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# Moshannon Group News



Moshannon Group of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Sierra Club

October 2003

## Quebec Run And Other State Forest Wild Areas

—A comment on the State Forest Resource Management Plan

By Dave Coleman

It may, or may not, have been a Sierra Club hike. I really don't remember who else was along when my Dad first took me to the Quebec Run Wild Area. As a 15 year old boy, the trips to Chestnut Ridge and other portions of the Laurel Highlands from our Washington County home was my introduction to the wilderness of Pennsylvania. We frequented other portions of the region in undertaking various outings – hiking, backpacking, skiing, canoeing and whitewater rafting. But it was the Quebec Run Wild Area that, to me, represented what the forest was all about.

I began a 4 or 5 year familiarity with the wild area – backpacking, hiking and skiing it with friends. We camped along the stream, hiked the miles of trails through hemlock and oak, climbed on the Grist Mill, sneaked into the cave, searched for the “gold pits” and imagined cougar encounters. The most inviting part of the wild area was the Hemlock lined Que-

November 12, General Meeting:

### Climbing In The Dolomites

This is how Geoff Brugler described his most recent climbing adventure:

*We spent a few days climbing out of the town of Cortina in the Dolomites in northern Italy. We did two via ferrata or 'iron way' climbing routes that were established in WWI. We then toured Venice and Florence and took a ferry to Greece. In Greece, we traveled the southern coastline then spent a few days on Santorini and ended our journey in Athens. The trip is a blend of climbing, adventure travel and cultural history.*

Join us at the Moshannon Group's November General Meeting to meet Geoff and to hear about this trek abroad.

bec Run itself. This was the part of the wild area we visited most. On a few of the backpacking trips, we would fish Quebec Run for trout, which would be fried and enjoyed next to the campfire. We explored the entire area during that period. It was in the Quebec Run Wild Area that I learned map and compass skills.

I knew next to nothing about forest ecology, silviculture or even the state forest system. But for a teenager, this 5,000 acre chunk of state forest was an expansive wilderness. Even though it was second and third growth, I appreciated the Quebec Run Area for what it was - then and there. The only thing that distracted from that perception was the clear-cutting on the edges of the wild area we would observe on our way there. Entire hill-sides and tops of Chestnut Ridge would be cut between some of our visits. Despite well informed explanations from the forest ranger about the value of silviculture, I never understood why this special area would be treated this way.

By the early '80s, I had moved permanently from my home in Washington County, lived a few years in Pittsburgh and then a few years in Virginia Beach. I returned to the Quebec Run Wild Area during visits to home – maybe once a year, probably less. It seemed somewhat smaller as an adult than I had remembered in the '70s, but it was just as special.

Moving back to Pennsylvania in 1989 was the best move I had made in my professional career as an environmental engineer. I had a good job, back in the place where I had

(Continued on page 2)

## EVENTS CALENDAR

### GENERAL MEETINGS

Wednesday, **November 12**, 7PM: Geoff Brugler will speak on “Climbing in the Dolomites of Northern Italy.” His presentation will cover such places as Venice, Florence, Greece, Santorini, the Acropolis and Olympia. See Page 1 article.

**General Meetings are held at the Centre Furnace Mansion and Historical Society at Porter Road and East College Ave.**

### OUTINGS

Sunday, **October 19**: 6-7 mile Hike in the Kettle Creek Wild and Natural Area's. Contact Dave Coleman, 234-0839 or at dyatesc@aol.com

Saturday, **October 25**: Hike in the Hook Natural Area, on trails that the Penn State Outing Club used to use for skiing, that are unknown to others and may be gone by this time. So it is not a trip for those afraid of being lost in the woods. This should cover less than 6 moderately strenuous miles. Also there might be a small amount of stream walking. Ralph Seeley, a man to whom all who enjoy Central PA's many trails owe a huge debt of gratitude, will lead this hike and share his insights into the area.

(Continued on page 3)

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

schooled a decade earlier – State College. We had decided that Central Pennsylvania would be a great place to raise children – not only because of the community we lived and worked, but the rural and forested setting of this part of the state.

Upon returning to Pennsylvania, I wanted to explore other sections of state forests. State College is a great place to be centered. One can reach no less than six forest districts from Centre County within an hour, and at least five others in less than twice that time. Sometime during the early '90's I realized that Quebec Run was just one of 16 state forest wild areas. I had recreated in the Thickhead Mountain Wild Area while attending Penn State without realizing its designation. One by one, I sought out and visited a new wild area whenever I could. I am not sure of the exact order I visited the wild areas – I have only considered it now as I am writing this. This is for me, as much as for the purpose of this comment paper:

Quebec Run, Thickhead Mountain, Trough Creek, Quehanna, Fish Dam, Burns Run, Hammersley, Martin Hill, Wolf Run, Asaph, Algerine, White Mountain, Clear Shade and most recently the proposed M.K. Goddard and the Squaretimber/Big Run Wild Areas.

I had hoped to have explored all 16 current and all 4 proposed state forest wild areas by the time I was to write this. However, work, family, other outings (including returning to other favor-

## Call For Nominations

An election to choose members of the Executive Committee of the Moshannon Group is held annually at the end of the calendar year. Three of the seven positions on the committee are up for election.

Members of the executive committee meet up to 11 times per year - now on the first Wednesday of the month. The committee manages the affairs and activities of the Group. Terms are two years and staggered. Ballots will be mailed to all group members within the December newsletter. Ballots will be opened at the January Ex-Com meeting. New members will be seated and officers selected by the new committee.

A nominating committee has been selected by the current executive committee. Committee members are Dave Coleman (234-0839), chair, Judith Johnsrud (237-3900) and Nancy Parks (349-5151).

Until November 29, 2003 nominations can be submitted to the Nomination Committee by contacting one of the nomination committee members or by a petition of at least 15 Moshannon Group members sent by mail addressed to Nominating Committee, c/o Sierra Club Moshannon Group, PO Box 513, State College, PA 16804. All nominations should include a brief narrative describing the background and/or qualifications of the nominee.

ite wild areas) as well as time spent advocating for state forest wild areas, has postponed this goal. Three existing and two proposed wild areas remain to explore.

I have never had a bad time in a state forest wild area. Even when soaked with rain or eyes filled with bugs, my excursions into the wild areas – the bigger the better – were rewarding and fulfilling experiences. I have learned much about forest ecology and the state forest system in these travels through the varying landscapes and forest types that are represented with wild areas.

Two main factors contribute to the perceived value of state forest wild areas – size and quality. The combination of expansive forest and undisturbed landscape is what draws people to recreate in these areas. The Quebec Run Wild Area was my first and most memorable experience with Pennsylvania's state forests; and, the forested landscape was one big factor to leave Virginia to move back "home". If I never had visited Quebec Run, would I be living in Pennsylvania now? Quality of place is frequently cited as a powerful force in local and state economics. It is absolutely critical for the future of Pennsylvania to protect these wild areas. Only then can they serve as a component of the variety of state attractions to retain our younger generations and to attract an educated workforce. In this context, the wildness of our state is constantly competing with the wildness of other states. We should be a leader in the East in preserving forests not just for nature, but also for our prosperity.

The Sierra Club Wild Area Protection Campaign stresses the importance of protecting state forest wild areas- biodiversity preservation, water quality and recreation. Enhancing these three attributes with a basic management change (ending commercial timber harvesting) seems to me to be a very good deal. The Bureau of Forestry seems to agree with this. I fully support the goals of protecting state forest wild areas, creating new wild areas and connecting them with protected forested corridors. A consensus is emerging that state forest wild areas will comprise the main core areas of a bioserve/old growth system envisioned for Pennsylvania. But, to do this, we have to start right now and end harvest and extraction activities on all wild areas and other large sections of state forest land.

The Quebec Run Wild Area will be just one of 20 state forest wild areas – hopefully one of 30 within the next few years. However, the number of areas and the amount of land they hold in aggregate is not the point of my comment here. Each wild area is special – to different people at different times. The Quebec Run Wild Area is certainly one of the many gems of Pennsylvania. It is a disgrace to the Bureau that this particular wild area is not slated for protection. If you only act on just one recommendation from the public this planning cycle, it should be the complete protection of the Quebec Run Wild Area. One of my goals in life is to pass-on knowing that my grandchildren can take their children to Quebec Run, camp under larger hemlocks and catch even more trout than I once had.

*Editor's note: In place of the usual Off The Chair column, we print this, the personal comment that our chair recently submitted to the Bureau of Forestry.*

# Pine Creek Rail-Trail: Easy Traveling by Foot, Bike, or Skis

By Ben Cramer

One of the great hidden recreational secrets of Central Pennsylvania is the Pine Creek Rail-Trail in Tioga and Lycoming Counties. The trail is a former railroad track that was once the only way to transport goods through the rugged Pine Creek Gorge, also known as the Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania. The Pine Creek Trail offers some of the best biking (and skiing) opportunities in the state, and probably all of the Northeast.

Until the late 1980s, a Conrail track extended from Corning, NY to the Jersey Shore area in Lycoming County, with origins in the old logging industry. The only route available as the track approached Jersey Shore was to follow Pine Creek through its spectacular gorge, along narrow bottomlands that often weren't even wide enough for a road. For decades, train engineers on the Conrail line got a unique view from the bottom of the gorge, which was impossible for all but the most rugged foot travelers. Otherwise, people had to make do with the bird's-eye views of the gorge from above by way of Leo-

nard Harrison and Colton Point State Parks. Those panoramic views are of course some of the most spectacular in the Northeast, but until recently access to the bottom of the gorge was limited to the few.

Eventually Conrail abandoned the line due to lack of business and removed the rails and crossties. A narrow dirt lane remained until the state decided to transform this hidden gem into an all-purpose trail for biking, walking, and cross-

country skiing, creating a level and easily followed crushed limestone pathway. The first section to be completed was actually the most remote section of the old track. The 17-mile stretch of trail from Ansonia south to Blackwell was opened in 1996. This section offers a spectacular trip through the deepest parts of the gorge, and only encounters one road in that entire distance. Even that's just a rugged lane accessible only to four-wheel drive vehicles, plunging off the side of the gorge into the logging ghost town of Tiadaghton (now a bucolic campsite).

In more recent years further sections of the trail have been completed. South of Blackwell, the trail parallels Route 414 through the (slightly) more populated sections of Pine Creek Gorge. Utilizing converted railway bridges, the trail is sometimes on the same side of Pine Creek as Route 414, and sometimes not. The long-distance enthusiast passes through the charming hamlets of Cedar Run, Slate Run, and Cammal – all good spots to stop for refreshments and home cooking. Campgrounds that were previously reached only by the canoeing and rafting crowd on Pine Creek are now accessible from the trail. There is even an antiquated cemetery off the trail just south of Slate Run, with tombstones dating back to the early-1800s.

The developed section of the trail currently ends in the town of Waterville, following Route 44 south for a short distance beyond the end of Route 414. The completed section of the trail now stretches 42.6 miles from Ansonia to Waterville. South of Waterville, further sections of the old railroad track are currently under construction (or conversion), and the Pine Creek Trail is planned to extend all the way to the end of Pine Creek itself within a few years, ending along the Susquehanna near Jersey Shore. An extension north of Ansonia toward the New York state line is also planned, which would create a very long and continuous trail offering some of the best scenery and solitude in Pennsylvania.

Given the Pine Creek Trail's many intermediate parking lots and access points, especially at Ansonia near Route 6 and Waterville on Route 44, this recreational treasure is easily reached from many parts of the state. In terms of scenery, adventure, and peace of mind, this multi-use trail presents the best of the Pennsylvania outdoor experience.

**A bike ride on the Pine Creek Rail-Trail is just one of the recent locations of Moshannon Group Outings.**

**Check the list in the Outings Calendar to find upcoming Moshannon Group outings of interest to you.**

**Contact Gary Thornbloom, Outings Chair, to get an e-mail notice of both scheduled and some spontaneous outings: bearknob@chilitech.com**

**Events Calendar** (Continued from page 1)  
Contact: Ralph Seeley at 355-2933 or rsbb219@pennswoods.net

Sunday, **November 16:** Jackson Trail - strenuous hike of about 6 miles along Tussey Ridge near State College, with numerous views of Happy Valley. The very rocky trail requires adequate footwear. Contact Ben Cramer at 237-4187 or doomsdayer520@yahoo.com.

Friday, **December 12:** Annual Christmas party at the home of Dave and Tammy Coleman. Details and directions in the next Newsletter.

Sunday, **December 14:** Black Moshannon State Park - easy hike of about 11 miles of level terrain, great opportunity to see wetland habitats in the winter season. Contact Ben Cramer at 237-4187 or doomsdayer520@yahoo.com.

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

**2004 CALENDAR SALE!**

Please help support the Moshannon Group in our only fundraiser for this year. Buy a calendar for yourself, for gifts, for your employees or clients.

Wilderness Wall calendars are only \$11.00; Engagement calendars are \$12.35. Mailing costs for one calendar are \$3.50 and only \$.50 to mail each additional calendar.

Contact Jan Filiaggi: 466-7362 rjf21@adelphia.net

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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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Read **On The Trail** a monthly column in the **Centre Daily Times** that is devoted to hiking, cross-country skiing, canoeing, and snowshoeing in Central Pennsylvania. Moshannon Group members Dave Coleman and Gary Thornbloom have been writing this column since February 2002 and they are now joined by Ben Cramer in writing **On The Trail**. The column is now scheduled to appear on the first Sunday of each month on the **Woods & Waters** page of the Sports Section. The column can also be viewed online at [www.centredaily.com](http://www.centredaily.com).

## Membership

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