

# Allegheny Forest Alliance

## Winter 2005 Newsletter

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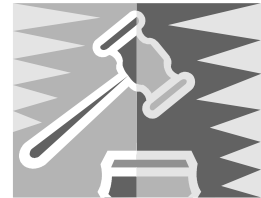
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### AFA Annual Meeting Held

The annual membership meeting of the **Allegheny Forest Alliance** was held on January 10<sup>th</sup> at the Kane Area High School. The meeting featured a brief report by Jack Hedlund, Executive Director, concerning events and issues during 2004 and was highlighted by guest speakers, U.S. Congressman John Peterson and U.S. Undersecretary of Agriculture Mark Rey.



Prominent among the issues reported by the Executive Director were a litigation report that stressed the dire need for additional funding to complete the battle for East Side and Windthrow lawsuits, and the unveiling of a position paper that clearly establishes a platform for the **Alliance** and its members. The paper is available on the **AFA** website at [www.renewableforests.com](http://www.renewableforests.com).

Congressman Peterson focused his remarks on what he sees as a significant flaw in public education. Most, if not all, professional foresters agree the ANF is at the brink of ecosystem destruction. If unattended, it will revert to a “brush patch” consisting of hemlock, beech and maple, the first two of which are under assault by insect infestation. Unfortunately, little about this pending calamity is being communicated to the general public and he lays the blame in large part on the major forestry institutions such as Penn State. Congressman Peterson is calling for a major media blitz from all sources to awaken the public regarding the ramifications of little or no sustainable management.

Mark Rey reviewed the accomplishments of the first Bush Administration and stressed the fact that much still needs to be done. He cautioned the members that the relatively slim majority in the Senate will make sweeping changes difficult. In addition, the fiscal reality currently pending in D.C. has ushered in an “era of discretionary spending” that will likely affect rural issues.

The **Alliance** is truly grateful to both gentlemen for taking time out of their busy schedules to share their vision as well as their concerns for the ANF and our rural communities.

### Membership Renewal Time

**Allegheny Forest Alliance** membership is annual and entitles you to attendance at our annual meeting every January as well as a quarterly newsletter. Members are sent notices of recent developments and calls to action when letter-writing is important in forming policy and opinion. More importantly, your dues help fund activities by the **Alliance** that promote the culture, customs and economy of the region as they relate to the Allegheny National Forest.

The fiscal year runs concurrently with the calendar. Please consider renewing your membership for 2005 so we can continue representing your best interests. Keep in mind, we will no longer send newsletters to inactive members. At a minimum, the dues payment structure is as follows:

- Single membership ----- \$25.00
- Government membership ----- \$50.00
- Professional membership ----- \$100.00
- Corporate sponsor ----- \$250.00

## **As I See It**

*By Jack Hedlund, AFA Executive Director*

With the passage of the “*Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960*,” management of our national forests was significantly altered from its original intent. A review of history supports that fact. The national forest system originated with the passage of the “*Organic Administration Act of 1897*.” The reason for its creation and its mission as stated in the act was “...*for the purpose of securing favorable conditions of water flow, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States.*”

Shortly after the national forest system was established it became evident that it had been placed in the wrong administrative department (Interior) because unlike other lands administered by that department, the USFS mission was to “produce” rather than to “preserve.” Therefore, it was moved to the Department of Agriculture in 1905 by the passage of the “*Transfer Act of 1905*.” Shortly thereafter in a letter from then Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson to the Forest Chief, he stated “*In the administration of the forest reserves it must be clearly borne in mind that all land is to be devoted to its productive use....brought about by a thoroughly prompt and businesslike manner...*”

Additionally, he wrote, “*You will see to it that the water, wood, and forage of the reserves are conserved and wisely used for the benefit of the home-builder first of all;...*” and continuing, “*In the management of each reserve local questions will be decided upon local grounds; the dominant industry will be considered first, but with little restriction to the minor industries as may be possible;...*” This last remarkable statement is actually confirmed in the language of the act itself where under “Forest Supervisors and Rangers,” Section 3 it states; “*Forest supervisors and rangers shall be selected, when practicable, from qualified citizens of the States and Territories in which the national forests respectfully, are situated.*” Although one is forced to conclude it is indeed “impracticable” to select supervisors and rangers locally, it is quite astonishing given the plethora of professionally trained and knowledgeable foresters in private practice locally.

Much changed with the passage of the “*1960 Act*.” Although language still exists that supports the notion of sustainable production, the divergence of management activities resulting from the act are more commonly associated with parks than forest reserves. Forest managers must now plan for hunting, fishing, hiking, skiing, camping, bird watching, ATV and snowmobile use, and the like. Aesthetic preservation has now surpassed timber production in degree of importance even though it accrues less than one-tenth of a percent of the “business” Secretary Wilson referred to in his letter.

In conclusion, the provision of wood, water and forage has been significantly corrupted by the “*1960 Act*,” relegating it to just one among a laundry list of activities requiring planning. Some may conclude this change is for the better. With respect to the historic purpose for the creation of the national forest system, I firmly believe it is not. Nor do I believe the change is in the best interest of the overall health of the forest.

## **New Planning Regulations Published**

Just prior to Christmas, the USDA released its final planning regulations for use when developing new forest plans on any of the 155 national forests. The new regulations streamline a process that currently extends up to seven years at an average expense of \$7.5 million just to create one 15-year plan. The new regulations look to shorten the process to three years tops at considerably less expense.

The Forest Service estimates it spends more than 40 percent of its budget on forest plan related issues. Given the fact that the Government Accounting Office estimates that one in three forest acres is dead or dying, the money wasted on this antiquated process would be far better spent on sustainable forest management rather than planning related matters.

The new rules do not promote more timber harvesting or mineral extraction, nor do they favor any one of the many multiple uses currently associated with any forest. Most importantly, it localizes the effort more while using best available science and public input.

### Lest We Forget.....



“And now, first and foremost, you can never afford to forget for one moment what is the objective of our forest policy. That objective is not to preserve the forests because they are beautiful, though that is good in itself; nor because they are refuges for wild creatures for the wilderness, though that, too, is good in itself; but the primary object of our forest policy in the United States, is the making of prosperous homes. Every other consideration comes secondary.”

---Theodore Roosevelt

### News on Methanol Research

Last fall an announcement was released through **The Spokesman-Review** regarding methanol research taking place at the University of Washington. The project grew out of the urgent need to find uses for the “millions of scrawny, spindly trees choking Western forests” and creating a fire hazard. A research team in the College of Forest Research has developed a process that will quickly convert small diameter trees and other wood fiber into methanol, which then can be used for fuel.

The process involved converting the wood fiber into liquid leaving only ash that may be left to fertilizer the forest floor. The methanol can then be used to power fuel cells or batteries that will not run down nor involve moving parts or internal combustion. Rather, the process gleans energy from hydrogen, the most abundant element in the universe leaving only pure water as a byproduct.



By current standards, one ton of biomass can be converted into 186 gallons of methanol. Given the amount of salvage material and small diameter wood scheduled for removal from all national, there would be an abundant supply of material to produce millions of gallons of methanol. The cost of conversion remains the major obstacle, but at the rate oil and gas prices are raising, the process is becoming more feasible. In addition, national security may well vault the process into reality.

For more information, connect to [www.fuelcellsworks.com/Suppage1289](http://www.fuelcellsworks.com/Suppage1289).

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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