

► Allegany State Park

Groups seek state intervention to prevent drilling

By Rick Miller
Olean Times Herald

SCIENCE LAKE — A coalition of groups called Friends of Allegany are calling on state officials to buy the Allegany State Park mineral rights on 2,800 acres that a drilling company wants to drill for oil and natural gas.

Members of the Friends of Allegany groups, including the Adirondack Mountain Club and the Sierra Club, visited a drilling site on the Pennsylvania side of the state park's southern border Saturday.

It was located about 50 yards from the New York-Pennsylvania border on land leased from the Bradford Water Authority. Much of the runoff from the area would go into the park. U.S. Energy Development Corp., an Amherst-based company, recently told state park officials it wanted to begin exercising its mineral rights in an adjacent 2,800-acre area in Allegany State Park.

The Friends of Allegany are asking State Parks Commissioner Carol Ash and Gov. David Paterson to take steps to purchase the mineral rights beneath areas of the park. The group is asking others to write to the state officials and state lawmakers to protect the park from



Rick Miller/Olean Times Herald

A group of hikers, including members of the Adirondack Mountain Club and the Sierra Club, look over a gas and oil well drilling site in the Allegany National Forest in Pennsylvania. The well is less than 50 yards from Allegany State Park. The company that owns the well has recently proposed drilling in the 65,000-acre New York state park.

drilling.

Jay Wopperer of Clarence in Erie County, and a member of the Adirondack Mountain Club, was among those who hiked up the Black Snake Mountain Trail in the state park Saturday to look at drilling sites just over the border in Pennsylvania.

Another Adirondack Mountain Club member, Wayne Gall, also of Erie County, showed the group, numbering about a dozen,

several uncommon plants along the trail. He, too, was concerned about the effects of modern-day drilling in the state park.

When the state park was created in 1921, sponsors were more interested in acquiring land than mineral rights, which was permitted under law. Even later state land purchases in the park did not include mineral rights.

Dr. Lawrence Beahan of

Amherst, a member of the Sierra Club, who expressed concern over the privately-held mineral rights in the park more than 20 years ago during the controversy over a state park master plan, was on the hike Saturday.

He also expressed dismay the oil and natural gas drilling would spill over into the state park after consuming so much of the nearby Allegheny National Forest. Hikers looked at a satellite

map of one area of the National Forest west of Bradford, Pa. that was crisscrossed with drilling roads and drill sites only 500 feet apart.

Mr. Gall said the Friends of Allegany has started the campaign in opposition to the proposed drilling in the park. Drilling roads and pipelines would destroy habitat, pollute surface and ground water, and increase noise, he said.