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# Scientific Management Of The Allegheny National Forest

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## *Supporting Scientific Management of the Allegheny National Forest*

The Pennsylvania Council of Professional Foresters (PCPF) supports scientific management of the National Forests for all forest resource values as provided for by the National Forest Management Act of 1976. Unfortunately, sound and balanced forest management on National Forests, including the Allegheny National Forest (ANF), is often thwarted by lawsuits filed with little expectation of winning on the legal merits of the case, but with full expectation of impeding forest management activities other than those that please the plaintiffs.

The ANF is managed according to sound scientific principles by a complement of professional foresters, assisted by professionals in related scientific disciplines, working under a Forest Resource Management Plan that was prepared with extensive public participation in 1986 and is currently being revised with, again, very extensive public participation.

The bias of the plaintiffs in these lawsuits is exposed by the fact that they object only to the management of 60 percent of the ANF, i.e. those lands dedicated to the production of timber. Evidently, the ANF planning process is acceptable to these persons when it leads to outcomes that please them personally, but not otherwise. Clearly they do not have the public interest at heart. Unfortunately, the public bears the cost of these challenges in legal fees, while the plaintiffs risk almost nothing. Any legal challenge by these groups is a "win" because it delays (if not prevents) the harvest of timber and it hurts those who depend upon forest products for their livelihoods. Harvest delays caused by special-interest lawsuits also lead inevitably to reduced timber harvest and increased loss of timber to damage from insects, disease, and natural catastrophes, and thus to higher lumber prices.

PCPF supports the rights of individuals to pursue grievances against the government. However, when a few persons with special interests can routinely achieve an outcome in their favor by simply filing a lawsuit, the rights of the majority are grievously infringed. PCPF denounces the abuse of our legal system by individuals and groups opposed to the harvest of timber from public lands. Furthermore, PCPF objects to the idea that micromanagement of the public forest lands through the court system can or should replace good-faith management by educated professionals who strive to balance all public interests and maintain the health of the forest ecosystem. We encourage legislation that restrains, in a reasonable manner, special interest groups from exploiting the court system to wage what amounts to guerrilla warfare against the public will.