



FEBRUARY ISSUE

Moshannon Sierra News

ONE EARTH, ONE CHANCE

Sporting and Environmental Groups File Lawsuit Challenging I-99 Bald Eagle Ridge Route

STATE COLLEGE - A coalition of six sporting and environmental groups filed suit in federal district court in Harrisburg against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Federal Highway Administration, and PennDOT, challenging their decision to build a stretch of I-99 through a large tract of ecologically valuable forests and wetlands on central Pennsylvania's Bald Eagle Mountain.

The new highway would denude a swath at least 400 feet wide of continuous forest on the side of the ridge for a length of about 8 miles, paving more than 500 acres of forest, including 85 acres of state game lands. The plaintiffs contend that the agencies violated federal environmental laws by approving this ridge route despite the existence of a feasible alternative route through Bald Eagle Valley. The valley route would roughly parallel US220, where the natural ecosystems have already been subject to extensive disturbance and fragmentation from development.

The plaintiffs - the Bald

Eagle Ridge Protection Association, the National Audubon Society, Pennsylvania Trout (a Council of Trout Unlimited), the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, the Pennsylvania Deer Association, and United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania - are represented in the lawsuit by attorneys from Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (Penn Future), a statewide membership group.

The plaintiffs assert that the agencies violated a provision of the federal Clean Water Act that prohibits the issuance of a wetlands permit where there is a feasible alternative that would cause less damage to wetlands and streams. They contend that routing the highway through the valley constitutes a less damaging alternative.

"The government admits that the forested spring seep wetlands on the ridge are rare in this region and

provide critical habitat to species of game birds, like American woodcock, that are in severe decline," commented Mark Henry of the Pennsylvania Association of Sportsmen's Clubs. "And they're irreplaceable. No one has been able to successfully create this kind of wetland."



"The Corps considers a wetland in the valley that's used as a junkyard to be equivalent to a natural undisturbed wetland on

"The Corps claims that it's OK to destroy these pristine and irreplaceable wetlands on the ridge in order to save so-called wetlands in the valley that have been so disturbed

by development that their natural functions are already seriously impaired," said Ed Bellis, president of Pennsylvania Trout. "The Corps considers a wetland in the valley that's used as a junkyard to be equivalent to a natural undisturbed wetland on the ridge. That makes a travesty of the Clean Water Act," added Dave Coleman, a spokesperson of BERPA and Moshannon Sierra Chair .

The plaintiffs also contend that the government has violated a federal law governing highway con-

struction that requires agencies to minimize the damage done to public parklands.

"Because the ridge has not been nearly as affected by development as the valley, it provides important habitat to a wide variety of game and other wildlife, and some of that land (state game lands #278) is supposed to be specifically protected for the

Brain Fillers

Number of corporate logos the average American can recognize: more than 1,000

Number of native plant and animal species in local habitat the average American can recognize today: fewer than 10.



Inside this issue:

Upcoming Events	2
World Watch Institute Report	3
ATV's in State Parks	4
Slocum Admits Dumping	4
Logging for Schools?	5
Moshannon Group Map	5



B.E.R.P.A. Press Release (cont'd from page 1)

benefit of wildlife," commented Jim Seitz, president of the Pennsylvania Deer Association.

Cindy Dunn of the Pennsylvania Audubon Society said the National Audubon Society designated Bald Eagle Ridge an "Important Bird Area" based on the independent scientific recommendation of the Ornithological Technical Committee of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey.

"The ridge was selected because it's a major flyway for golden eagles and other raptors and it provides critical nesting habitat for wood thrush, scarlet tanager, and other forest-interior songbirds," she said. "These songbird species are declining precipitously as our last remaining natural areas get swallowed up by uncontrolled sprawl."

All of the groups participating in the lawsuit have members who are just as concerned about safety as they are about environment, a spokesman said. "Why hasn't PennDOT proposed real safety improvements to Route 220?" asked Don Miller, a member and director of BERPA. "After all, the local residents will still be using it no matter where the interstate highway goes."

Association members also question how much safer the new I-99 will be

than existing US 220 if it is built on the ridge instead of in the valley. Meteorologists have warned that motorists will be exposed to increased fog, gale force winds, snow and ice, and whiteouts on the ridge. PennDOT has acknowledged that its trucks will need to respond to icing conditions as additional 50 callouts a year on the ridge route, compared to the valley alternative.

"If one of the primary purposes of this project is to increase motorist safety, why do they want to build it on the mountain where there will be more severe weather?" asked Larry Hagg, a BERPA director and resident of Hollidaysburg who is familiar with similar weather conditions on US 220 crossing Cresson Mountain. "It's also got to be costlier than the valley route because of the massive amounts of cuts and fills and the complex construction involved in building four lanes on the side of the ridge. It just doesn't make sense," he said.

(Courtesy of B.E.R.P.A.)



Upcoming Events

February 18-20 ADP Activist Corps Weekend. Allegheny Defense Project Activist Corps Weekends are designed to give folks an opportunity to help out the ADP in our fight to protect Allegheny Forests! Volunteers who donate five hours of work time to the ADP receive full Supporter benefits.

February 20 X Country Outing Cross country skiing at Black Moshannon State Park. Moderate difficulty. Contact Dave Coleman at 234-0839.

February 22 Clear Water Conservancy Public Meeting to discuss Phase II of Spring Creek Corridor Study, 7:30pm Celebration Hall at 2280 Commercial Boulevard in State College.

February 27 X Country Outing Cross Country skiing at Roth Rock State Park. Moderate to Strenuous difficulty. Contact Gary Thornbloom at 353-3466.

March 21 General Meeting* Nancy Parks, our state Sierra Club chair for Air Quality, will give an important talk on air pollution.

April 19 Allegheny Day of Action! Plan an event in your neck of the woods to bring attention to the plight of Allegheny forests!

April 20 Earth Day! Celebrate Earth Day 2000 with events planned in your area.

Email suggestions to Kelly at kms289@psu.edu or write to us. Send us your articles, concerns and ideas.

***Moshannon Group General Meetings held at 7pm in Schlow Library 100 E. Beaver Ave. State College**

Email concerns, ideas, and articles to Kelly at kms289@psu.edu or write to us at PO box 513, State College, PA 16804.

Help Protect Bald Eagle Ridge - Join B.E.R.P.A.

Membership Form

Name _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State/ZIP: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____

Send membership payments to:
Bald Eagle Ridge Protection Association
P.O. Box 513
Pine Grove Mills, PA 16868-0515

\$ 10 Annual family membership
 \$ 5 Annual student membership
\$ _____ additional contribution
\$ _____ total amount enclosed



The Cost of "Freedom" By Kelly Spevak

Picture this: You have an intelligent mind and a successful career, but you eat too many hamburgers, smoke too many cigarettes and abuse alcohol so much that your body is visibly deteriorating. When your doctors tell you that unless you clean up, you'll eventually die painfully, would you ignore the signs simply because you're intelligent and have everything you need? Or would you do everything you could to better your lifestyle?

Now imagine this: The world is entering an age in which information flows faster than ever dreamed. People everywhere are being connected through technology, and first world economies, at least, are prospering. World leaders are satisfied with this success, as are many others who feel the benefits of the booming economy. Meanwhile, more researchers are verifying the startling news that the Earth is in trouble. Apparently, while the human population multiplies and our needs grow, our consumption rate is also exploding and destroying our habitat. This means that eventually, not only will there be shortages of energy supplies that fuel our economy, but also disappearing clean water, air, and soil which enable life on Earth. Do we sit back and enjoy the temporary prosperity, knowing that to continue at this rate will mean certain extinction, or do we make every effort to reverse the damage we've inflicted on ourselves and our environment in the name of economic progress?

That is the warning the WorldWatch Institute announced in its first report of the new millennium, "State of the World 2000." Environmental trends, not technology and instant access to information, will ultimately shape the new century. The Worldwatch Institute, a nonprofit research organization that studies global environmental and development issues, has been reporting on these trends annually since 1984. Back then, researchers hoped to produce findings that showed the health of the planet improving. Instead, they found that the more the economy prospers, the more Earth's health suffers. Since then, rising temperatures, increasingly destructive storms, melting

glaciers and dying coral reefs have been added to the list of disturbing ecological trends, which already included disappearing species, collapsing fisheries, erosion, shrinking forests, and a falling water table.

As John Muir said, "There is not a 'fragment' in all nature, for every relative fragment of one thing is a full harmonious unit in itself," (A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf (1916), page 164). The World-Watch institute reports that as these environmental trends are interconnected, so, too, are the prosperity of the economy and the degeneration of our planet. In only a couple centuries of industrial civilization, 11 percent of all bird species, 25 percent of mammals, and 34 percent of fish have disappeared. "I don't think we've yet fully grasped the consequences of our population, that has reached six billion this year," said Lester Brown, president of World-Watch, at a press event last December. By 2050, that number will reach nine billion and the rapidly growing population will continue to strain resources. A report from researchers in Washington, D.C. at the Center for Strategic and International Studies revealed that while the outlook for technology and quality of life for those with access to that technology is outstanding, wars will most likely be fought over water. Although irrigation problems have existed for thousands of years, in the last fifty years electric and diesel pumps have accelerated the depletion of aquifers. Experts at the World-Watch Institute stress the need for a balance between existing water supplies and water usage.

Water used to grow grain, most concentrated in the U.S., China, India, North Africa and the Middle East, exceeds 160 billion tons a year. That much water only produces half the U.S. grain harvest, 160 million tons of grain. These are the same countries enjoy a higher standard of living and which increasingly demand water for luxuries. "We assume that with development, one day everyone will be able to take showers," Brown said. "We think at the Worldwatch Institute that water is the

most underestimated resource issue that the world is facing."

Only a worldwide effort to reduce water use and to stabilize population will keep the problem from getting worse. Most developing countries already face water shortages while their population still rises by millions each year. We can see an example of how this can effect a nation in India. Their water use doubles their supply, while the population of the country grows by 18 million a year and more than half their children are malnourished. As water supplies and irrigation abilities disappear, the resulting decrease in grain production could mean starvation for millions.

The growing population also is collapsing ecosystems through erosion, pollution, development. We can ignore the thousands of species who are quickly losing their way of survival, but humans may be next. The goal of zero population growth is to keep families to two children. Already, 24 industrial countries have reached population stability as well as several developing countries

While the outlook for technology and quality of life for those with access to that technology is outstanding, wars will most likely be fought over water.

We can use technology wisely. We can use the internet to inform ourselves and others and write our government representatives and community leaders about these issues. Spread the word and practice sustainable living in your own daily life. Nothing will change unless we make it happen. No one would ignore their own body's degeneration, nor their own home's degeneration. Tell our leaders that we won't stand by while our planet is

destroyed.

For more information, check out the WorldWatch Institute Homepage at: [//www.worldwatch.org/index.html](http://www.worldwatch.org/index.html) Information gathered from Environmental News Service at: www.ens.lycos.com Addresses for PA government officials are available at <http://members.aol.com/pacomsumer/activist.htm>.



WRITE TO GOVERNOR RIDGE ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS: 225 MAIN CAPITOLHARRISBURG, PA 17120 OR EMAIL HIM AT WWW.STATE.PA.US/PA_EXEC/GOVERNOR/GOVMAIL.HTML

Representative Mike Hanna is in the process of drafting legislation that will open up existing trails or create new trails for ATV's in Pennsylvania State Forests, State Parks, and State Gamelands. Initially, he is proposing 100 miles of trails be open to ATV use with additional trails added in 100 mile increments in future years. He is hoping to increase tourism in Pennsylvania through this trail system. There are federal matching funds available to support the construction of off road vehicle trails. Representative Hanna has met with PA DCNR Secretary John Oliver, who expressed concern with Representative Hanna's proposal in its present form. District foresters have been asked to submit a five year plan for the development of ATV trails. A meeting with members of the ATV industry is being scheduled by DCNR to help foresters plan these trails.

I would encourage you and members of the Sierra Club to contact Representative Hanna's office and Secretary Oliver of the DCNR to express your concern with this legislation.

Representative Mike Hanna 29 Bellefonte Avenue Lock Haven, PA 17745 (570) 748-5480

Secretary John Oliver Rachel Carson State Office Building P.O. Box 8767 Harrisburg, PA 17105-8767

Slocum pleads guilty to charges of polluting stream By Jennifer Eck

State Sen. William Slocum pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charges of polluting a Warren County trout stream, allowing him to avoid a trial on federal environmental violations and focus on a re-election campaign.

Slocum (R.-Warren) pleaded guilty in U. S. District Court in Erie to six charges of negligent discharge, admitting that he failed to stop the flow of raw sewage into Brokenstraw Creek in Youngsville on several occasions between 1983 and 1995. During that time, he worked for the Youngsville water department and, later, as borough manager.

Levels of bacteria in the waterway were triple that permitted by state regulations and violated the plant's operating permit, officials said. The state Fish and Boat Commission documented damage to plants and fish.

A federal grand jury indicted Slocum on felony dumping charges in July. He also was accused of failing to fix a pollution monitor so sewage reports would be invalid. Slocum recently agreed to open to the public a hearing in which an ethics panel will discuss whether or not the Senate should censure him for his admitted role in polluting the waterway. The ethics panel is a bipartisan committee that includes three Republicans and three Democrats.

Slocum apologized to his constituents for his part in dumping raw sewage into Brokenstraw Creek. According to Slocum's plea agreement, he now admits he told

plant employees not to remove a gate that controlled flow into the Youngsville Borough sewage treatment plant although there was a risk of raw



sewage being diverted into the creek with the gate there.

Inspection records filed with the DEP stated, "creek full of sludge, area smelled of sewage and effluent was brown coming out of the discharge pipe."

State environmental regulators who reviewed three years of plant operations ending in 1993 estimated that the dumping saved the borough \$20,000 in treatment costs during that period.

In exchange for the guilty plea, Assistant U.S. Attorney Constance Bowden agreed to drop more serious charges, including a felony charge of conspiring to dump sewage in the creek. Slocum, who will be sentenced April 17, faces up to six years in prison and a maximum fine of \$600,000.

Bowden said Slocum ignored repeated orders from state environmental officials to stop dumping sewage in the creek. She said he ignored similar pleas from his employees.

Slocum said the allegations of sewage discharge came up during his first campaign, but voters elected him anyway. He said he hoped his constituents would see

past the issue again this year.

Youngsville, with about 1,775 people, is about 50 miles southeast of Erie. Slocum represents a vast 10-county district in northwestern Pennsylvania that includes the city of Corry in Erie County. He has said he will seek re-election to a second term this year despite his legal troubles.

John Martin, who worked with Slocum at the borough, pleaded guilty in August pleaded guilty to conspiracy charges and admitted faking documents that were required under the Clean Water Act, and agreed to testify against Slocum if necessary. Martin is scheduled to be sentenced Feb. 28. Martin's attorney said Slocum ordered Martin to dump pollution. (Courtesy of The Associated Press)

Update on Senator "Sludge" Slocum

As we go to press, environmentalists in Slocum's district have staged a theatrical demonstration in Franklin, PA condemning his polluting activities. On Feb. 11, two Special Agents dubbed "Justive N. Earth" and "Alley Ganey", from the Earth Police's Watershed Protection Division delivered a citation to Sen. "Sludge" Slocum at the Franklin Club for his part in illegally dumping sewage into Brokenstraw Creek. See an online video clip of the demonstration at http://www.enviroweb.org/adp/multimedia/earth_police_110200.mov.

Logging for schools: How far will we go to save a doomed industry? By Kelly Spevak

As if corporations do not already have too much influence over our children's minds, Senate Bill S 1608 will provide more funds for schools by increasing logging on national forests. Using children to justify more logging of our remaining national forest, corporations are seeking to turn nature to profit through public institutions.

Committees of teachers and administrators would help find logging projects that are publically supported and would provide substantial funds for local schools. The committees themselves would be funded by almost a quarter of the payments to schools. If the payments are not enough, the difference the Forest Service must take from the budgets for fish, wildlife and water to fund the county payments for schools.

Schools should not be partners with industries such as timber, tobacco, mining, and grazing that benefit corporate America but endangers our children's futures by ruining the environment. What happens when those resources disappear and schools lack funds? What kind of message is this irresponsible behavior sending to the next generation?

Over 100 years ago, Congress passed revenue sharing programs that would compensate communities for logging in national forests. Now, these communities have become dependent on unsustainable and unpredictable funding that often is insufficient, contributes to the degeneration of the environment, and even relies on environmental funding when projects fail.

Instead of these careless policies, con-

planting forests, restoring watersheds, removing eroded logging roads, and create steady and dependable wages for workers.

Let your congressmen know how you feel. Join the Allegheny Defense Project at <http://www.enviroweb.org/adp/> or start a group effort in your own area. Work to teach the next generation how to care for the planet and make a better life on Earth.



Loggers in the 18th Century

OFF THE CHAIR

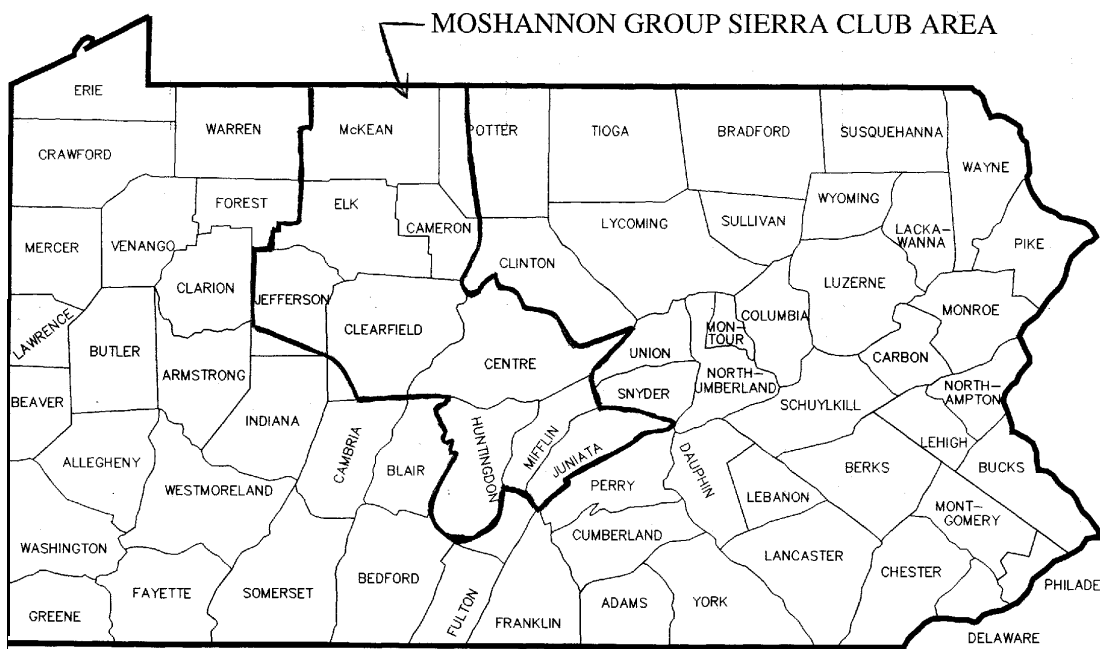
By Dave Coleman

Below is a Pennsylvania County Map showing the boundaries of the Moshannon Group. One of the 12 groups of the Pennsylvania Chapter, Moshannon is comprised mainly of the North-Central portion of the state. The boundary includes all of Centre, Mifflin, Juniata, Elk, Cameron, and McKean

counties and portions of Potter, Huntingdon, Jefferson, and Clearfield counties. Although the bulk of the group's membership is in Centre County (mainly in the State College area), many members are in the more rural areas. Consequently, our meetings are held in State College (Schlow Library), but our outings and conservation programs frequently take place in these other counties.

As a matter of fact, the Moshannon Group boundary encompasses large portions of seven State Forest Districts: Susquehannock, Elk, Sproul, Rothrock, Bald Eagle, Tuscarora, and, of course, Moshannon. As a conservation organization, we are concerned about and will promote proper public uses of these state lands.

If you have a local conservation issue you would like the group to focus on or if you would like to lead an outing in your neck of the woods, let the leadership know. We welcome involvement, contributions, and comments from all of our members — and encourage those furthest from our "Centre".



**Moshannon Group News
Sierra Club
P.O. Box 513
State College, PA 16804**

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MOSHANNON GROUP DIRECTORY

Chair - Dave Coleman*
234-0839
DYATESC@aol.com

Vice Chair - Hilary Vida*
371 - 3277

Conservation - Keith Nelson*
863-1747
k1n@psu.edu

**Outings &
Transportation** - Gary Thornbloom*
353 - 3466
wesleyanne@dellnet.com

**Treasurer &
State Delegate** - Bill Tanner*
542-8519
billtann@penn.com

Secretary - Judy Tanner*
542 - 8519
billtann@penn.com

**Newsletter
Consultant** - Jan Filiaggi*
466-7362
rjf21@home.com

**Website &
Intern Supervisor** - Elisa Beshero-Bondar
237-3983
eeb4@psu.edu

Interns: **Web Editors and Newsletter Editors :**
Kelly Spevak
237-2872
kms289@psu.edu

Jennifer Eck
867 - 5613
jle158@psu.edu

*members of the Executive Committee
Send newsletter contributions to: kms289@psu.edu