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# Moshannon Group News



Moshannon Group of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Sierra Club

April 2001

## WILD AREAS

### *A CASE FOR FULL PERMANENT PROTECTION OF WILD AREAS IN PENNSYLVANIA'S STATE FORESTS*

By Dave Coleman

Within our state forest system are lands designated Natural Areas where the forest ecology is protected with an absence of development and silviculture. Lands designated Wild Areas are protected from development but not from timber practices. There is currently a temporary moratorium on timber harvesting in Wild Areas, however, for real preservation of the biodiversity of our forests to have success, this moratorium should be made permanent - basically classifying and managing Wild Areas the same as Natural areas - areas where natural processes define the structure and health of the forest free from unnatural disruption and fragmentation. It is not enough just to preserve areas of forest - these protected areas must be surrounded by non-developed "buffer" areas where sound land management is applied.

Of our 2.1 million acres of state forest, over half of the acreage is in North-Central Pennsylvania centered on the boundaries of Clinton, Potter and Cameron counties and occupying portions of five others. This contiguous conglomerate includes the majority of the Susquehannock, Tioga, Tiadaghton, Sproul, Moshannon and Elk forest districts. Besides having the majority of total state forest lands, this conglomerate is the most contiguous area of public lands in Pennsylvania. Thus, this issue is very much a Central Pennsylvania issue - an issue that could

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Tom Thwaites To Speak At April General Meeting

By Gary Thornbloom

Tom Thwaites took his first hike almost sixty years ago. He has moved well beyond the pleasant past time of hiking, although he has taken time to do a great deal of hiking. Tom has hiked the Appalachian and John Muir trails. Grand Canyon, Adirondaks, White Mountains, Pacific Crest? —Tom has also been there. If you have enjoyed hiking on the Mid State Trail (MST), you can thank Tom. While an advisor to the Penn State Outing

*(Continued on page 5)*

## EVENTS CALENDAR

### GENERAL MEETINGS

Tuesday, April 17, 7:30 PM: Schlow Library, Guest speaker: Tom Thwaites, will speak and show slides on hiking trails in Pennsylvania and the assault on these trails.

Tuesday, May 15, 7:30 PM : Schlow Library, Guest speakers: Owners of Tussey Mountain Outfitters will speak about canoeing in Central Pennsylvania.

Tuesday, September 18, 7:30 PM: Schlow Library, Guest speakers: Members of the Allegheny Defense Project.

Tuesday, October 16, 7:30 PM: Schlow Library, Guest speaker: Jeff Schmidt, state lobbyist of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Sierra Club, will speak about current legislative issues affecting Pennsylvania's environment.

### EARTH DAY

Come to the Hub lawn on Penn State's campus Sunday April 22nd for the annual Earth Day celebration. The Moshannon Group will be present along with dozens of other conservation groups to distribute information about current environmental issues and ideas as well as to discuss ideas with the public. Presentations by Eco-Action and entertainment also is scheduled.

### OUTINGS

Saturday, April 28: Clearwater Conservancy's annual Spring Creek cleanup. Moshannon Group does it with canoes! Some canoes available complimentary of Tussey Mountain Outfitters. Contact Dave Coleman at 234-0839.

Friday-Sunday, May 26-28: Canoe Camping on the West Branch of the Susquehanna. This two nighter will be on flat and Class 1 waters and will also feature two short day hikes in State Forest wild areas. Contact Dave Coleman at 234-0839.

Sunday, June 10: Canoe upper end of Black Moshannon Lake; explore Bog Natural Area, beaver dams. Some canoe's available. No canoe experience necessary. Contact Gary Thornbloom at 353-3466.

Sunday, June 24: Hiking in the Quehanna Natural and Wild areas,

*(Continued on page 5)*

# OFF THE CHAIR!

By Dave Coleman, Chair, Moshannon Group

Spring is a time of year of mixed emotions for me. Although the snow that I enjoyed on mountain skiing trips this winter has now melted, it has mixed with the waters that will float me down many streams, in many canoe adventures, that I plan for the next few months. After the snowmelt and spring rain waters have receded and the trees soak up the majority of the rest, I will enjoy the greens of the forest in hikes through the summer.

If you joined us for the cross-country ski trips we hosted this winter - in the Moshannon, Elk and Sproul state forest lands, you may have known, and shared, our enthusiasm for the Nordic experience. If not, join us this spring and summer for some canoeing or hiking excursions.. Those of us who enjoy snow, water and trail recreation are truly blessed to be living here in Central Pennsylvania.

This winter was not the best, but it certainly was not the worst, as there was enough snow to make cross-country skiing available almost everywhere in January; enough in the mountains into February and a short resumption in March. We enjoyed trips on the Rock Run trail in the Moshannon State Forest, in Black Moshannon State Park, and in the Quehanna Wild Area in Elk State Forest, to name a few.

This Spring we plan on again participating in Clear Water Con-

servancy's annual Spring Creek Cleanup, and we will do it by canoe! This will be our fifth consecutive year supporting the program in this way and we may select the lowest section - from Bellefonte to Milesburg - thus completing our cleanup of sections from Spring Creek Park in Houserville to the mouth of Spring Creek at Milesburg. Once again, Tussey Mountain Outfitters in Bellefonte has graciously offered rental canoes free of charge, for volunteers who do not own canoes.

Later in the Spring, we will host a canoe camping trip on the West Branch of the Susquehanna on the most attractive section of the river through state forest and state game lands. Because of popular demand we are doing this trip for the second consecutive year.

We plan on concentrating our summer hikes in Wild Areas of state forest lands to explore these most remote sections of our public lands, to educate our membership and other participants of the natural resource that we have in these areas, and to promote the preservation of their wild character and natural habitat.

So, even if you did not get out in the snow this winter, you can still get off the chair this spring and summer.

Explore, Enjoy and Protect Central Pennsylvania.

## Wild Areas *(Continued from page 1)*

most affect members of the Moshannon Group.

More notable is the percentage of the state's total of Natural (83%) and Wild (61%) Areas in this contiguous forest. Current Natural Areas amount to only 79,000 acres and each is simply too small (most just several hundred acres), scattered and disconnected from each other, to effectively and assuredly preserve forest biodiversity. Research studies have concluded that in order to preserve habitat for the majority of current communities of forest species, protected areas need to be in the order of thousands of acres. Some researchers have placed that minimum threshold at 12 to 24,000 acres, and this is merely preserves the biodiversity of today's forests, not necessarily the species we have lost over the last 100 years. If we are to preserve the intricate biodiversity that we have left today, we obviously need to preserve areas much larger than those protected under the Natural Area designations.

Established Wild Areas, on the other hand, are much larger - all in the thousands of acres. Of the state's 13 Wild Areas, the largest two and another, potentially the third largest, lie within the large section of state forests previously described: The Quehanna Wild Area is the largest at 48,000 acres, the Hammersley is the second largest at 25,000 acres and the poten-

**There is just one hope of repulsing the tyrannical ambition of civilization to conquer every niche on the whole earth. That hope is the organization of spirited people who will fight for the freedom of the wilderness.**

—Robert Marshall

tial third largest area is the 17,000 acre "old growth area" proposed by the Sproul District Forester. All three of these areas contain some of the largest tracts of the oldest stands of timber and have been treated better, at least slightly, than the rest of the state forest lands.

These three areas are interconnected by the major waterways of the West Branch of the Susquehanna, of Sinnemahoning Creek and of Kettle Creek. A significant portion of the banks of these waterways are protected by the Bucktail Natural Area and by Kettle Creek State Park. These protected riparian zones act, and could continue to act, as "corridors" connecting the "core" Wild Areas.

Thus protecting Wild Areas in Pennsylvania would not only add more protected forest (145,000 acres) to the state forest system, it could also allow the establishment of interconnected wildlands as envisioned by The Wildlands Project.

Protecting these lands could be relatively simple; the areas are already defined and specially managed by the BOF and the protection would be by the simple change of policy of, and a commitment from, the Bureau Of Forestry. If you are interested in helping to create and/or participating in a program to help make this protection come to pass, contact Dave Coleman.

# Our Forests, Our Deer

By Brian Drosinski

What do you envision when you see a whitetail deer in your mind? The soft ivory tail bouncing through big woods, as its hind legs kick at the silenced wind, the russet pelage absorbing all it passes, in balance with its environment and symbolizing freedom and durability in the wild's of Pennsylvania. Or do you see droves of deer over browsing our forests, out of balance with their habitat, resulting in forest degradation and the lack of regeneration which promises a dismal future for Pennsylvanian forests. I see both, the first as a possibility and the second as a reality.

Deer have become too abundant for our



**Villain Or Image Of The Wild?**

forests. The enormous herd has over browsed much of their habitat, and outgrown the capacity of the forests. This is a problem that has happened in Pennsylvania's past and it is happening again. One man, with the backing of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, has decided to take the helm in finding a solution to this problem, and his plan goes against the grain of past deer management strategies.

Dr. Gary Alt, one of the foremost biolo-



**Over Browsed Woodlands**

gists in Pennsylvania and known as the man who brought our dwindling black bear population back into check, is at it again, but this time his task is to save the whitetail and its habitat. His attempt to save them consists in new hunting regulations that will reduce the deer herd, and this in turn will help balance our wildlife with its habitat.

This is a revolution of sorts because the past management plan for the deer herd has been to keep the population growing, and to maintain a large doe population in hopes of making as many large and harvestable bucks as possible. Dr. Alt has come to realize, through extensive research, that the way to manage a species like the whitetail is to keep them at a population level that will sustain the habitat from which they are nourished. The old ways led to over browsed forests, malnourished bucks that were not able to make it through the winter, especially after a tough rut, and a doe population that was bred by genetically weak bucks.

Alt is proposing a concurrent antlered and antlerless deer season. This means that doe season will start on the Saturday before buck season and run through the two weeks of buck season. Dr. Alt hopes this will induce more hunters to shoot at doe and make more of a stir in the forests while doing it. This in turn will spook the buck and help to get them through the season, while at the same time giving hunters the opportunity to get meat in their freezer without having to kill a young buck in haste. The plan is to limit the number of yearling and younger bucks shot so they can grow, compete, and breed as they become older, making for a healthier and stronger herd, living within the carrying capacity of the forest lands.

Environmentalists and other conservation minded people out there should know that Dr. Alt's proposal is environmentally responsible. He understands what over browsing has done to our forest ecosystems and that is at the forefront of his proposal. I have been to one of his presentations on the problem and the manner in which he goes about convincing the public

of how necessary this plan is for our environment is astonishing. Hunter's are the largest and toughest group to persuade. Three fourths of the audience at the presentation that I attended had blaze orange or camouflage caps on. As Alt showed his slides of degraded habitat that lacked young trees, shrubs, and low vegetation, his audience absorbed the peril that threatens our forests and wildlife. Everyone who attended felt the threat of an out of balance deer population. The plan is a large step forward. By including the needs of environmentalists, hunters, landowners, farmers and businessmen alike, the proposal is as sound as it comes.

As a commonwealth, the state is the steward of our land and good stewardship includes making sure our wildlife is not at odds with its habitat. Ensuring the commonwealth of our land includes making sure the whitetail deer population is in check. Dr. Alt's proposal addresses these concerns and will provide Pennsylvania with both a hardy, vigorous whitetail population, and a robust ecosystem for their forage. This plan should appease almost everyone's needs, if not right now, in the prolific years to come for our deer herd and the forests they symbolize.

**If you would like to voice your opinion:** The Board of the Pennsylvania Game Commission will vote on these proposals on April 9-10 at the Pennsylvania Game Commission Harrisburg headquarters, 2001 Elmerton Ave, off the Progress Ave. exit of Interstate 81. The meetings begin at 8:30 AM, Saturday and Sunday.



**A Healthy, Diverse Forest**

# Local Outfitters To Speak At May General Meeting

*Canoe sport and the Environment*

Perhaps most of our members have been canoeing at least once in their lives. Some of our members are avid canoeists. Anyone with at least casual canoeing experience certainly has a heightened sense of the intrinsic natural value of our rivers and streams. They are more likely to prioritize river protection. The recreational sport of canoeing itself is dependent on an environment of the highest quality. The owners of Tussey Mountain Outfitters of Bellefonte- Ed Bowman and Brad Smith, speakers at our May general meeting, can attest that there is a correlation between canoeing and river protection.

The reasons for protecting rivers are as complex as the range of human interaction with rivers. To some, rivers are spiritual experiences symbolizing the connective thread that binds together the earth. To others, rivers are exciting adventures that invigorate the soul. Human beings have always been drawn to rivers for practical reasons: they are sources of water, and sources of food. Rivers have served throughout history to connect people as they settled and populated the land, and began to trade goods and services. Rivers in many ways define our cultural landscape and are a backdrop to our

greatest moments in history.

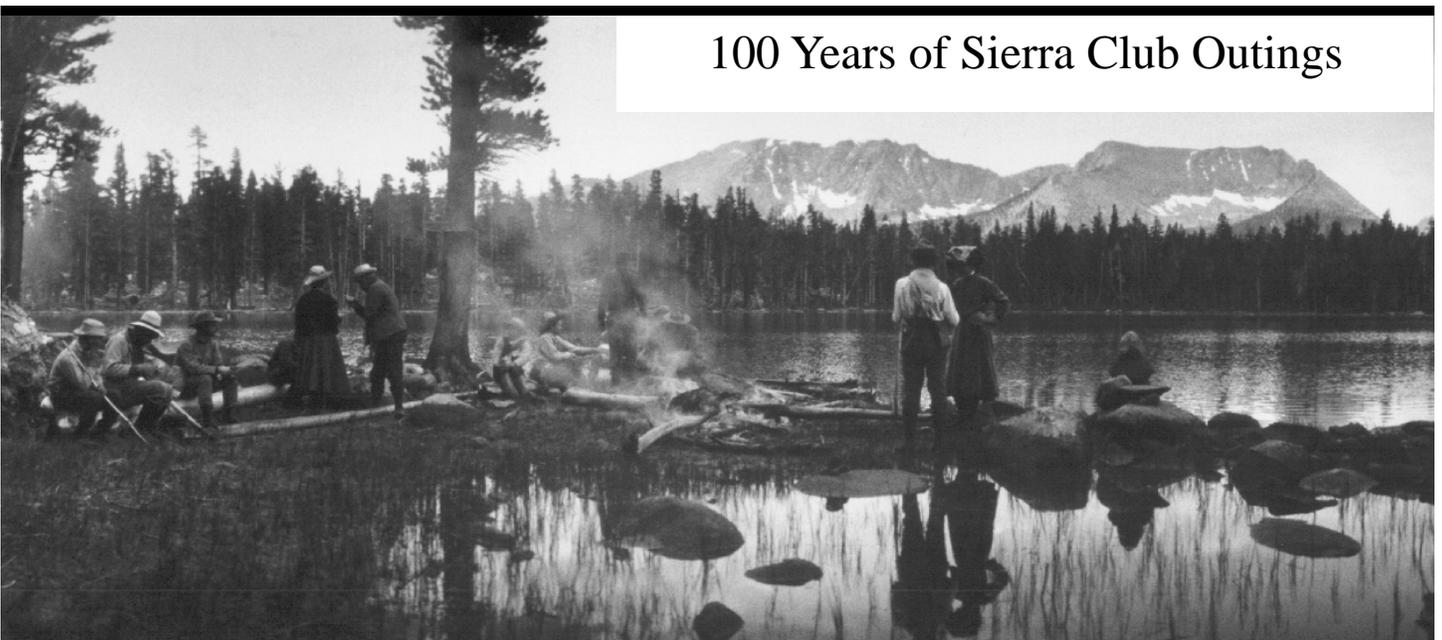
Today, people view healthy, free flowing rivers as vital to healthy, livable communities. Free flowing rivers provide recreation opportunities ranging from outstanding fishing holes to exciting whitewater adventures, activities that can be enjoyed by nearby communities as well as tourists, who enhance economies of local communi-



ties. Healthy rivers provide clean drinking water, reducing the cost of treatment needed for the public water supply as well as enhancing public health. Rivers are vital not only to humans, but also to animals and plants. Rivers are core components of ecosystems ranging from the temperate rainforests of the Pacific

Northwest, to the slow, black water swamps of the Southeast. Plants and animals both in the river and on shore rely upon clean, healthy rivers for their survival. Here in Central Pennsylvania, with streams and rivers of all sizes within a 100 mile radius of State College, riparian habitat is especially critical. We have many rivers - of different sizes and types, featuring varying levels of water quality. Rivers can be explored best by canoe; the only limits are the canoeist's experience and river access. Not only can canoeing take you to places in our civilized, as well as wild, lands that you may otherwise not have the opportunity to visit, but the act of canoeing itself is a way of experiencing our environment in a very intimate way: you can literally be "immersed" in it.

Come to the **Moshannon Group meeting on May 18, 7:30 PM at the Schlow Library** to learn about the sport of canoeing, equipment tips, local rivers, and ways to get involved in protecting our waterways. The owners of Tussey Mountain Outfitters can relay their experience and knowledge to you, so you too can fully appreciate the rivers and streams that Central Pennsylvania has to offer.



## 100 Years of Sierra Club Outings

# An Invitation From Eco-Action

## Earth Day 2001!

### April 22-HUB Lawn

As Earth Day 2001 quickly approaches, we at Eco-Action, the Pennsylvania State University's environmental group, would like you to join us in honoring the international effort to save our planet.

This year we will join a diverse array of local musicians, organizations, businesses, and community members for a day of festivities celebrating the Earth. The goal of Earth Day 2001, is an emphasis on "Staying Local", in which we will be able to spread awareness and increase public interest on environmental issues among the students and citizens in Centre County.

We hope to provide people with the information and guidance necessary to lead a more ecologically friendly and environmentally sustainable lifestyle.

Our Earth Day celebration will take place beginning at noon on Sunday, April 22nd. For further information please contact Rubina Jeveri(rcj114@psu.edu) c/o USG-Environmental Affairs, 223 HUB, University Park, PA 16802.

We hope you take this unique opportunity to increase the awareness of your presence in the community.

Thank you,  
Earth Day Planning Committee  
Eco-Action

Note: The Moshannon Group will have a table and an exhibit at the Earth Day Event.

#### Tom Thwaites *(Continued from page 1)*

Club (PSOC) for 29 years, Tom was the person who made the Mid State Trail happen. This trail is now over 200 miles long, and it stretches from a northern connection to the West Rim Trail down to a connection at the Maryland border. It was Tom's vision, ability and persistence that got the job done. PSOC built the majority of the original MST, while later sections were largely built by the Keystone Trails Association (KTA), which Tom has served twice as its vice president and has served as its Trail Care Chair since 1985.

Many of us who do volunteer trail work in Central Pennsylvania can trace our roots back to Tom Thwaites or someone who began their trail work by helping Tom and the PSOC with trail work. By now you might be thinking that Tom Thwaites must have wrote the book on trails in central

Pennsylvania. You would be partially correct since Tom has not only written the book **50 Hikes in Central PA**, but he has also written the books **50 Hikes in Western PA** and **50 Hikes in Eastern PA**.

These books have gone through three editions and **50 Hikes in Central PA** is about to be issued in its fourth edition. These books offer an excellent selection of trails, as well as information on how to get there, a description of the trail and its highlights, personal, natural and historical observations, and a map of the trail. Tom's photographs throughout the books will whet your appetite for visiting these trails.



Tom Thwaites will be the guest speaker for our **General Meeting 7:30 PM April 17 at Schlow Library**. Tom will present slides of some of these trails, while speaking about the assault on hiking trails that is taking place.

#### Events Calendar *(Continued from page 1)*

Elk State Forest. Easy hiking - 3-5 miles. Contact Dave Coleman at 234-0839.

Sunday, July 22: Hiking in the Hammersley Wild Area, Susquehannock State Forest. Strenuous hiking - 7-8 miles. Contact Dave Coleman at 234-0839.

Sunday, August 19: Hiking on the Chuck Keiper trail in the Burns Run Wild Area, Sprout State Forest. Moderate hiking - 5-6 miles. Contact Dave Coleman at 234-0839.

#### Executive Committee Meetings

These meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month and they are open to all members. Call an Executive Committee Member for the next meeting location.

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Moshannon Group of the  
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 Club

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**Moshannon Group Directory** \*members of the Executive Committee

Chair & Conservation	*Dave Coleman	234-0839	dyatesc@aol.com
Vice Chair	*Hilary Vida	371-3277	
Treasurer	*Bill Tanner	542-8519	billtann@penn.com
Secretary	*Judy Tanner	542-8519	billtann@penn.com
Ex-Com Member	*Joe Banks		
Web Editor	Elisa Beshero-Bondar	237-3983	eeb4@psu.edu
Newsletter Consultant	*Jan Filiaggi	466-7362	rjf21@home.com
Newsletter Editor, Outings & Transportation	*Gary Thornbloom	353-3466	bearnob@msn.com
Program Director	Jason Saltman	234-3824	JTS166@aol.com
Intern	Brian Drosinski		

**Membership**

**Yes**, I want to help safeguard our nation's precious natural heritage. My check is enclosed.

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