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An F-16 fighter jet – one of the type that may soon roar over Pennsylvania’s wilds.

## Low Altitude Military Flights Over Pennsylvania Wilds One Step Closer

by Doug Mason

The Duke Low Military Operations Airspace (MOA) is one step closer to becoming a reality. This proposal to conduct military fighter jet training as low as 100 feet above ground level over parts of the Pennsylvania Wilds was open again for public comment in May. Full disclosure: I am an Air Force veteran of the Vietnam Theater of War and believe that we need the military, albeit much smaller than as currently envisioned.

The Maryland Air National Guard currently operates at 6,000 feet and higher above sea level over all or part of Cameron, Clinton, Elk, McKean, Potter and Tioga Counties, much of this is the Moshannon region. The new low-altitude airspace would authorize Maryland, New Jersey, and District of Columbia air national guard units, as well as other military wings and branches, to fly just above the treetops as often as two hours every other day, including weekends and evenings, in this sensitive natural area.

This airspace is likely to be utilized by several types of military aircraft soon besides the A-10 and F-16 aircraft currently in use, including the financially troubled F-35. The A-10 Thunderbolt II attack jet, commonly known as the Warthog, is currently being replaced by F-16 Fighting Falcons and ultimately by the F-35 Lightning II. The plane that recently caused the disruptive sonic boom over Washington D.C. was an F-16.

The Pennsylvania Wilds are a place to enjoy solitude and silence from human affairs. They have some of the darkest skies in the nation (check out Cherry Springs State Park in Potter County sometime), hundreds of miles of hiking trails and the largest elk herd in the Northeast. The Pennsylvania Wilds depend on

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## *Low Altitude Flights, cont'd*

and quiet the region has historically had to offer. The Air National Guard acknowledges that such operations would result in an increase of “noise experienced on the ground.”

It's hard to imagine that military aircraft flying as low as 100 feet above ground level as often as every other day will not impact the quality of life for all living things within the affected area (which also a small portion of southern New York). Aside from the aforementioned elk herd, there is a pocket of synchronous fireflies in the Allegheny National Forest that could be impacted. There are also several Pennsylvania threatened or endangered species found in the Wilds sections of Penn's Woods.

The proposal, first pitched in 2021, has long caused concerns among residents, business owners, elected officials, and others who worry about noise pollution, disruption to livestock, and negative effects on the tourism and recreational economy of the Wilds region.

A retired state district forester, who requested anonymity, told of several close calls involving military trainings in the existing airspace through the years.

One incident involved the tail section of a Warthog severing a high-voltage power line strung across the Susquehanna River. And more than once, frightened state tree-planting crews reported Warthogs pretend-strafting them, as if their tree-planting equipment were enemy tanks.

In another incident, an air tanker being used to fight a forest fire had an uncomfortably close encounter with a Warthog flying just above the Susquehanna River, in what was supposed to be closed airspace. “The air tanker was diverted just in time to avoid a disastrous mid-air collision,” the former forest claimed.

Step by step, awareness is growing that every nation's quest for security must move beyond the traditional dependency on military security. Real security requires a holistic cooperative approach that addresses all the inter-linked threats to humanity. This includes the threats that attempts at military security have themselves created.

Human security draws upon our increasing understandings of the physical environment - the webs of life in nature, and upon principles of good governance - principles that sustain the webs of life in the human environment.

Military activities place a number of stresses on the physical environment, but their contribution to over-all environmental deterioration has not received its share of attention. There are several reasons for this. One is that the military is not seen as an “industry,” yet in many ways it behaves as one. Another is that states operate a double standard: they are not willing to subject their armed forces to the levels of transparency and accountability that are required of other governmental or civil society actors. No institution can be above the law.



## **2023 Banff Mtn. Film Festival a Great Success - See You in 2024!**

**By Kelly Forest**

I'm excited to announce next year's Banff Mountain Film Festival dates, Friday, April 4<sup>th</sup> and Saturday April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at the State Theatre. After a sold-out Saturday night event, I was energized by the positive feedback we got on the films and the event from our sponsors, the community groups tabling and to all of you who came to the event.

The Moshannon Group wants to thank all our sponsors at the event. A big thank you to our local presenting sponsors who donated \$1000; Envinity and Organic Climbing. A big thank you to our local supporting sponsors who donated \$400; Shubin Law, Appalachian Outdoors, Freezethaw Cycles, Nittany Climb and Miller, Kistler & Campbell attorneys at law. Our gratitude to our local contributing sponsors who donated \$200; Webster's Bookstore Café, Rapid Transit Sports, Kitchen Kaboodle, Shaver's Creek, Todd Costello with REMAX, and Centre County Recycling and Refuse Authority.

With our sponsors and ticket sales, the 2023 Banff Mountain

*Continued on Page 3*

## Banff, cont'd

Film Festival raised \$14,000, which will go to support environmental conservation in central Pennsylvania. I urge you to check out the Banff Mountain Film Festival program on our website, <https://www.sierraclub.org/pennsylvania/moshannon/banff-mountain-film-festival>. It shares with you the films we watched, the list of sponsors, the list of community groups that tabled, and some of the issues we have been supporting this last year.

Mark your calendar now for next year's Banff Mountain Film Festival on April 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at the State Theatre.



## Hike in Bear Meadows on July 22

Join us for a hike through rhododendrons at Bear Meadows on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. It is a moderate three and a half hike. The more rain we have, the more flowers we will have but also more streams to cross. So, wear waterproof foot gear. The hike begins at ten o'clock. The parking location is east of Route 322 about 9 miles south of State

College. Turn onto Bear Meadows Lane toward the Tussey Mountain resort. Continue three miles. You will see a parking area but continue another half mile to a second parking area. There is a stone monument to mark the spot. Something to repel ticks is recommended.

Questions: Call Ernest Boyd at 814-404-2275.



## Volunteer Without Fear! Training Programs Support New Sierra Club Volunteers

By Melissa Farr, Distributed Organizer, Sierra Club Pennsylvania Chapter

Signing up to be a new volunteer can make you nervous. No matter how much you admire an organization, becoming an active part of their work can raise personal questions and doubts about whether you have the experience, skills, and knowledge to be successful. Volunteering with a multi-issue organization like Sierra Club that engages in a wide array of activities from outings to advocacy and

everything in between, can feel even more overwhelming as you consider which path might be the right one for you.

As a new organizer with the Pennsylvania Chapter, I am excited to share the myriad ways in which our Chapter and Local Groups are able to support new volunteers in their journeys with our organization, through comprehensive training and individualized coaching. When you volunteer with the Sierra Club, you are not just another face in the crowd. We strive to understand your unique talents and what motivates your desire to volunteer with us so that we can find the best fit within our volunteer program.

There is something here for everyone and the training available to make it happen. If your passion is the outdoors, our outings program will provide you with an educational curriculum that will help you to grow from an outings participant into an outings leader, planning your very own creative outdoor adventures!

If you're ready to raise your voice to let your lawmakers know where you stand on environmental bills, our volunteer lobbying and grassroots power building teams offer workshops to prepare you for action. Most comfortable writing letters? We'll help you craft the best messages to get your letter into your local paper or your lawmaker's inbox. Love texting or talking on the phone? We'll teach you how to text and phone bank. Ready to step into your legislator's office and

*Continued on Page 4*

## *Volunteer, cont'd*

meet face-to-face? We'll guide you in planning your visit, developing your talking points, and connecting your personal story.

Perhaps you are passionate about reaching out to your neighbors and sharing the Sierra Club's work with your community. Representing the Sierra Club at community events, such as Earth Day or Pride Festivals, is a wonderful way to grow our supporter base. We can teach you how to plan and set up your information table and how to effectively communicate with the public.

What do YOU want to learn? Is there a volunteer activity you want to pursue but you are not sure you are ready to take it on? Let us know! We are developing new training all the time and want to know what will help you find success and fulfillment as a volunteer. Volunteering is a collaborative effort - your experience with Sierra Club should meet your objectives as well as support our work. This is a journey we take together, towards a cleaner, healthier, more equitable environment for all!

*To*

*is for Volunteer!*

Volunteer with us. Write to:  
[sierramoshannon@gmail.com](mailto:sierramoshannon@gmail.com).



## **Electric Vehicles Serve Diverse Communities**

**By Nancy F. Parks**

As electric vehicles fill our minds with visions of a future transportation that works for everyone and that is truly just for our communities, we search for many different programs and techniques to suit urban and rural, wealthy and poor, and bring equity to all. Equity being the " ... exact resources that are needed to reach an equal outcome," according to EVhybridnoire.com of California.

Right now, 21% of all vehicles sold in 2023 are zero emission electric vehicles (EV's). The 1.5 million EV's sold in California prompted their legislature to allocate \$2.9 million to expand fast charging in that state.

Historical challenges to buying EV's include absent charging infrastructure, the cost of EVs and in-home charging infrastructure, and inequitable car loan decisions. The average cost of an EV across the USA is \$66,997. The affordable Chevy Bolt is less than \$30,000 but General Motors will discontinue its production by the end of 2023.



**Affordable but disappearing:  
Chevy Bolt**

Studies show that more diverse communities are more willing to purchase an EV compared to white males making over \$100,000 per year, perhaps

because they are already disproportionately affected by pollution. There are currently 30,000 premature deaths per year in the USA caused by particulate matter/fine particle soot. With highways sited more often in low-income communities where cancer rates are higher within a half mile of that highway, we can expect that zero-emission vehicles can alleviate and reduce air pollutants, reduce lost days from work, reduce visits to hospitals emergency rooms from asthma and other acute respiratory and cardiac disease.

There needs to be intentional actions to support and enhance the supply and purchase of EV's. More used EV's at a lower price point will come onto the market because Uber and Lyft are mandated in California to use EVs by 2030.

Changes to tax law means that in 2024, the tax credit for EV's will be changed from a tax credit to a 'point of sale' price reduction. Making upfront costs more affordable. President Biden's Infrastructure bill has \$7.5 million for fast charging infrastructure, and 40% of monies off the top will go to disadvantaged communities across the country. Walmart, Subway, and 7-11 have committed to providing fast charging in their parking lots.

To enhance education about EV technology and ease of driving, the "National Drive EV Week" (September 21 - October 2) makes vehicles available to try out, and is sponsored by Interfaith Power and Light, Sierra Club, Plug-In America and the EV Association.

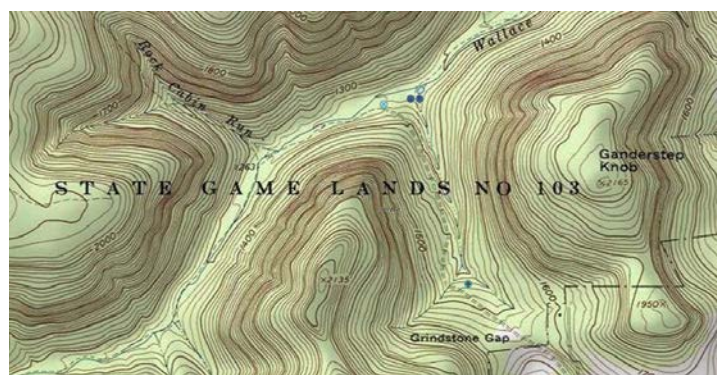
Imagine a front porch haven without noisy gas-powered vehicles speeding past you.

Imagine Quiet.

# Moshannon Group Visits Abandoned Gas Wells on State Gamelands

By Laurie Barr

In the spring of 2022, while hiking along Wallace Run in State Gameland 103 in Centre County, PA a member of the Moshannon Group Sierra Club (MGSC) came across a vigorously bubbling abandoned gas well. He reported the well to Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Oil and Gas Management. The DEP followed up the report by inspecting the well. A gas check of the ambient air above the bubbling well "showed 60% gas" according to the inspector's notes. This well, according to the department's database is one of four wells in State Gameland 103.



On April 1, members of the Moshannon Group went on an outing to visit the four abandoned gas wells. Two wells; Wallace Run 1 (API 027-21717) and Wallace Run 2 (API 027-21718) are located near the bottom of Grindstone Gap. After an easy (downhill) one mile hike from the SGL 103 parking area they located the vigorously bubbling well. Another well nearby was bubbling sporadically. Both had fluid flowing out of them. This was recently sampled by researchers from Penn State. Along with natural gas the samples revealed arsenic in the effluent.

Another SGL 103 well that MGSC members hiked to that day was drilled by Phillips Petroleum. This well was drilled on November 5, 1973 and plugged one month later. According to available well records it was a dry hole. That well is surrounded by a 6-foot fence located about a quarter mile from the parking area. A tall pipe filled with cement is a monument marking the plugged well's location.

A number of wildcat wells were drilled in Centre County, PA. around 4 miles north of SGL 103

exploratory wells were drilled into the Tuscarora Formation. These wells near Devil's Elbow produced 65% nitrogen, a non-flammable gas and 35% methane. The process of separating and marketing the gas produced by these wells made them uneconomical and they were abandoned.

The Department of Agriculture took historical aerial images of Pennsylvania beginning in the early 1930's. These images have been digitized by Penn Pilot and they are available online. The Penn Pilot images show access roads to well locations and pipelines that fragmented Pennsylvania's forests. A Penn Pilot image of what is now SGL 103 taken in 1949 shows an undisturbed forest. An aerial image taken 8 years later shows an access road along Wallace Run beginning at Brush Hollow Rd in Union Township. This road leads from the Gameland parking lot toward the area where the two bubbling wells are located at the foot of Grindstone Gap. A 1957 aerial image also shows clearings and what appears to be a narrow pipeline clearing.



Sierra Club members inspect an abandoned well.

The 4th well in SGL 103 is identified by Department of Environmental Protection's oil and gas well database as an orphan, dry hole.

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## *Abandoned Wells, cont'd*

On April 1st MGSC members didn't have time to locate that well, a storm front was moving in, the winds began whipping up during the hike and tree branches began falling, so the group hiked back to the parking lot before locating the 4th well, identified as COP TRACT 1 API 027-90001 by DEP's online database. The group may have reached the parking lot in the nick of time. On the drive out the hikers had to take a detour to get back to the main road because a tree had fallen across the road. A MGSC member re-visited the site recently and noticed a large hemlock tree had fallen along the access road to the wells. If you're in Centre County and would like to visit bubbling abandoned wells, this is a nice 1-mile hike down the old access road. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), signed into law by the Biden Administration has the potential to provide Pennsylvania with up to 400 million dollars to plug orphan wells over the next 10 years. These funds could be used to plug wells on privately owned land. In May of 2022 the Department

of Interior allocated \$250 million through the IIJA to California, Kentucky, Louisiana, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, and West Virginia to clean up and plug orphan well sites on public land. Pennsylvania allocated that funding to plug 18 wells in the Allegheny National Forest (ANF). The DEP estimates there may be as many as one hundred thousand abandoned wells in need of plugging in the ANF alone.

Thousands of wells, similar to State Gameland 103's bubbling wells, are scattered across the oil and gas region of Pennsylvania. Many are releasing natural gas. A main component of natural gas is methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. In the atmosphere, methane is 28 times more effective at trapping heat than carbon dioxide over a 100-year time scale. Over a 20-year timescale methane is 84 times more potent. Experts estimate there may be as many as 750k lost, orphan and abandoned wells in Pennsylvania. These wells, in need of plugging are playing a significant role in climate change.

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## **Join the Moshannon Group's Summer Gathering at Ole Bull State Park, Potter County**

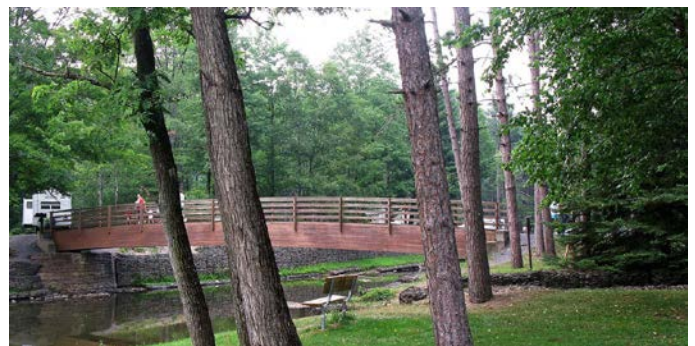
Any Chapter and Group members of the Sierra Club are welcome at the Moshannon Group Summer Get-Together, which will be held **August 18 through 20** at Ole Bull State Park in Potter County. Rustic Organized Group Tenting Site 001 has been reserved for those who want to camp on Friday and Saturday nights. Check-in and check-out time is 3 p.m. Friday and Sunday, respectively. There are also bed & breakfast options and motels in Coudersport and vicinity for those who would prefer to go that route.

The meeting will officially begin at 11 a.m. Saturday at Pavilion 006. Topics to be discussed will include abandoned oil & gas wells and a proposed injection well for frackwater waste in nearby Clara Township. There will be a potluck lunch at the pavilion.

If the weather is clear, a group of us will visit nearby Cherry Springs State Park in the evening(s). The astronomy field there offers a 360 degree view of the night sky in one of the darkest parts of the Eastern United States. We chose to have the

meeting during the waxing phase of the Crescent Moon, so expect spectacular views of the Milky Way and other celestial objects. Amateur and professional astronomers typically set up their equipment and welcome viewers who want to gaze at heavenly bodies like the planets and nebulae.

On Sunday, we will take a field trip to the State Gamelands adjacent to the private property where the Clara Township injection well could be situated. There are numerous abandoned wells in the Gamelands in various states of disrepair. Please contact Doug Mason at [ramakong1@gmail.com](mailto:ramakong1@gmail.com) for further details and to reserve your **free** camping spot at Ole Bull State Park. Be prepared to have a fun time in addition to learning about environmental challenges in the Commonwealth.



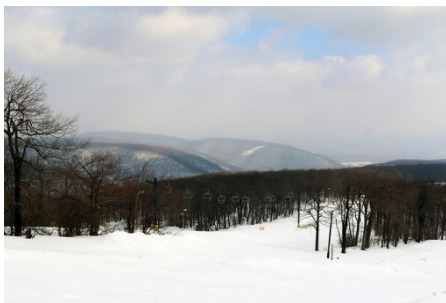
**Bridge over Kettle Creek at Ole Bull State Park**

# A Scenic Sampling of the Moshannon Group

By Steve Lachman

Here is a quick sampling of scenic wonders from the Moshannon Group's territory.

*Bedford County – Blue Knob State Park*



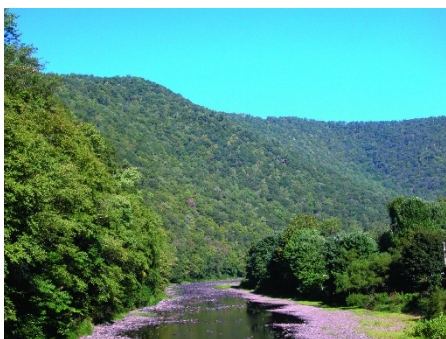
Blue Knob is Pennsylvania's second highest mountain and a favorite for skiers. It features many overlooks with august views.

*Blair County – Chimney Rocks*



These finger-like limestone pillars sit with a majestic view of Hollidaysburg and are a popular hiking destination.

*Cameron County – Bucktail State Park Natural Area*



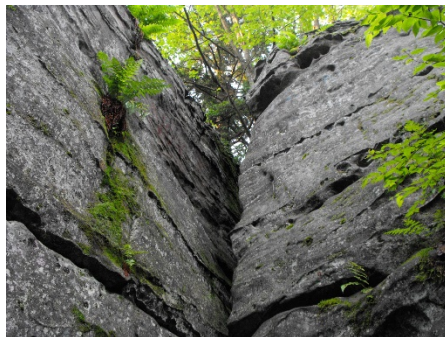
Near Emporium, this area contains stunning views and multiple hiking trails, not to mention elk herd sitings.

*Centre County – Penn's Cave*



Discovered and used by the Seneca Indians, this underground wonder was created from dissolving limestone. The boat tour of the cave is a popular tourist attraction.

*Clearfield County – Bilger's Rocks*



This sandstone formation is more than 300 million years old, and is a favorite place for hiking and climbing.

*Elk County – Elk Herd*



Both Elk and Cameron Counties are prime locations for viewing Pennsylvania's elk herd. This herd was relocated to Pennsylvania in 1913. The native elk population went extinct in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*Huntingdon County – Raystown Lake*



Raystown Lake, the largest lake completely in Pennsylvania, was completed by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1973. It is perhaps the recreational hub of central Pennsylvania, and a haven for waterfowl.

*McKean County – Kinzua Bridge State Park*



The Kinzua Viaduct was a 2,053 foot long and 301 foot tall railroad structure. After being partially destroyed by a tornado in 2003, it was converted into a pedestrian walkway.

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<b>Chair and Programs</b>	<b>*Doug Mason</b>	<b>814 753-0598</b>	<b>ramakong1@gmail.com</b>
<b>Air Quality, Conservation</b>	<b>Nancy Parks</b>	<b>814 349-5151</b>	<b>nancyfparks@gmail.com</b>
<b>Vice Chair, Banff Coordinator</b>	<b>*Kelly Forest</b>	<b>814 441-8916</b>	<b>khforest@icloud.com</b>
<b>Tabling</b>	<b>*Ernest Boyd</b>	<b>814 404-2275</b>	<b>ernestcboyd@gmail.com</b>
<b>Water Quality</b>	<b>*Dave Roberts</b>	<b>814 769-0550</b>	<b>puzzlewuzzle.dr@gmail.com</b>
<b>Membership, Newsletter Editor</b>	<b>*Steve Lachman</b>	<b>814 384-7505</b>	<b>stewelachman@gmail.com</b>
<b>Oil and Gas Wells</b>	<b>*Laurie Barr</b>	<b>814-203-9772</b>	<b>lauriebarr59@yahoo.com</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Ron Johnson</b>	<b>814 359-6841</b>	<b>rwjohnson1@outlook.com</b>
<b>Secretary and Chapter Delegate</b>	<b>Judy Tanner</b>	<b>814 542-8519</b>	<b>billtann@verizon.net</b>
<b>Special Events</b>	<b>Joan Bouchard</b>	<b>860-818-4421</b>	<b>bouchardjm@aol.com</b>
<b>Outings</b>	<b>Kat Alden</b>	<b>814 404-2165</b>	<b>aldenkat@gmail.com</b>
<b>Outings</b>	<b>Kevin Abbott</b>	<b>814 769-3644</b>	<b>kevingabbott@comcast.net</b>
<b>Clean Energy</b>	<b>*Ellen Foreman</b>	<b>240 418-9721</b>	<b>esforeman@yahoo.com</b>

\* Indicates Executive Committee Members