the first time opposing sides met and presented their case publicly. A videotape copy of the debate is available at the AFA office for anyone interested in seeing the debate.

### Watermelons & Reno Conference

By DOUGLAS E. CARLSON, AFA Board

Member



The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual National Forest Counties & Schools Coalition Conference was held on

April 20-23. I traveled to the event with Dale Anderson but we made it anyway! Seriously, the conference was a confirmation of our wildest nightmares. Things are out of control in rural America, particularly where rural America adjoins our Federal lands such as in National Forests or on BLM lands. Why is the situation out of control? Mismanagement by appeal and lawsuit promulgated by radical environmental groups all across America. The Federal land managers are not able to do the natural resource management needed on Federal lands because the radical activities and due in part to the past Administration in Washington, D.C.

What is out of control? We heard from people who live in counties where over 90 percent of all their land is under government ownership. They have non-existent tax basis, few options and an out-migration of citizens that is frightening. Rural communities are dying as jobs dry up, timber receipt money is gone and as the Endangered Species Act paralyzes all activity on Federal property. There are school districts that have gone to four-day school weeks to cut costs.

Over and over we heard data that argues that the actions of radical environmentalists and national environmental groups are the greatest threat to the sustainability and health of our National Forests. There are always “Oh, Wow!” facts given at these kinds of events. Here are a few for you to think about. Mary Coulumbe (Director, AF&PA) has gathered up some neat data. Thirty-two percent of all Federal land is forested; 77 percent of that forested land is under some protected status. Fifty percent of the nation’s softwood inventory is on National Forest; 4 percent is harvested annually. There is a 225 percent greater economic contribution to rural economies from timber activities than from recreational businesses. Tree mortality exceeds tree removal by 50 percent. One-tenth of a percent of all National Forests is harvested annually! Forest health issues are in a drastic state nationally. Due to lack of proper management of on the ground fuel loads, the number of wildfires has doubled over the past 20 years.

Generally, the National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition oppose de-coupling and recognizes that long-term solutions take commitment, financial resources and hard work. In addition, improved active management of Federal forests is essential for any real solutions for both the forests and for forest communities. The Coalition is committed to keeping together because in numbers there is power. I personally want to thank the AFA for sending me to Reno to represent our area. We are ground zero for the Zero-Cut crowd. Michael Jackson, an environmental lawyer, described himself as a “watermelon.” He was unashamed that he was “green” on the outside and “red” inside. There may be the true essence of the evil that we are

fighting against. Be encouraged; we are not alone. This is a national phenomenon.

## **AFA and ANF Officials Meet**

**O**n April 8, members of the **AFA** met with Kevin Elliott, Supervisor of the ANF, for an informal discussion regarding a variety of issues ranging from wilderness and chartered forests to increased revenue and successful tenure.

Supervisor Elliott stressed the importance of focusing on the four priority goals of the organization: implementation of the current (1986) Forest Plan, completion of the vegetation management plan, progress with the new Forest Plan and development and implementation of a recreation plan. All other activities, regardless of their worthiness, will be subordinate to the achievement of these goals.

Vegetation management quotas were somewhat encouraging, as well as Supervisor Elliott's expressed commitment to the current Forest Plan. In fact, Mr. Elliott was successful in securing additional funding from the regional office to move scheduled projects forward. Most of the goals and benchmarks discussed unfortunately have been and will undoubtedly continue to be affected by litigation by preservationists bent on “zero cut.”

The **AFA** plans to organize future meetings with the ANF on a quarterly basis.

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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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