

# HUMANE SOCIETY

## MERGING ANTI-HUNTING FORCES

By: Bob Frye  
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[http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/s\\_545205.html](http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/s_545205.html)

The voice of America's anti-hunting forces is trying to become more powerful.

In what the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance is calling a "precisely-calculated effort," the Humane Society of the United States is attempting to consolidate all of the animal rights movement's political power under a single umbrella.

Humane Society director Wayne Pacelle reportedly told one publication that his organization may soon merge with at least three unnamed animal rights organizations.

"The HSUS is playing up a mainstream reputation in hopes of becoming the primary mouthpiece for the animal rights movement," said Bud Pidgeon, president of the Sportsmen's Alliance. "It is not difficult to convince a smaller group to unite with a multimillion dollar organization that will push its political agenda, be it to end hunting or eliminate animal research.

"Sportsmen will no doubt see HSUS continue to grow in this way."

The Humane Society previously absorbed the Fund for Animals in 2005 and the Doris Day Animal League in 2006. It has 10.5 million members or supporters -- 3.1 million more than it had just five years ago.

The group has an annual budget of \$112 million, some of which it used -- for the first time ever last year -- to back or oppose candidates for public office based on their animal-related voting history.

### **Young hunters**

If there's some good news for hunters -- albeit mixed good news -- it's that they are getting a little boost from youngsters.

According to new data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the ratio of hunters ages 6 to 15 has grown almost 4 percent since 2001. In that year, 10.9 percent of hunters were between 6 and 15 years old. In 2006, though, that had jumped to 11.3 percent.

That's significant because hunting was the only one of the three outdoor activities monitored by the Fish and Wildlife Service to show an increase in youth participation.

Twenty-three percent of fishermen were between the ages of 6 and 15 in 2001. In 2006, just 21.7 percent did. Likewise, the percentage of wildlife watchers ages 6 to 15 was 16 percent in 2001; in 2006, it fell to 14.4.

The reason those numbers are of mixed value from the hunting side is that participation among older people continues to decline. The number of hunters 16 and older declined by more than 3 percent, to 12.5 million, from 2001-06.

Sportsmen's groups are hopeful that new initiatives aimed at recruiting young hunters, like Pennsylvania's mentor hunting program, ultimately will offset those declines.

### **Benefits of wilderness**

Designating more of the Allegheny National Forest as official "wilderness" would be good for Pennsylvania's economy, according to a new report.

According to "Allegheny National Forest Wilderness: Economic Benefits for Pennsylvania," wilderness supports economic opportunities, enhances property values and boosts recreation.

Adding to it in the Allegheny would not impact the Forest Service's ability to meet its timbering goals, either, says the report, which was done by The Wilderness Society and Friends of Allegheny Wilderness.

Friends of Allegheny Wilderness has proposed designating eight special areas totaling 54,460 acres in the forest for wilderness designation. Less than 2 percent of the Allegheny is currently listed as wilderness.

Nationwide, 18 percent of national forests are wilderness. In the East, 11 percent of forests bear that designation.

The complete report can be downloaded at [www.pawild.org/pdfs/ANF\\_wilderness\\_economics.pdf](http://www.pawild.org/pdfs/ANF_wilderness_economics.pdf).

*Bob Frye can be reached at [bfrye@tribweb.com](mailto:bfrye@tribweb.com) or 724-838-514*