



Moshannon Group News



Moshannon Group of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Sierra Club

January 2003

January General Meeting:

Wildlands Project in Pennsylvania

By Dave Bonta, (Guest Speaker at January General Meeting)

If anything good can be said about the orgy of highway building and metastasizing sprawl in the Centre Region, it's that many more people have awoken to the manifold threats facing what urban planners call "open space". The professional ecologist's terminology of "wildlife corridors," "area-sensitive species" and "habitat fragmentation" has suddenly gained a wider and more attentive audience. As local residents begin to organize and take control of economic decision making, how can

conference organized completely on a grassroots level. The excitement and energy generated by that event spurred the creation of the Pennsylvania Wildlands Recovery Project (PWRP), a new 501(c)(3) educational and scientific organization dedicated to the development of a comprehensive conservation network plan. Its premise: only by linking Pennsylvania wildlands with each other and with lands in other states do we have any hope for preserving the full complement of ecological communities,

Pennsylvania has the potential to be a center of wilderness in the Northeast. It has more public land than any state in the region (4,397,921 acres) and is second only to New Hampshire in percentage of land in public ownership (15.3 percent) . . . So, even though today Pennsylvania is the Northeast's most disappointing state in terms of protected wilderness, it is the state that has the most potential for expanding wilderness on lands already owned by the public.

— Christopher McGrory Klyza in *Wilderness Comes Home: Rewilding the Northeast*

they be sure that ostensibly sustainable development won't prove just as destructive to native biodiversity in the long run? Sure, we can save a few, small areas--and maybe some large ones, as well. But what will keep these preserves from turning into mere "habitat islands"--fragile oases in a biological desert?

More than 150 people attended the first Pennsylvania Wildlands Conference held in State College in January 2001, a

species and genotypes.

Several such plans have already been developed by conservation biologists and supporters in other regions of North America. Some of the better known examples include Yellowstone to Yukon (Y2Y), the Sky Islands Plan in the Southwest and, more recently, the Maine Wildlands Network. A growing array of state-based and regional groups like PWRP are springing up across the

(Continued on page 4)

EVENTS CALENDAR

GENERAL MEETINGS

Tuesday, **January 21**, 7PM: the Centre Furnace Mansion and Centre County Historical Society at Porter Road and East College Ave. Guest Speaker: Dave Bonta will speak on the Pennsylvania Wildlands Recovery Project. See article on Page 1.

OUTINGS

Sunday, **January 19**: Cross country ski the Quehanna Wild Area - easy to moderate 4-6 miles. Contact Dave Coleman 234-0839.

Sunday, **February 9**: Cross country ski a section of the Rock Run Trail. Contact Gary Thornbloom at 353-3466 or bearknob@chilitech.com.

Snowshoeing: If you are interested and if we get some snow--contact Gary Thornbloom and we will put together an outing. Note that snowshoes can be rented from Appalachian Outdoor and Ski in State College.

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.

From The Editor

Gary Thornbloom

As additional highway construction continues to provide arteries for growth in Central Pennsylvania the danger grows that public lands will become islands of habitat preserved, but disconnected. This is one of the issues that the **Pennsylvania Wildlands Recovery Project** has given some thought to. Each new highway, especially those built to Interstate Highway standards, presents another barrier to the genetic exchange necessary to maintaining viable wildlife populations. This is a problem compounded by each new highway. This is an issue that federal and state wildlife agencies should give some thought to.

Growth and development follow highway construction. At some point it makes sense to ask how much is enough. At what point will sprawl destroy the character of Central Pennsylvania, the character that has kept many of us living here, and has attracted many more of us to move here?

The growth of the past decades has followed the highways down valleys, over mountains and into each next valley. No niche or cranny is a guaranteed safe haven as long as the common assumption is that the growth must continue.

It makes sense to question whether new highways are needed. It makes sense to ask what is being lost with the continued growth of the region. The Sierra Club is asking these questions at the national and state level.

What are we, at the local level doing?

An Environmentally Friendly Company —Earth Shell Corporation

By Jan Filiaggi

Finally there is a company out there that puts the environment first - Earth Shell Corporation. They have developed a packaging product for the fast food industry that is made of limestone, potato starch, water and recycled paper fiber. It biodegrades when exposed to moisture in nature, physically disintegrates in water when crushed or broken, and can be composted in commercial facilities or in your backyard. In studies done at the University of Maryland, the containers degraded within 60 to 90 days in a road-side environment.

Earth Shell makes sandwich and salad containers, plates, bowls and cups. It has recently signed a licensing agreement with Sweetheart Cup Company – one of the largest manufacturers of single-use food service disposables in North America. The Department of the Interior has adopted it for their use after much testing (even serving food on it at a White House reception) and it is now being used in eight National Parks including Bushkill Falls, here in Pennsylvania. It has received endorsement from the Defenders of Wildlife, Friends of the Earth, American Oceans Campaign, the EPA, and Green Seal.

The plates and cups are being sold in Wal-Mart on the west coast and in Maryland. I would encourage you to ask our local Wal-Mart to stock Earth Shell products and to use them instead of anything currently available – especially the polystyrene. They are durable, strong and attractive. There is much more information about the company on their web site: www.EarthShell.com.

Trail Registers—Why Bother?

By Gary Thornbloom

On a recent Moshannon Group cross country ski outing several of us engaged in a discussion of why people do or do not bother to make entries in trail registers. I asked Ralph Seeley, Trail Overseer and author of *“Great Buffalo Swamp” A Trail Guide and Regional History of the Moshannon State Forest and nearby parts of Clearfield and Centre Counties*, for a few thoughts on why you should bother to make an entry in these registers the next time you are out hiking or skiing.

This was Ralph’s response:

On trail registers: to me they have several values.

1. Sometimes a trail-user will enthusiastically offer to be a maintainer. Although the majority of these offers come to naught (people seldom answer my letter), occasionally a live one turns up.
2. I can check on trail condition—when I start to see negative remarks about a trail section, then it is time to contact the maintainer (and of course, many times it turns out that the maintainer has quietly disappeared, leaving no way to contact that person, and not having notified me so I could find a replacement).
3. I can see interesting usage patterns, particularly in the Quehanna area. There it has recently developed that people are making "quarter-pie" extended-weekend hikes on the eastern side, using part of the Quehanna Trail, part of the eastern cross-connector, and the #15 and Big Spring Draft trails to close the loop. This information bears on the perennial question of whether adding a middle cross-connector is warranted for the Quehanna Trail.

ECO-TIPS: Spread the word. Educate your neighbors and your members of Congress about how improved energy efficiency and renewable energy sources save money, protect our health and preserve the environment.—Sierra Club.

Off The Chair

Dave Coleman

One day before Thanksgiving the Bush administration quietly declared an enormous change in how the government will manage its 192 million acres of national forests. Billed as a way to "streamline" planning in the forests, the Bush proposal would, among other things:

- Allow local forest managers to decide if logging and grazing deserve as much weight as protecting animals or birds.
- Drop a 25-year-old requirement that forest-management plans contain detailed environmental impact statements.
- Set the stage for reducing requirements that the Forest Service protect plant and animal diversity in the forests.

It is perhaps true, as Forest Service officials claim, that current forest-management rules are too complex and costly to administer. It is equally true that the proposed rule changes are essentially an effort to open national forests to more logging than they have seen in years.

Logging is an extractive industry. Even during boom times, lumber towns never really prospered. They didn't attract other businesses or investment because they were designed to be more or less temporary, since they were mowing down their chief resource: trees.

But perhaps the Bush administration's rule changes really are not about economics. In conservative circles logging is a bellwether issue, a club with which to beat Bill Clinton, the Sierra Club, and the heavy hand of government in general. Logging is a kind of religious issue: Conservatives take it on faith that cutting down trees is good for business. But the economics of the West during the past 20 years argues that it isn't.

Here in the East – in Pennsylvania – the situation is, of course, much different. While we do have the Allegheny National Forest, the majority of public forests are those managed by our state Bureau of Forestry. We do not have the same political forces over the manage-

ment of our forests – but we do have some parallels to the national forest environment.

Take Salvage Logging (please!), recently, the Bureau of Forestry opened one of our most precious state parks, the Ricketts Glen State Park in northeastern Pennsylvania, to large-scale "salvage" logging practices in order to profit off of the windblown black cherry trees. What is of particular concern is that the logging at Ricketts Glen was seen as a "pilot" project which may in fact lead to further logging in our state parks. This concern fits closely with the fact that the logging program on Pennsylvania's state forests and state parks broke records in 2000 with 20,000 acres of our public lands being logged.

Why, in this area, would the state even consider compromising the promise of wilderness with an impact like commercial logging? Under the guise of "salvage", we are told that we are actually "improving" the forest – "managing" it for its own good. Wouldn't the removal of these downed tree trunks be better than logging un-damaged live trees? Not necessarily.

Downed trees are still important to the forest. Large tree trunks are left providing forest structure as well as an important source of water and elements for the forest soils. If these trunks are removed, the soils are exposed to direct sunlight, and dry. While helicopter logging theoretically does less damage than skidding, it is not true that helicopter logging results in no soils impacts. Helicopter logging tends to occur where skidder logging is deemed unacceptable even by those eager to sell the timber which is quite an indicator of the type of sensitive habitat we are dealing with. When you remove the trunks you remove an important germination spot for some important northern PA vegetative species such as hemlock and birch. Furthermore, you reduce ground cover which can be important to salamanders and other important species. Research in northern PA has found that the structure resulting from

unsalvaged wind throw helps increase diversity of vegetative species by prohibiting over browsing by deer.

The bottom line is that the logging at Ricketts Glen was terrible for the forest. There is extensive documentation on a whole array of environmental impacts (including soils impacts) as a result of helicopter logging. An area like Ricketts Glen is supposedly one of Pennsylvania's rare places of relative wildness – where the forest is left to itself to define itself, to become what nature will allow it to become – and ever change.

In general, the "salvage" logging concept here in Pennsylvania (as well as nationwide) needs to be exposed as the oxymoron it is.

Maybe one paradigm that needs refocused is that of the icon of the old growth forest. Right now, the vision of the majority of citizens of old growth forest is of huge trees.

In north and central PA, we celebrate the sight of large pine (although puny in comparison of what we had until the latter 19th century) and hemlock. Our most notable natural areas (Alan Seegar, Duttlinger, etc...) are described almost exclusively as this icon.

The paradigm shift would result in a picture of a large trunk, lying on the ground, mosses growing around it - the trunk in various stages of decay - surrounded by younger trees of a spectrum of ages. Yes, hundreds of board feet rotting - but not wasted. Undeniably more valuable to the forest as eventual soil than lifted away by a Huey, but also just as valuable to the ecosystem as it was when it was standing tall.

We need to preserve what little wildness we have left in Pennsylvania. We have to quit talking about it – and just do it. Lifting downed trees out of a state natural or wild area is not the way to do it. There are many ways to do it, but any requires one to get off the chair.

continent. Most, if not all, are working in close affiliation with The Wildlands Project office in Vermont. Wildlands Project board members include such well-known conservation biologists as John Terborgh of Duke University, Michael Soule, and Reed Noss.

Some might wonder, can't such technical (and expensive) planning be left to government? In some ways, it HAS been left up to government. The US Fish and Wildlife Service's Gap Analysis Project at Penn State has compiled extensive maps correlating land cover types with the distribution of various species. Combining these maps will allow us to identify candidates for Core Areas, Buffers and Wildlife Corridors in a provisional fashion. But in the current political climate, even such preliminary, broad-brush suggestions could endanger a state or federal employee's career. And--as Sierra Club members are well aware--the cause of conservation in the United States has always depended upon the passionate advocacy of idealistic amateurs, from John Muir to Edward Abbey.

Can't existing conservation organizations such as Sierra Club or the Audubon Society do this work? Yes! That's exactly what we're hoping will happen here in Pennsylvania, as it has happened in other parts of the country where wildlands proposals have been drafted: everyone takes part. This is a coalition effort. PWRP, like most other such groups, is not a membership organization, though it does solicit support. We want not just monetary help, but the kind of expertise that can ONLY come from folks in local nature clubs and local chapters of conservation organizations who are intimately familiar with the landscape.

While PWRP will rely heavily on the work of scientists, a Pennsylvania Wildlands Plan will be meaningless unless it involves local and regional conservancies and a wide range of amateur naturalists, sportsmen, activists and recreationists from across the Commonwealth willing to act on its recommendations. And only the active collaboration of scientists with



The second Pennsylvania Wildlands Conference will be held at the Penn Stater on February 1. Wild Earth publisher Dave Foreman will present the keynote address, focusing on lessons from the Sky Islands Plan. Advance registration for this all-day event is \$30 (\$35 at the door). For more information, contact Tonya Boston-Sagar at t.bostonsagar@worldnet.att.net. For more information about PWRP contact Alan Gregory at meg5@psu.edu, or visit www.wildpennsylvania.org.

local residents is likely to produce the kind of searching questions we need to begin asking.

Here in Central Pennsylvania, for instance, the wooded ridges and the Allegheny Front, separated and dissected as they are by highways, developments and agricultural areas, present unique challenges and opportunities for bioserve design. A few ar-

reas possibly large enough to constitute wilderness cores--areas where natural processes, including disturbances, should be allowed to predominate--already enjoy a fairly high level of protection in parts of Bald Eagle, Moshannon and Rothrock State Forests. But existing or proposed highways present formidable barriers to animal movements into and out of these areas. Special overpasses and/or culverts for wildlife will probably be necessary to maintain genetic flow. And while we can feel fortunate to live in the midst of so many forested ridges, what about the ecological communities that once thrived in fertile limestone valleys? What about habitats on more sensitive sites, like shale barrens and talus slope forests--have they really been adequately inventoried and protected? Are all the extant tracts of old growth sufficiently buffered from the "edge effect" and from sources of air and water pollution (not to mention noise and light pollution)? Do present and future refuges really stand a chance of preserving biodiversity, so long as large carnivores remain absent? And does land have to be acquired by the state to enjoy full protection, or would other options, such as conservation easements or full ownership by conservancies, be preferable in some cases?

As the threats to the natural world intensify, conservationists and environmentalists everywhere need to combine forces and go on the offensive. It's time to craft our own, positive vision for a wilder--and saner--future. If we wait to protect natural areas until the bulldozers are at the gates, it may already be too late. Ask the brook trout. Ask the goldenseal. Ask the cerulean warbler. Every wild place is special. Let's save them all.

Statements By Candidates For The Executive Committee Of The Moshannon Group and Ballot

Jan Filiaggi

I have enjoyed being a Sierra Club member for the last 6 years, working on the newsletter and now serving as Membership Chair on the Executive Committee. I am always amazed at how much a few hands and voices can do to effect our environment – even if it is in seemingly small ways.

One day spent planting trees, cleaning a river, or writing a letter has a ripple effect that touches many lives – both animal and human. In the Sierra Club, we get an opportunity to do these things and make these small changes. They add up. For this reason I wish to continue volunteering as an Executive Committee member.

Judy Tanner

I have been a member of the Sierra Club for 25 years and am currently serving on the Moshannon Group Executive Committee as Secretary, Political Chair, and Population/Growth Chair. I work part-time as a Registered Nurse in Huntingdon. In today's political climate, protecting the environment will be even more of a challenge that will require the attention and efforts of each of us. We cannot remain silent as we watch the attack on our air quality, forests, water, endangered species, and other natural resources. At the same time, we must individually examine our lives and determine ways in which we can alter our consumerism in order to decrease the impact on the environment. I hope to continue serving on the Executive Committee and ask each of you to commit to joining with the Sierra Club in our efforts to make a difference.

*****Ballot*****

Vote by placing a checkmark next to no more than three nominees and return this ballot concerning the governing executive committee of the Moshannon Group of the Sierra Club. Ballots must be received by **January 31, 2003**. Mail to **Elections, Sierra Club Moshannon Group, P.O. Box 513, State College, PA 16804**.

Jan Filiaggi
 Judy Tanner

Write In Candidate

Note: For verification purposes your mailing label should remain attached on the opposite side. You may black out your name and address on the label, but not the zip code. If joint membership two sets of checks are permitted.

If There Is Snow, Why Not Snowshoe?

By Gary Thornbloom

Some of you may have noticed that Dave Coleman and I have been writing a column, **On The Trail**, that has been appearing once a month in the **Centre Daily Times**. In the December column I wrote about snowshoeing. Snowshoeing is as easy as walking. Well, after a day or so on snowshoes it is as easy as walking. It is a great way to flow with the changing seasons and to stay on, or off, the trail year round. Snowshoeing is also much easier on your joints than cross country skiing. It is also easier snowshoeing along with trees at your elbow than flying by those same trees on ski's. I asked for some thoughts on snowshoeing from a friend who has experience on both in the winter woods.

Some comments from Ralph Seeley:

About the only thing that I would add to your recent article about snow-shoeing is the following: A word about equipment. I am too practical to be horn-swaggled by the allure of antique snow-shoes, those beautifully-arched pieces of wood with old rawhide lacing. They are easily broken by ill-advised 'bridging,' that is making one shoe extend from one firm support all the way to another with no support in the middle. They are worse than useless, extending to dangerous, on slippery surfaces. I have no doubt that they were wonderful in the major snowpacks of Canada and the Rockies, but our conditions are seldom rife with major snowpacks. The modern shoe has no problem with bridging, it has good claws hanging below for ice, and it has a modern way of fastening your boots to the shoe. So invest a few bucks for a lifetime of good snow-shoeing!

Parenthetic note: you probably know that the name of the nearby town called Snow Shoe came from the finding of an Indian snow-shoe hanging in a bush nearby; perhaps that Indian was disappointed at the utility of that stone-age item.

Program Director

The Moshannon Group needs someone to step up and be our program director.

The Program Director works with the Ex-com members to obtain guest speakers for our General Meetings. The Program Director would also get the word out about the General Meetings.

If you have an interest in this position please contact an Ex-com member. We will work with you on this.

Our Group can only be as effective as each of you. You decide how much time you can spend on this. You decide whether to become involved.

**Moshannon Group of the
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Sierra Club**
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We're on the web!—<http://pennsylvania.sierraclub.org/moshannon/>

Moshannon Group Directory

*members of the Executive Committee

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Newsletter Mailing	Nancy deStreel		
Intern	Available position.		

Membership

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

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	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
INTRODUCTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
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SUPPORTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
CONTRIBUTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
SENIOR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
LIMITED INCOME	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

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