

PENNSYLVANIA NATURALLY

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

There is a conservation cause, particularly espoused in Western Pennsylvania, which is called Conserving Pennsylvania Naturally. All of us are interesting in conserving the nature of Pennsylvania, but this refers to its natural and original landscapes--the virgin stands of northern hardwood forest and the natural growth of southern plant communities, like the Umbrella Magnolia which reaches its northern extension in Pennsylvania. At one time the area of Pennsylvania was covered with a mosaic of summer-green forest, with fingers of cool hemlock ravines laced among the blue of streams and rivers. It is these untouched tracts of virgin forest, vegetational communities, extensive wet lands and rare and endangered species that are the original natural areas of Pennsylvania, and which have been part of our terrain since the beginning of time--those tracts are the concern of Pennsylvania conservationists. Fortunately, two areas of Pennsylvania have now been identified as Federally Protected Tracts; the Tionesta Natural Area of more than 2000 acres and the Jacob Guy Natural Area in the Erie Wildlife Refuge. At the state level, the Bureau of Forestry has designated 11 areas of State forest land as Natural Areas. Examples of these are The Hemlocks, a virgin stand in Pike County and the Box Huckleberry Site, only eight acres of Box Huckleberry in Perry County. The Box Huckleberry illustrates

the reasons for natural areas preservation. The plant produces not by seed, but by vegetation production in the form of underground runners. The entire eight acres is believed to be covered by a single plant, which has a growth of six inches a year. This one plant--those eight acres--are believed to be some 8000 years old. Another site along the Juniata in the same region is thought to be more than 12,000 years old. These plants in Pennsylvania therefore are much older than the Bristlecone Pine of California, which many say is considered the oldest living organism. Obviously the Box Huckleberry, found only in these two sites in the nation--in Perry County--is a rare and interesting plant which must be preserved. Similarly, there are bogs--the Gentian in Lawrence County--it was once used for horse pasture--today it is conserved. Finding these natural areas--bogs and plants is a challenging process, and fortunately, Pennsylvanians are concerned; concerned for the precious relics and geology and vegetation, which none but God created at the time of the Genesis of Pennsylvania.

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.