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Spring 2023

Forest Defender Shot and Killed by Atlanta Police



see story inside on pages 5 and 17

The Buffalo Springs Restoration Project A Terrible Plan in Store for Orange, Crawford Counties

by Jeff Stant



INDIANAPOLIS, IN — We thought we had seen it all with the Houston South Vegetation Management and Restoration Project. That project proposed to log 4,370 acres and burn 13,500 acres, a scale of impact that had never been proposed before for an individual project in the history of the Hoosier National Forest (HNF). But then, in the fall of 2021, the US Forest Service proposed a project with an impact more massive than Houston South. The Buffalo Springs Restoration Project proposes to log 5,124 acres and burn up to 15,000 acres of HNF land, US Army Corps land, and even more acres if private landowners can be persuaded to join the project. Similar to the Houston South's threat to Monroe Reservoir, most of this land is on steep hillsides with erodible soils that drain into another large public water supply, Patoka Reservoir, from which 150,000 Hoosiers get their drinking water. Yet worse than Houston South, where the burning and logging will occur several miles from Monroe Reservoir, at Buffalo Springs the logging and

continued on page 9

Citizens Write Preferred Alternative for Buffalo Springs

by Andy Mahler



INDIANA — PROTECT OUR WOODS has prepared a Citizens' Preferred Alternative (CPA) to the Forest Service's

proposal for wholesale logging, widespread repeated burning, road-building, and herbicide spraying in Buffalo Springs. The CPA allows us to work for a positive vision that would have us partnering with the Forest Service to emphasize and protect what we value about the forest, rather than just opposing their current proposal that would degrade and irreparably harm those values and the quality of life for area residents and visitors alike.

The CPA emphasizes water quality, heritage preservation, enhanced recreational opportunities, biodiversity and endangered species protection, climate moderation, carbon sequestration, majestic old trees, scenic beauty, and natural science education. It reflects changing environmental and societal conditions, and evolving public attitudes. It takes a watershed-based approach and places the role of public ownership in the context of the entire landscape rather than managing primarily for a few commercially valuable species. It also takes into consideration the critical role played by surrounding private, corporate, utility, and agricultural lands in meeting critical conservation objectives. The CPA will encourage greater public use and enjoyment of the forest, and will strengthen the local economy.

While the concepts presented in this *continued on page 5*

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Heartwood mourns the passing of our friend and devoted eco-troubador



Robert Hoyt



Robert Hoyt embodied a radical empathy the world sorely needs. Back in the 90s when he was touring all over the country as a folksinging troubadour, he was famously accompanied by his companion Claude the paraplegic cat. His involved care for Claude and the sacrifices he made personally and professionally are one example of Robert's giant heart. Because of the public nature of those eco-folk years they will be much eulogized but it was only one chapter of a well lived life. His past twenty years as a father, working healthcare provider, and alter ego as piano man Bob Palindrome are as much how I will remember him. I feel honored to have traveled on parallel roads with Robert Hoyt for a time, and his songs will stay with me forever.

~ Casey Neill

Through Robert I became familiar with the wonderful music of folks like Darryl Cherney, Judi Bari, Danny Dolinger, Dana Lyons, Casey Neill, Peg Millett, and others who made up the cultural backbone of the Earth First! network as it existed then. All of Robert's concerts were an introduction to these artists, and an introduction to what was happening with Earth First!-related activities, forest defense campaigns, conferences, and other things that were going on or coming up somewhere. Robert made a big difference in the world for a lot of people, very much including me. One of the best things I ever did in life was to be Robert's bass player one summer.

Long live planet Earth, and long live the music of Robert Hoyt. I'll see you at the campfire, beneath the stars, guitar in hand.

~ David Rovics

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Heartwood welcomes any and all volunteer contributions to this publication from the grassroots community. Deadline for fall issue contributions is August 15 for publication September 1. Send us your campaign updates, photos, commentary, satire, art, poems, politics, polemics, rants, or recipes to info@heartwood.org.

More info on our website: https://heartwood.org/heartbeat/

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Heartwood invites volunteers to join one of our standing board committees to help with the work of making Heartwood happen! Forest Watch, events, publications, and more. Contact us for more information to get involved: info@heartwood.org.





I roam these hills
 And these peaceful valleys
 I've seen the work
 Of a mighty hand
 Tall trees grow
 And the water sings
 It sings the song of the
 Buffalo Springs

This land was used
 By the ones before
 Until this land
 Could be used no more
 They threw up their hands
 And they walked away
 Left the land alone
 And Nature had her way

Long gone
 Is the chestnut tree
 The buffalo
 A distant memory
 On ancient fields
 New woods have grown
 And the works of man
 Are now piles of stone

Now the men
 Entrusted with this land
 That belongs to all
 Just because they can
 With eyes on money
 The power of a king
 They plan to destroy
 The place of which we sing

I roam these hills
 And these peaceful valleys
 I've seen the work
 Of a mighty hand
 Tall trees grow
 And the water sings
 It sings the song of the
 Buffalo Springs

words and music by Robert Hoyt

Ride the moonlight home
 Let the towns drift slowly by
 Ride the moonlight home
 Back to that shack among the pines
 High above the hemlock grove
 A star will always shine
 So ride the moonlight home, my friend
 Ride the moonlight home

~ Matt Peters

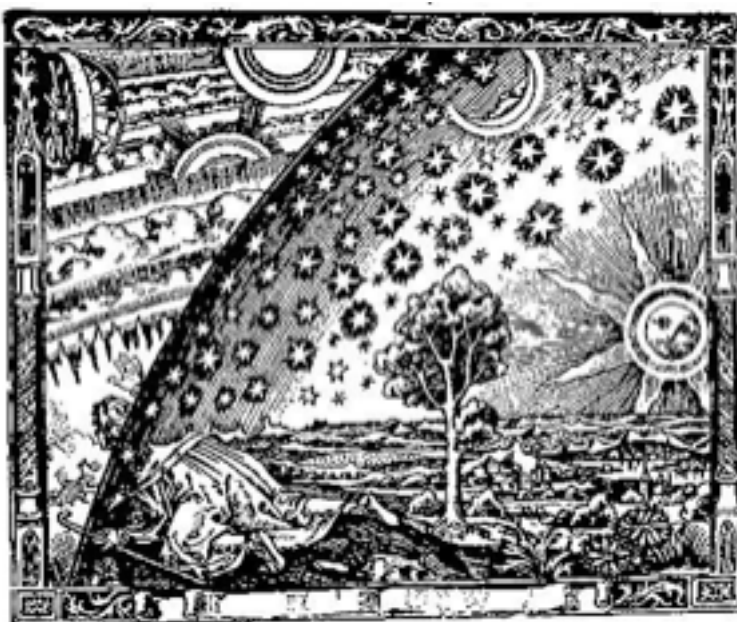
Robert Hoyt drew his last breath on the afternoon of February 1, at home on a quiet street in Bloomington with his beloved daughter Cicada by his side, as the green comet made its closest approach to our home planet earth in 50,000 years.

Robert was loved from coast to coast and everywhere in between, by all those touched by his deeply heartfelt lyrics, the power of his voice, the perfectionism in his performance, his moving melodies. His deep love for the wild was matched only by his affection for the people who share that love and a willingness to take action to defend the last, best wild places.

There are many things you can do to honor Robert Hoyt and continue the work that was so important to him. Join us for this year's Heartwood Forest Council to be held at Camp Rivervale, between Spring Mill State Park and the White River near Mitchell, Indiana, Memorial Day weekend, May 26-29. The program for the event will focus on protecting the Buffalo Springs area that Robert spent his life exploring, celebrating in song, and working to defend. See page 11 for more information.

Help us defend Buffalo Springs. The Forest Service plans to clearcut the forest immediately adjacent to Robert's land and then repeatedly burn it for up to 25 years, spray it with herbicide, and convert the nearby hiking trails into logging roads closed to the public for up to fifteen years. Please make a donation to Heartwood indicating that the donation is to be used for the legal defense of Buffalo Springs.

You can also donate to a project that was near and dear to Robert's heart: a billboard (a Buffalo Billboard) on the highway greeting visitors to the Hoosier National Forest, and yard signs with the same message. Please send donations to Protect Our Woods, PO Box 352, Paoli IN 47454.



And of course get out in the forest or on a wild river, look up into the night sky and look for that little star that we will all remember forevermore as the heart's home of the one and only Robert Hoyt.



~ Andy Mahler

Uncovering Hidden Truth in the Wayne National Forest



by Nathan Johnson

deru – also **dreu-**: Proto-Indo-European (PIE) root meaning “tree”, specifically “oak tree”, as well as “firm, solid, steadfast, faithful”.

(See also, **weid** – PIE for “to see” or “to know”; **deru-weid**: “oak-seer” or “oak-knower”.)

Trēow: Old English word meaning both “tree” and “true”.

IRONTON, OH – It was no surprise that “Sunny Oaks” was and is a terrible U.S. Forest Service timber project. Announced in the wake of a massive Trump-era timber target increase, it authorizes thousands of acres of clearcuts in the Wayne National Forest. To top it off, the project’s Environmental Assessment (EA) fails to analyze substantial threatened harms to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) relevant factors like mycorrhizal networks and oak ecosystems.

In short, I knew we had a great case when I filed *Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) v. US Forest Service* back in September of 2021. But even I was surprised by what else was hiding in this case’s administrative record.

The “Sunny Oaks” record contains damning Forest Service documents the agency never disclosed to the public during the NEPA process — documents showing that the Forest Service cut important parts of the Wayne’s forest plan to bits.

The Wayne’s forest plan contains mandatory protections for endangered Indiana bats and for substantial numbers of the loose-barked trees they roost in – white oaks in particular. Thanks to field verification work fairly late in the development of “Sunny Oaks”, the Forest Service realized that large clearcuts are simply not compatible with the plan’s numerical tree retention requirements. White oaks, it turned out, stood in the way of the agency’s clearcutting agenda. The Forest Service’s response: make white oaks disappear.

In its undisclosed project records, the Forest Service determined that loose-barked trees like white oaks “do not exist in nature”, and, therefore, that the forest plan’s mandatory Indiana bat tree retention standard was “nullified”. Never mind that white oaks are likely the most numerous species in many and perhaps even most of the stands “Sunny Oaks” is targeting.

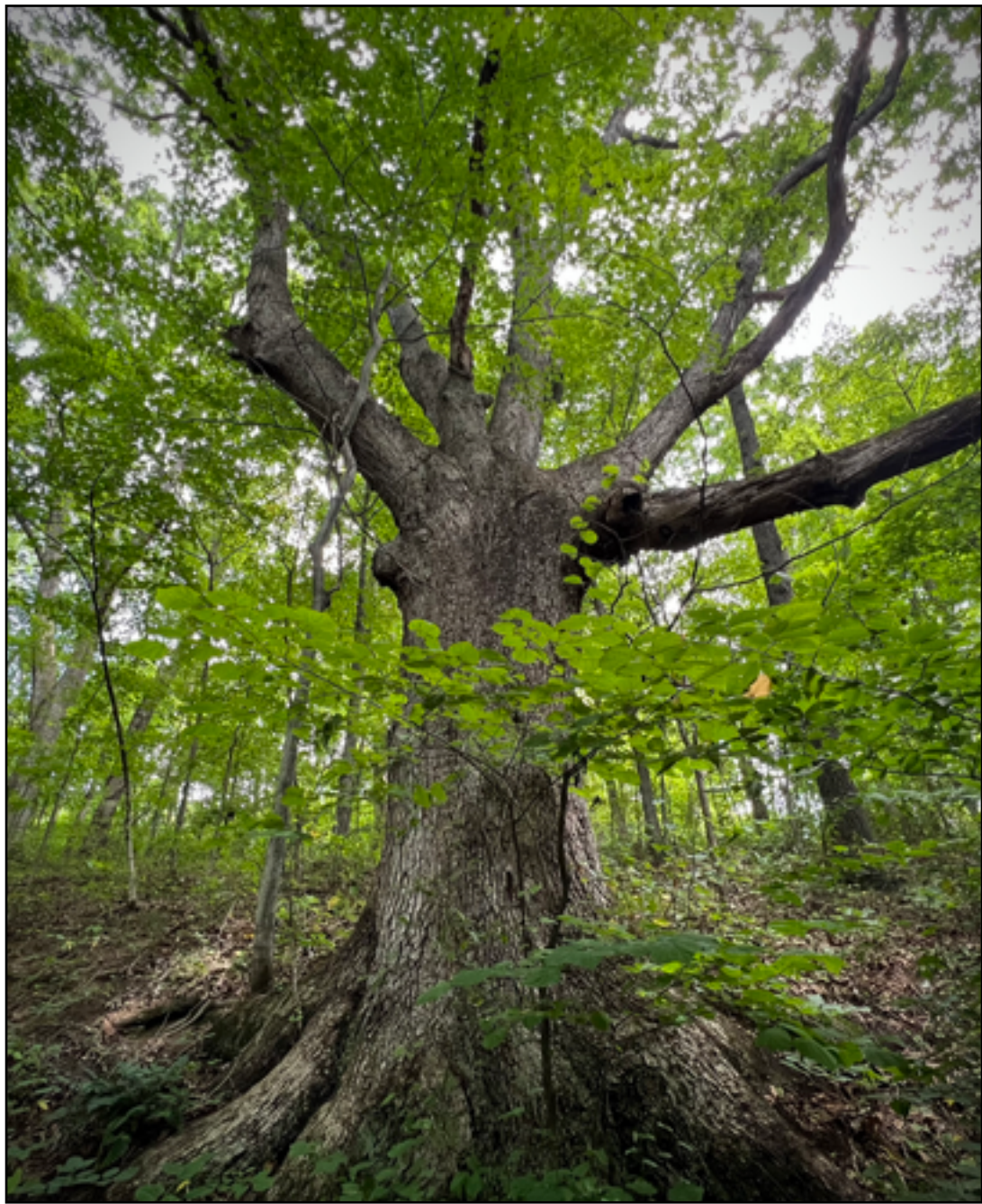
In fact, *Quercus alba* (white oak) once dominated southeastern Ohio, accounting for 40% of the canopy according to pre-settlement witness tree records. Historical and modern-day clearcutting are what have driven the decline of this species. And its numbers are in steep decline today. White oak is uniquely unsuited to heavy cutting. When a white oak grove is clearcut, it almost never comes back.

The Forest Service’s hidden disappearing act — the idea that white oaks don’t exist in nature, thereby “nullifying” the plan’s tree retention standard — violates the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), NEPA, and the Administrative Procedures Act’s (APA) “arbitrary and capricious” standard of review. The fact that the Forest Service never disclosed its standard nullification decision to the public further underscores these violations.

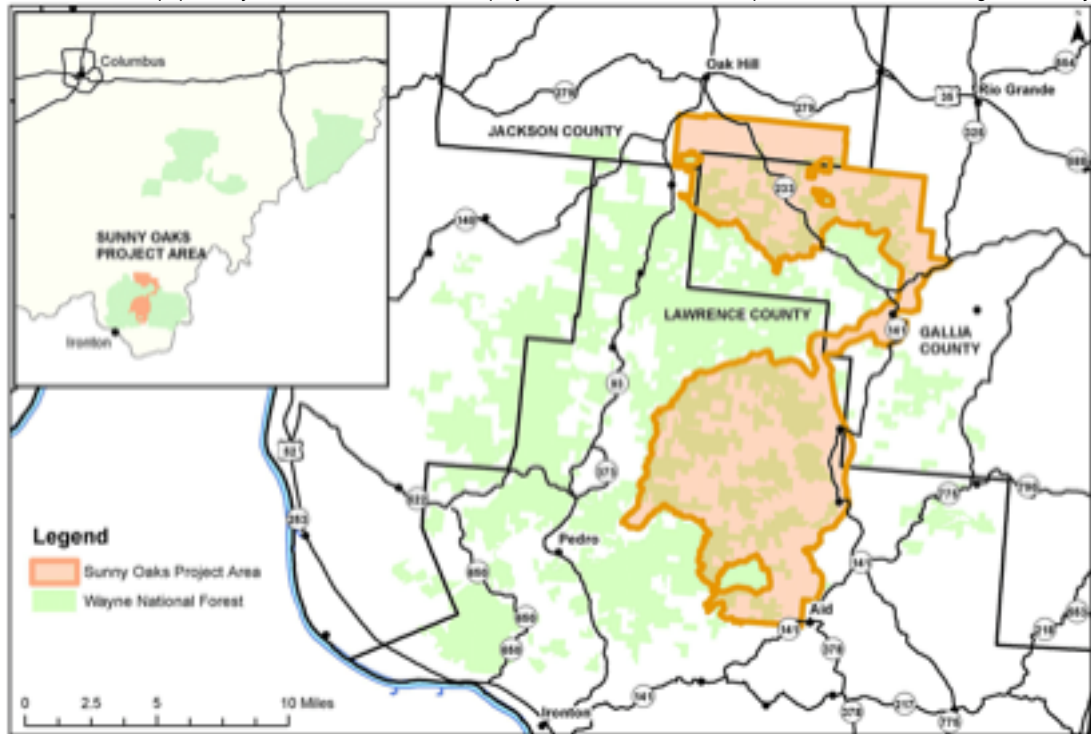
The final kicker here is that the OEC advanced an especially apt project alternative during scoping. The offered alternative: retain all white oak trees in the project’s cuts. Of course, it turned out that the Wayne’s plan required the Forest Service to do this anyway. As one could probably guess, the Forest Service eliminated the OEC’s alternative from NEPA analysis.

I’ve come to see and love oak trees, especially white oak trees, during my time exploring and now litigating the “Sunny Oaks” project. This case is now fully briefed and oral argument is scheduled for early March.

May the truth prevail.



Top: photo by Nathan Johnson. Below: map by OEC. Bottom: Indiana bat, photo from Center for Biological Diversity



Citizens' Alternative from page 1

alternative are specific to the Buffalo Springs project area, they are intended to serve as a model for conservation throughout the Hoosier National Forest and the entire Heartwood region, in which publicly owned forests are recognized for their increasingly important role as biodiversity and climate preserves.

Water: The Buffalo Springs area features numerous fresh water and mineral springs with the highest water quality in Indiana. The project is in the watershed of Patoka Lake, a public water resource for an estimated 100,000 people, and the world-renowned and critically endangered Lost River karst ecosystem. Logging, road-building, and burning accelerate erosion and sedimentation; herbicide spraying releases pollutants into air, soil, and water. Intact forests ensure optimum water quality by acting as a filter and buffer for Patoka Lake and other area water resources.

Heritage and Culture: The Buffalo Springs area takes its name from the Buffalo Trace, a primary transportation corridor for bison, Native Americans, and early settlers to the area. Not only are the best remnants of the Buffalo Trace present, but so are numerous historical, cultural and archaeological artifacts. These include the Initial Survey Point, Lost River karst features, numerous pioneer homesites, the famed Lick Creek Settlement homesteaded by Black pioneers and formerly enslaved people, and Native American sites, among others.



photo by Indiana Forest Alliance

Endangered Species: The Buffalo Springs area provides critical habitat for twelve rare and endangered bat species; neotropical migratory songbirds; insect pollinators; medicinal and botanical plants such as ginseng that require cool, moist conditions found in undisturbed forests; box turtles and other reptiles and amphibians; extraordinary fungal diversity; and soil biota only found in healthy natural forests.

Recreation: The Buffalo Springs area features exceptional recreational opportunities including abundant habitat for white-tailed deer, wild turkey, and other popular wildlife species, numerous recreational trails for hikers, horseback riders, and mountain bikers, scenic beauty, boating and canoeing, caving, bird-watching, mushroom hunting, foraging, nature study, and spiritual renewal — all of which would be severely degraded by extensive logging and burning.

Carbon and Climate: Large areas of mature forest moderate weather extremes and buffer the impacts of climate change. Temperate forests are the most effective natural carbon sinks on the planet, sequestering vast stores of carbon not just in the standing forest but in root systems and forest soils. Cutting down forests and exposing forest soils to the drying effects of the sun and the erosive effects of wind and rain will release the stored carbon they hold.

Take Action! See page 9 for what you can do today to help protect Buffalo Springs.



Spring Beauty, Claytonia virginica. Photo by Rock Emmert

Forest Defender Murdered by Police in Atlanta, Georgia



by Atlanta Forest Defenders

ATLANTA, GA – On January 18, police shot and killed protester Manuela Teran, affectionately known as Tortuguita, in the Weelaunee Forest. This 381-acre forest, situated in south Atlanta, has for the past two years been the site of tree sits and nonviolent protests to stop Cop City, a sprawling training facility for civilian police forces. Dozens of heavily-armed DeKalb Police, Atlanta Police, and Georgia State police shut down Weelaunee People's Park and nearby streets before entering the tree line with guns drawn and heavy machinery poised to continue forest destruction the morning of January 18.

Police have repeatedly raided this public park, flattened community gardens and art installations, attacked protesters with chemical weapons and rubber bullets, and threatened lethal force. During past raids, police have consistently escalated violent tactics on peaceful people who were sitting in trees or walking through the public park. Since June 6, 2022, activists and community members fighting to Defend the Atlanta Forest and Stop Cop City have been demanding that officers stop bringing weapons into the forest after APD pointed their weapons at peaceful protesters.

Since the fatal shooting, the operation has continued, with heavy machinery entering the forest and cops shooting pepper balls at people who remain in the park – as if nothing has happened. The loss of life remains meaningless to the police. Police killed a forest defender for loving this earth, for taking a stand against the ongoing destruction of the planet and its people. Indiscriminate police murder, unfettered police violence are exactly why people have, for two years, called for the Cop City project to be cancelled immediately. As politicians invest in cops, militarization and police budgets are only increasing. Meanwhile, police murders peaked in 2022: US cops killed 100 people every month.

What is taking place is a classic example of tyrannical government overreach. The public has a right to defend its interests. We are advocates of a free and peaceful society built on cooperation and mutual understanding. The government is escalating this situation pointlessly. Allow peace to return to our community. Cancel the Cop City project. Return Intrenchment Creek Park to the public. Drop the charges against protesters. An innocent life has been taken and yet the machines continue.

Here are some ways to support the defense of the forest in Atlanta:

- Donate to the Atlanta Solidarity Fund to support legal costs for arrested protesters and ongoing legal action.
- Call on investors in the project to divest from Cop City. Call on builders of the project to drop their construction contracts.
- Organize political solidarity bail funds, forest defense funds, and forest defense committees where you live.
- Participate in or organize local solidarity actions.

Visit <https://defendtheatlantaforest.org/solidarity/> to learn more.

See page 17 for related story about Cop City.



photo courtesy StopCopCity.org

Ohio House Bill 507 Would Devastate Outdoor Recreation Economic Sector



by Randi Pokladnik

COLUMBUS, OH — During the recent “lame duck” session, Ohio’s legislature and Governor DeWine rushed to pass HB 507. The amended bill expedites land-leasing for high pressure hydraulic fracking in Ohio’s state parks, forests, and state university campuses. Since 2011, Ohio law has said an agency “may” lease land for oil and gas drilling, but the new bill will “compel state agencies to lease these lands”.

The Oil and Gas Land Management Commission met on Wednesday, February 1 to discuss HB 507 and adopt rules for reviewing proposed parcels to be drilled. Currently, little more than a “showing of parcel identification and registration, proof of insurance, and satisfaction of financial assurance” are all that is required before obtaining a drilling lease.

A recent commentary in the January 6, 2023, *Ohio Outdoor News* titled “Outdoor Recreation: Now an \$862 Billion Industry” detailed the economic benefits of outdoor recreation in the USA. “The US Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Economic Analysis 2021 data showed outdoor recreation generates \$862 billion in economic output and 4.5 million jobs.”

According to a report from The Ohio State University, “the contribution of outdoor recreational trips in Ohio to Ohio’s overall economic activity is estimated to be \$8.1 billion per year, which amounts to 1.3% of Ohio’s economy. The outdoor recreational sector is estimated to employ 132,790 workers in Ohio, or 1.9% of Ohio’s workforce.”

Ohio has 75 state parks, 20 state memorials, 25 state forests and 12 state wildlife areas. The Ohio State Park system encompasses over 170,000 acres of land, and over 31 million visitors come to an Ohio park each year. Ohio’s State Forests cover about 200,000 acres and are located in 21 counties.

For many people, both in and out of state, Ohio state parks and forests provide a sanctuary to escape our hectic lives and find the peace that nature offers. It also provides a space for recreating, bird watching, fishing, hiking, canoeing, boating, hunting, and biking. These state areas may soon fall prey to oil and gas development.

Fracking and all the build-out that this industry requires will dramatically damage these fragile forest ecosystems. To believe that one can conduct fracking and still sustain a vibrant, healthy forest ecosystem is ludicrous. The Haliburton loophole legislation of 2005 exempted natural gas drilling from the Safe Drinking Water Act. It exempts companies from disclosing the chemicals used during hydraulic fracturing. Essentially, the provision took the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) off the job, leaving fracking virtually unregulated. Who will guarantee that every stage of the process will be conducted in a way that will not degrade the state lands that supposedly belong to Ohio’s tax-paying citizens?

Fracking infrastructure, pipelines, well pads, and compressor stations, would harm and even destroy the plants, trees and their seed banks. A study conducted in the Fernow Experimental Forest in West Virginia showed that the forest ecosystem was affected by forest clearing, erosion, and road building. Vegetation death resulted from direct exposure to fluid spills.

Fracking wastewater known as produced water has been found to contain water soluble radionuclides. Elevated levels of chloride and bromide, combined with strontium, radium, oxygen, and hydrogen isotopic compositions are also present in the Marcellus shale wastewaters.

Peer-reviewed studies show that watersheds surrounding frack well pads test positive for radioactive substances. Drilling companies deliberately spread wastewater on roads and fields. Pollutants from the wastewater can then contaminate local waterways. Drilling operators sometimes spray wastewater on dirt and gravel roads to control dust or on paved roads to melt ice.

Fracking well pads and infrastructure will require clearcutting trees and vegetation. The combined land needed for fracking one well can total more than 30 acres. This fragmentation could affect plant reproduction. The amount of equipment brought onto the sites introduces and

encourages the spread of invasive species. These species hitch-hike on gravel delivered to build pads and roads and in mud on the tires and undercarriages of trucks traveling those roads.

Fracking requires huge quantities of concrete for well casings and gravel for well pad stabilization. This means that the traffic in the region will increase tremendously, becoming a burden on roads and to citizens living in the area. Each well requires approximately 592 one-way trips, with a truck that carries between 80,000-100,000 lbs. when fully loaded. Multiple wells are drilled on each pad, and each bore is fracked multiple times. The traffic from the development of one well is equivalent to 3.4 million car trips.

The process of high-pressure hydraulic fracking requires 4-6 million gallons of water per well. This surface water would no doubt be withdrawn from the local streams resulting in harm to aquatic organisms and can affect the diversity of species, too.

Fracking fluids typically contain chemical additives, e.g. friction reducers, biocides, and surfactants. There are over 400 chemicals that can be used, many of which are known carcinogens and endocrine disruptors. This includes the “forever chemicals” known as PFAS. Very little is known about the potential effects of the chemicals, metals, organics, and other contaminants once they enter terrestrial or aquatic food webs. There are numerous cases of fracking fluid spills killing fish.

Land clearing and construction of wells, pipelines, and roads can result in excessive sediment in surface water. The researchers found that the amount of sediment in seven major streams in the Fayetteville Shale strongly corresponded with the density of gas wells in their drainage area.

Fracking operations have been known to allow flaring of natural gas, resulting in flames being visible in the night sky. Studies show this process affects plant diversity. Fracking operations are very noisy. Noise pollution generated by natural gas extraction causes some avian species to avoid breeding sites resulting in reduced bird abundance. The data of impacts of chronic anthropogenic noise from energy-sector activity on abundance of songbirds shows a marked decline in the bird populations.

Climate change, the elephant in the room, is being exacerbated by our reliance on fossil fuels. Fracking operations release fugitive methane emissions that are much higher in quantity than what the industry reports. Methane gas is about 86 times as potent as carbon dioxide in trapping infrared light, which contributes to climate change.

The aesthetic beauty of the forest will be forever damaged with the visible scars of fracking operations left behind. Who wants to hike through a park surrounded by frack pads, pipelines, access roads, and other appurtenant structures? Who wants to ingest wild game and fish taken from areas where they could be contaminated with carcinogens and endocrine-disrupting chemicals? Allowing fracking in our outdoor recreation areas, state parks, and forests is a big mistake.



The Ohio Department of Natural Resources is due to update their five-year Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, last updated in 2018. photo from internet/ODNR

HB 507: Selling Our Ohio State Parks, Forests, and Other Lands to Oil and Gas



by Loraine McCosker

ATHENS, OH — House bill 507, originally a poultry bill, was passed in the Ohio state house and sent to the senate where an amendment was introduced that declared natural gas “green energy” and mandates oil and gas leasing on all state public lands including universities, ODOT, anything except Natural Areas and Preserves. This amendment was written by the Oil and Gas industry and the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), it was later learned, as written in the *Washington Post*.

This law followed a 2011 bill, HB 133, that received expansive public input and testimony as well as media attention. HB 133 passed nonetheless and stated lands “shall lease”, where the 507 amendment states “must lease”. HB 133,

The rules must go through several agencies. We anticipate that will take many months. In the meantime, once HB 507 comes into effect, (April 7) the mandated leasing will begin. Guidelines are being created on March 1 at the next commission meeting. It is not clear if those will have any bearing on leasing of lands.

Craig Butler, former Director of Ohio EPA and now Director of the Muskingum Watershed District Conservancy and Ohio University Board of Trustees trustee (newly appointed by the governor in November 2022) will be in attendance advising the commission. Butler signed his name to a letter of support for HB 507 which was posted on the Ohio legislative services page. The letter states that it is written by Oil and Gas.



photo from internet

though signed by Governor Kasich, never instituted the Oil and Gas Land Management Commission. Under DeWine, this commission began meeting in 2019 and was put on hold with the pandemic but continued meeting behind closed doors.

Nonetheless, citizens rallied against HB 507 in mid-December, wrote emails, and called the House speaker as well as Governor Dewine’s office. Over 750 emails were received by the governor, a representative sample of the community across Ohio including hunters and anglers, environmental groups, educators, and private citizens from all walks of life. Still, the governor ignored our concerns and stated that he was sure there would be no surface impacts on public lands, a quote in the Columbus Dispatch.

The passage of HB 507 in late December was a violation of the Ohio constitution that maintains requirements of public involvement and amendments. This did not stop Governor DeWine from signing this bill late on a Friday afternoon in January.

On February 1, the Oil and Gas Land Management Commission met to discuss rules and the lease. There was much public input prior to and during that meeting requesting parameters of public involvement with notification and comment periods. Again over 700 comments were received. Again those requests were denied and stated that they would be addressed later.

The effort to create a perception that fossil gas is green energy echoes the greenwashing efforts in other states with similar legislatures and fossil fuel resources. Butler, as director of the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy, has leased thousands of acres in the watershed and sold their water for fracking.

There is incredible corruption in the Ohio state house and governor from the Oil and Gas lobby. The Oil and Gas Land Management Commission is made up of oil and gas attorneys as well as one conservation representative who advocates for oil and gas leasing. The HB 6 scandal (now in court) has revealed the corruption of the state house and the likely complicity of the DeWine administration.

There has been state as well as national news regarding this action. Our goal is to watch over the work of the Oil and Gas Commission and to have advocates for the many lands that are potentially threatened. We will attend the March 1 meeting and we will continue to build awareness and engagement of this violation of the public trust. A group is developing. These are the lands of the citizens of Ohio who need and demand clean air, water and places to recreate. If you live near Ohio state land and can act as a steward or just want to be engaged, please contact:

Loraine McCosker, Loraine.mccosker@gmail.com, or Cathy Cowan Becker becker271@gmail.com.



Beautiful World

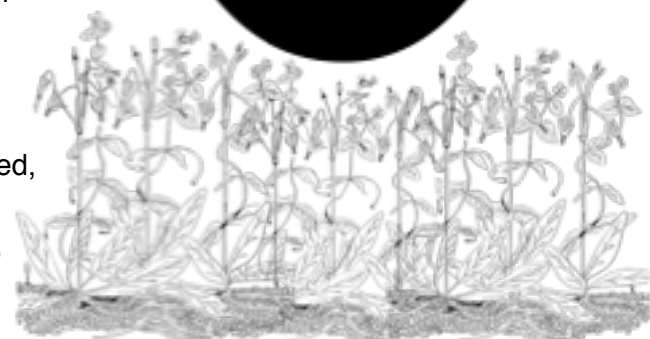
When birds soar through clean air,
we may rest.
When our waters run pure,
we'll be free.
When all creatures' homes
are just left alone,
we may sleep;
we may dream.
May it be.

When trees may grow old,
we'll be there.
Left to live their full lives
as they dare.
When all honey bees
find the pollen they need,
we may sleep;
we may dream.
May it be.

Eagles fly high above,
looking down on what we've done.
Beautiful world coming into view.
We know what we need to do.

When the smallest of beings
has no fear,
when all children on earth
are revered,
when we drink without ration
from the well of compassion,
we may sleep;
we may dream.
May it be.

*song lyrics by Kris Lasher
from her 2022 album, Sanctuary
on Spotify and Apple Music*



The Wild American Chestnut Is on Its Way Back



by Anne Petermann and Steve Taylor

MAINE – On his land in western Maine, naturalist Bernd Heinrich is surrounded by American chestnut trees and seedlings. More than 1,300 of them grow on his land. Only four of these trees were planted by him, the rest with the help of blue jays and squirrels.

Heinrich, a professor emeritus from the University of Vermont, recently published a new article in *Northeastern Naturalist* (2022, Vol. 29 Issue 3, p.321-334), that describes “the reproduction, dispersal, and regeneration of a wild population of *Castanea dentata* (American chestnut), established from four seed-bearing trees planted in a western Maine forest in 1982.”

According to the research, the trees show no obvious signs of the introduced blight that, along with unsustainable logging, devastated populations of American chestnut trees across eastern North America in the early 1900s.

The idea that a blight-resistant American chestnut could emerge naturally has been the goal of the American Chestnut Cooperator’s Foundation (ACCF) for decades. The ACCF, founded in 1985, has a program to cultivate a naturally blight-resistant wild American chestnut through a natural breeding program. Their work continues to this day and includes a specific mission to ensure their wild trees are not contaminated with the genetically engineered variety that is now undergoing a USDA public comment period.

There is currently a formal petition in front of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) requesting permission to freely release genetically engineered American chestnut trees into wild forests. This proposal is of great concern to those working to restore the non-GE wild American chestnut tree who worry that it will threaten the comeback of those wild trees.

Dr. Donald Davis, author of the new book *The American Chestnut: An Environmental History* and founding member of the Georgia chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation, has challenged the notion put forward by GE chestnut proponents that the American chestnut is “functionally extinct”, noting that there are at least 400 million American Chestnuts in the wild. In a recent opinion piece in *The Hill*, Dr. Davis, a former Fulbright Fellow and part-time researcher at Harvard Forest, warned of the dangers of releasing a GE variety. He has called the proposal to release GE American chestnuts into wild forests a “dangerous, irreversible experiment”.

Yet this is exactly the proposal being evaluated by the USDA. In 2020 researchers from the SUNY School of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) submitted a request to the USDA to deregulate “Darling 58” GE American chestnuts for unmonitored, widespread release in US forests.

If approved, this would be the first time in the history of the world that a genetically engineered plant was deliberately released into the wild with the express intent of spreading and contaminating a native species.

Organizations representing tens of millions in the US and globally have endorsed the demand to the USDA to reject the D58 GE American chestnut tree.

“This is a nutty proposal, which seeks to use an ecological tragedy to rationalize the use of genetic engineering in forestry,” said Rachel Smolker of Biofuelwatch. “It has nothing to do with forest health and everything to do with paving the way for use of genetically engineered trees in commercial forestry plantations. It is a Trojan Horse made of GE chestnut wood.”



Orin Langelle stands with a seedling named “Langelle” planted by Bernd Heinrich. Photo by Anne Petermann

Statement from the American Chestnut Cooperator’s Foundation



The American Chestnut Cooperator’s Foundation began in 1985 in response to other organizations utilizing other methods, as an effort to restore the pure American chestnut and its natural genetics to its former prominence in our eastern forests. ACCF founders actually began work in the 60s and 70s in cooperation with each other and on their own to find and graft original blight survivors so they could be utilized in breeding. They believed that intercrossing American chestnuts that survived the original blight pandemic would yield offspring better able to survive and resist the blight fungus.

The ACCF breeding program is stand alone and our goal is restoration. We strive for pure American chestnut trees with durable blight resistance and structural properties characteristic of the native tree that once dominated our forests. ACCF has trees in our breeding program that have reproduced and shown durable blight resistance for many years. We have made great progress via natural means and are also addressing other threats to this fantastic tree.

The woods are full of American chestnut sprouts and trees, some reproducing. We don’t believe DNA preservation and genetic rescue are necessary. We do believe the genetic makeup can be forever tainted by the introduction of foreign genes. Once the GMO Pandora’s box is opened, it is unlikely that any damage can be undone. There are many unknowns about characteristics, current and future, of a genetically engineered forest chestnut to replace our American chestnuts. American chestnuts historically could live several hundreds of years. Dispersion of GMO American type chestnuts possessing improved blight resistance will very likely become a bigger concern if, in the GMO process, there is loss of essential physical characteristics and alteration in chemical composition that can negatively impact tree tolerance of other environmental stresses. Will the characteristics that make the American chestnut such a valuable timber tree be lost in the GMO forest replacement? It may take decades to find out. GMO proponents are searching for robust mature chestnuts to make their OXO crosses. ACCF germplasm, almost 50 years in the making, is not for use in other methods to help them succeed. Those methods should also stand alone.

Terrible Plan from page 1

burning in some areas is on slopes draining directly into Patoka Reservoir.

In some cases, roads are being “reconstructed” on what are now paths with trees and other vegetation growing in them. The road miles do not count the hundreds of miles of skidder trails and fire lanes that will permeate treatment areas to haul out logs and manage fires.

It is hard to comprehend the scope of impacts that will occur in this project. The proposal includes a project area south of Paoli and east of Patoka Reservoir that measures approximately 14 miles from east to west and 11 miles from north to south. Within this area, a plethora of logging operations will occur on land designated as Prescription 2.8 land in the HNF Management Plan. Prescription 2.8 land takes up about half of all HNF acres and a little more than half of HNF acres east of Patoka Reservoir. While the HNF Plan authorizes logging on Prescription 2.8 acres, it also states that the “Desired Future Condition” in these acres shall include, “large areas of old forests . . . different canopy levels and animal communities associated with vertically diverse, shade tolerant vegetation, as well as different successional stages of vegetation. . . . Habitat in these areas is best suited to hardwood forests. . . . Large trees with continuous canopy characterize much of this area.”(p. 3-28)

In fact, the Buffalo Springs Restoration Project will move the forest away from this Desired Future Condition. Instead of “continuous canopy” some 10,200 acres of Prescription 2.8 land will be riddled with openings like Swiss cheese. The project proposes logging on 5,124 acres, 49 percent of these acres, within a ten-year period. Furthermore, even though forests on less than 15% of these acres are more than a century old and less than one percent of the forest is within ten years of returning to old growth conditions (150 years or older), logging would occur in at least 34 forest stands in the Buffalo Springs Project area that are between 100 and 132 years old. In other words, 799 acres or 51 percent of the forest acres that are 100 years or older within the Prescription 2.8 lands will be logged. Thus, rather than restoring “large areas of old forest” or allowing more old forest to return, the project will retard the restoration of older age forests that are already missing almost entirely from the Buffalo Springs area.

In some areas, hundreds of contiguous acres are involved in logging operations. For example, logging of one kind or another, from clearcutting to thinning to group tree and selective cutting, will occur throughout a 767 acre configuration — well beyond a square mile — that extends along the northern loop of the Youngs Creek Trail. Along its southern loop, the Trail will run through an area of 485 acres targeted for some kind of logging. This much logging will close the Trail for multiple years in numerous places. Similarly, logging will occur throughout a 607-acre area of forest that surrounds Apple Chapel and extends down slopes to the Patoka River.

The deep, older forest character of lands surrounding Tucker Lake Recreation Area would be destroyed. At least six stands between 100 and 132 years old and seven more stands that are 90 years or older would be logged there. Trees would be felled throughout 433 acres, and another 100 acres nearby, as timber harvest consumes between a third and a half of the national forest east of Tucker Lake.

Multiple areas to be logged extend over portions of the famed Buffalo Trace, a path still visible today, worn by thousands of migrating bison over thousands of years, used by Native Americans and eventually pioneers in what became Indiana’s first road. Sixty-thousand-pound Feller Buncher logging machines that compact forest soil, crushing hundreds of amphibians and reptiles, could also flatten the indentations of this ancient path, erasing its existence once and for all.

Compared to other clearcuts in the HNF, which are around 10-20 acres, in several cases, because they will occur in stands adjacent to each other, clearcuts in the Buffalo Springs Project will be substantially larger. For example, three clearcuts of adjacent White Pine stands will knock down every tree in a 61.4 acre area southeast of Patoka Reservoir. Nearby, another clearcut in mixed pine will level trees over a 54.5 acre area. The Forest Service is oblivious to the hardwoods including white and red oak, tulip poplar, beech, maple, and sassafras that are regenerating naturally in these stands. Once the canopy is removed over such large areas, the Forest Service’s own data shows that these oaks will have a very hard time competing with the faster growing, shade-tolerant beech, maple, poplar, and cherry. Without constantly returning to these clearcuts to kill their natural competitors, the oaks will decline to levels below where they are now. Although the Forest Service plans to burn clearcut areas and apply herbicides to kill growth of trees that aren’t oak and hickory, it strains credulity to believe the constant re-entry necessary to kill the native forest that is trying to return would be restoring the natural ecosystem.



Clearcuts like this one in the Hoosier National Forest are what the US Forest Service claims is “ecological restoration” of our public lands. Photo by Indiana Forest Alliance.

TAKE ACTION to Protect BUFFALO SPRINGS

Call, email, or write a letter to Regional Forester

Gina Owens 414-308-5475
626 E Wisconsin Avenue,
Milwaukee WI 53202-44616

Email: Gina.Owens@usda.gov

(cc: homer.wilkes@usda.gov, christopher.thornton@usda.gov,
randy.moore@usda.gov, mike.chaveas@usda.gov,
Joshua_Kelley@braun.senate.gov,
Nancy_Martinez@young.senate.gov,
kyle.kizzier@mail.house.gov, conner.roberts@mail.house.gov.)

In your communications with Gina please include the following points:

- Please insist that the Forest Service must prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Buffalo Springs project, the largest project in the history of the Hoosier National Forest. NEPA requires an EIS when endangered species are present.
- The EIS must include an analysis of the Citizens Preferred Alternative, an alternative to the proposed widespread logging and wholesale burning of the forest, which focuses on water quality, historical and cultural heritage, biodiversity, endangered species, recreation, scenic beauty, old growth, education, climate moderation, and carbon sequestration.

Please also express your support for comprehensive, long-term protection for these public lands in a network of protected preserves for biodiversity, climate, and other public benefits. If the Forest Service is unwilling or unable to protect these lands then they should be transferred to another federal agency, like the Park Service, that will.

The following quotes are from Forest Service documents referencing Gina Owens:

- Gina earned a degree in wildland recreation management from Washington State University.
- Gina is passionate about exploring the outdoors. She loves to hike and camp and particularly loves to be on the water.
- Gina is keenly interested in how the Eastern Region accomplishes its priority work and, just as importantly, how the region engages with the people and communities it serves.
- Her passion is for all regional employees to be experienced by each other and by the region’s diverse partners and the public it serves as caring, respectful, inclusive, trustworthy, and responsive.
- Gina’s diverse experience and leadership skills include an extensive understanding of both rural and urban communities’ connection to public land.
- Gina is an Executive Sponsor of the GIVER Group (Gender Inclusivity, Visibility and Employee Resource) within the Forest Service, “a collection of like-minded and passionate people who have come together to make the Forest Service a more welcoming and inclusive place. With transgender, non-binary, gay, lesbian, straight, and all sorts of diverse kinds of queer employees, we’re the place where people can come together, no matter where they’re physically located.”

Please be kind and respectful in your comments. Ideally, Gina should want us as allies and partners in her efforts to make the Forest Service more receptive, more responsive, and more respectful of the diverse public it serves. We are asking her to seek a path that recognizes the biodiversity, climate, and social challenges we face, rather than one that is wedded to old plans and an outdated sense of purpose; one that sees land and people not as resources to be exploited, but as a larger community to which we all belong.



photo USFS/Internet





Member Services

Heartwood offers a variety of services and network support to our members and member organizations. We invite

individual activists and grassroots citizens' organizations to apply for our **Minigrants Program**, a great way to cover gas money for forest watch expenses, costs associated with a direct action campaign, or to help show a larger funder that you have support from a variety of sources. You can find more information about the program guidelines and how to apply online at <https://heartwood.org/minigrants/>.

Heartwood offers **fiscal sponsorship** to new and emerging grassroots organizations that need 501c3 status to be able to get grants from foundations and green corporate donors. Heartwood takes a small administrative fee for non-members and an even smaller fee for groups that have joined the Heartwood network as a member, and we are happy to join with you on collaborative grants to fund programs where we might play a more active supporting role.

Other membership perks include free column inches and advertising space in *Heartbeat*, discounts and savings on event registration and merchandise, and all the spiritual and emotional perks of being a part of the most passionate and visionary network of forest defenders and wilderness advocates in the US today.

Our minigrants program and other membership support services depend almost entirely upon the donations we receive from the grassroots community. As a general practice Heartwood does not apply for grants that may compete with our member groups, who are reaching out to that same small pool of foundation funders for support. We rely on the proceeds from the auction that we hold at our events, our merchandise sales, and the support from our grassroots members to pay the bills. Please donate to Heartwood today, and visit our website to see a list of our member groups. Find one in your area and give them some green love as well!

<https://heartwood.org/member-groups/>



Kroger Grocery Rewards

If you shop at Kroger, you can support Heartwood while picking up your groceries.

Through the Kroger Community Rewards program, you can link your customer account and every time you use it, Heartwood will earn a small percentage of every purchase. A digital account is needed to participate in Kroger Community Rewards. Simply link your Shopper's Card to your account so that all transactions apply toward the organization you choose. Selecting Heartwood as the organization that you wish to support is as simple as updating the Kroger Community Rewards selection.

<https://www.kroger.com/signin?redirectUrl=/i/community/community-rewards>

Contact your local Kroger's Customer Service Center for more information.

What to Bring

Camping gear (tent, sleeping bag, ground pad, etc.) or cabin bunk gear (pillow, sheets, blankets, etc.)
Auction items for the fundraisers (any items, new or used, you think Heartwood members would appreciate).
Extra money for the Sunday night Live Auction
Bathroom supplies (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, washcloth, towel, etc.)
Water bottle, wallet, cap, hat, hiking shoes/boots, walking stick, etc.
Stories of the places you love and defend
Seeds or perennials to swap or share
Activist literature from your region and/or member group
Songs, poems
A friend who likes to go hiking
A friend who hasn't been to a Heartwood event in years
Service and emotional-support animals are welcomed. They must be under their owner's control at all times. Other pets should not attend.



Registration

Pre-register before May 15 and mail this form to us with your payment, or pay at the gate when you arrive. There will be a 10% late fee for those not pre-registered.

You may register online anytime. We greatly appreciate early registrations. The cost of food has increased dramatically in recent years, so knowing how many people to prepare for helps us trim costs.

Remit form and check via USPS before May 15 payable to

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Heartwood
PO Box 543
Tell City, IN 47586
or register online at
<https://heartwood.org/events/>

FULL WEEKEND MEAL PRICES (*See lodging info below.)
Total meal costs for the entire event (DAILY RATES AVAILABLE):
\$135.00 per adult, \$75.00 per child (12 & under)
Children 5 and under are free.

Donate to Heartwood
Scholarship Fund \$ _____
Direct Action Fund \$ _____

Please check one:
 Vegan Vegetarian Carnivore Gluten-free
 Other dietary requirements, medical needs, etc., contact Corina. (Contact info below.)
____ # of adults _____ # of children

TOTAL MEAL COSTS FOR FULL WEEKEND: _____
*If not staying the whole weekend, please specify below which meals you will attend so that Shane knows how much food to prepare.

PARTIAL WEEKEND MEAL PRICES
(12 and under) Children 5 and under free
Breakfast
\$10.00 per adult, \$5.00 per child (12 and under)
Cost for the whole event (3 meals: Saturday - Monday): \$30.00 per adult, \$15.00 per child
Lunch
Cost \$15.00 per adult, \$10.00 per child (12 and under)
Cost for the whole event (2 meals: Saturday - Sunday): \$45.00 per adult, \$30.00 per child
Dinner
Cost \$30.00 per adult, \$15.00 per child
Cost for the whole event (3 meals: Friday - Sunday): \$60.00 per adult, \$30.00 per child

SPECIFIC MEALS REQUESTED, day(s) and meal(s)
(for example, Saturday lunch and dinner):

____ # of adults _____ # of children **TOTAL MEAL COSTS: \$** _____

I am interested in carpooling or rideshare. Please contact Corina. See contact info below.

LODGING

***FOOD AND SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE PAID SEPARATELY THIS YEAR.**

For lodging, please contact Brianna at Camp Rivervale. She will be handling overnight accommodations and fees.
Brianna Whitman: brianna.whitman@impact2818.com, 888-628-2818
Camp info: retreats@impact2818.com, www.impact2818.org

LODGING OPTIONS/RATES:

Tent camping \$5 per person per night. Please bring your own gear.
OTTERBEIN LODGE, attached to kitchen, rented as unit: 36 people maximum, 24 people minimum
ONE OTTERBEIN BUNK: \$34.50 per night, couples \$71.86, 3 people \$95.83
CABINS: Ironwood, Maple, Sassafras, bunks: \$17.50 per night, bathhouse nearby
FAMILY CABIN: \$100 per night, sleeps 8, has personal bathroom and kitchen

VOLUNTEER/COST REDUCTION OPPORTUNITIES

No one will be turned away for inability to pay.
*Please email Corina at corinalang@yahoo.com or call 618-201-1784 to learn about volunteer opportunities, scholarships to save on registration costs, or to inform us about special dietary, medical, travel, rideshare, or other needs.

Heartwood Safer Spaces Guidelines

For full guidelines, visit <https://heartwood.org/safer-spaces/index.html>.

Heartwood maintains zero tolerance regarding any form of abuse, sexual harassment, intimidation, assault, discriminatory language, oppressive behavior, exclusion, or marginalization.



Please join us for the 31st Annual Heartwood Forest Council

May 26-29, 2023 Memorial Day Weekend
Camp Rivervale

496 Rivervale Road · Mitchell, IN · 47446

Reenvisioning & Reinvigorating the Forest Community

Heartwood is offering a new vision for our region's publicly owned forests and we are featuring a program to inspire, energize, and empower those working to defend them.

This year's Heartwood Forest Council program will focus on

- stopping a new wave of destructive Forest Service proposals like the Buffalo Springs wholesale logging and widespread repeated burning project on the Hoosier National Forest that threaten forests throughout the Heartwood region
- offering alternatives to those proposals that protect forests for air and water quality, biodiversity, and public enjoyment while moderating climate and sequestering carbon
- creating the Shawnee National Park and Climate Preserve as a pilot project in the creation of a multi-state, bioregional, biodiversity and climate preserve system of protected public forests

We have put together a dynamic and focused program of keynote speakers, panel discussions, workshops, and strategy sessions, but the most important component of the weekend's gathering will be the interactions and connections forged by the participants as we share the challenges we are facing and work together to come up with coordinated efforts to bring about real and lasting forest protection.

We are offering free time for participants to mingle and explore, with a variety of options for field trips on Sunday, highlighting the remarkable history, biological diversity, and great beauty of the surrounding area. This family-friendly event will also feature a slate of activities for kids as well!

This year's Heartwood Forest Council will also highlight a fantastic farm-to-table menu featuring fresh, local and organic food, with gluten free and vegan options at every meal, deliciously and lovingly prepared by our hardworking kitchen crew led by the fabulous Shane McElwee! This will all be topped off with lively musical offerings throughout the weekend, including Forest Gras, a great dance band Friday night; the legendary Bob Lucas; Danny Dolinger's tribute to the extraordinary music of the late great Robert Hoyt on Saturday night with campfire music late into the night; and the Heartwood Talent Show on Sunday, following the always lively Heartwood Auction!

Though times have changed dramatically over the past three decades of Heartwood's existence, the Heartwood circle remains strong, connecting us through friendship and commitment like the long, tangled skeins of mycelia that hold our forests together.

On Memorial Day weekend, join us to celebrate Heartwood and to envision the powerful possibilities that the future holds.



Registration and more information at
<https://heartwood.org/events/>

Thank You to this year's

Co-Sponsoring Organizations!



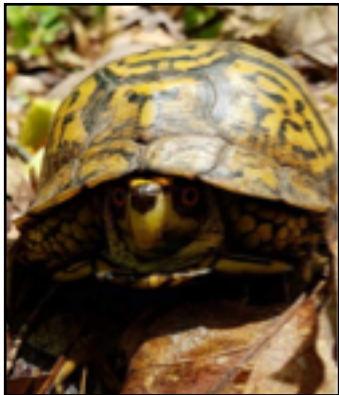


Photo by Rick Emmert

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Ads and Announcements

Invitation To All!

CAMPFIRE GATHERING: March 30-31, 2023 Let's Fire-Up a Campaign to Protect Our Environment in Western Pennsylvania!



WITH SPECIAL GUEST: **GEORGE LAKEY!**

Join environmental groups from across the Western Pennsylvania region, each working on many different aspects of protecting our environment, at the Campfire Gathering to Develop a Regional Campaign. Hosted by a coalition of local groups who want to unify and strengthen the work we all are doing, this event will also be useful to anyone hoping to build grassroots power and form alliances.



THURSDAY, MARCH 30 (Lunch 12 - 1 pm and Gathering 1 - 3 pm ET)

This will be a gathering of folks from organizations whose work has been focused on hearings, lobbying, petitioning, and rallying to protect our air, water, land, and soil. This gathering will give groups a chance to get to know each other, discuss work and successes, and learn about additional ideas to consider when these approaches have run their course or seem to be losing.

FRIDAY, MARCH 31 (9:30 am to 8 pm ET)

This is a gathering of those organizations from Thursday plus many more local and national groups fighting for change. This day will include groups working on civil rights, environmental justice, worker issues, peace, voting issues, government reform, and other areas to build connections and support each other.

The morning will kick off with a discussion about the common monster we are all fighting. This will be followed by a "Meet and Greet", with each organization having three minutes to talk about their work and the opportunity for informational tabling. Following lunch together, our featured guest speaker, George Lakey, will present information about experiences and successes of work in other parts of the country. He will help us begin to develop a long-term strategic campaign in our area so we can more effectively fight our common enemy. There will be dinner and an opportunity to celebrate into the evening.

About Keynote Speaker George Lakey

George Lakey has been involved in helping organizations develop long-term strategic nonviolent campaigns since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. He was instrumental in the beginning of the Sunrise Movement and presently focuses on environmental and climate campaigns across the country. He is the author of several books including *How We Win!* Lakey will be facilitating the gathering on Thursday and will be presenting information and guiding the strategy session on Friday afternoon.

Register online at:

https://actionnetwork.org/events/pennsylvaniacampfiregathering?clear_id=true

For More Information:


James Highland – 724-372-9598, editor@sgpublishingteam.com
Michael Bagdes-Canning – 724-431-8560, mbagdes@gmail.com



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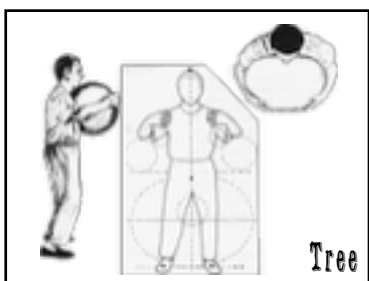
New climate laws passed by Congress last year offer US families, businesses, communities, and states major financial incentives and other tools to embrace clean energy solutions and help build a better tomorrow for all. But knowing where to start and how to take full advantage of the available funding can be challenging.

That's why this spring, Climate Reality is offering our **Power Up Training: From Acts to Action**, a free online training designed to take the guesswork out of historic climate laws like the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Join us in April and learn how you can leverage these laws to

- Electrify your home, workplace, and community with affordable clean technologies that save money.
- Create good-paying jobs and opportunities for your city or state in the new clean energy economy.
- Embrace renewable alternatives to fossil fuels that cut emissions and clean up our air and water.
- Advance environmental justice in your community.

Register for this free training on the Climate Reality Project's website:

<https://www.climate realityproject.org/training/power-up-from-acts-to-action>



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Tell City, IN • 47586

or donate online at <https://heartwood.org/support/>.

Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature — the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.

~ Rachel Carson



<https://www.greenspringherbs.com/>



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Heartwood mourns the passing of long-time friend, colleague, ally, supporter, mentor, and inspiration, James Alexander Thom, who died at the age of 89 on January 30. A much-loved speaker at Heartwood events, Jim was author of bestselling historical fiction novels set in the heart of the Heartwood region, such as *Long Knife* and *Panther In the Sky*. He died in the cabin he built himself, on land that he loved. Thom won many honors, including induction as a member of the Indiana Journalism Hall of Fame in 2014. In 2009, Jim was an Indiana Authors Awards Lifetime Achievement Honoree and National Winner. His 1981 book *Follow The River* was made into a movie in 1995, directed by Martin Davidson and starring Sheryl Lee. One of the last things Jim wrote was an article opposing the logging in Buffalo Springs: <https://thebtownbee.com/2021/12/06/the-endangered-forest/>. Thom is survived by the love of his life, his wife Dark Rain, a member of the Shawnee Nation United Remnant Band; by his books and writings, and by the Heartwood family of which he was an honored and well-beloved member.



Sickle Darter Receives Critical Habitat Protection in Tennessee, Virginia

Beautiful Bronze Fish Threatened by Pollution, Mining, Logging, Dams



by Will Harlan

KNOXVILLE, TN — The US Fish and Wildlife Service announced a proposed rule in late January to protect 104 miles of rivers as critical habitat in Tennessee and Virginia for a

fish called the sickle darter under the Endangered Species Act. The Service designated the sickle darter as a threatened species in November.

The sickle darter was protected following a 2010 petition filed by the Center for Biological Diversity and a 2015 agreement with the agency to protect the fish.

“Critical habitat is essential for this beautiful bronze fish and the rivers it calls home,” said Will Harlan, a scientist at the Center. “Protecting these 104 miles is an important step toward restoring not only the sickle darter but the health of Appalachian rivers.”

The sickle darter used to be found in rivers across southern Appalachia. Today only six populations remain, living in southern Virginia and eastern Tennessee.

The proposed critical habitat protects 16 miles of the Little River, 30 miles of the Emory River, 14 miles of Copper Creek, 25 miles of the North Fork of the Holston River, 14 miles of the Middle Fork of the Holston River, and five miles of the Sequatchie River.

“It’s disappointing that the designation doesn’t include portions of the French Broad River watershed so the species can fully recover,” said Harlan. “The sickle darter once thrived in the French Broad River and other rivers in North Carolina’s Blue Ridge region.”

Critical habitat is key to an endangered species’ survival. Species with designated critical habitat are twice as likely to be recovering as species without it.

The primary threats to the sickle darter are siltation, water pollution, and dams. Siltation from logging and development fills the spaces between rocks on the river bottom that the fish needs to lay eggs and find prey. The sickle darter’s water is also polluted by animal waste, domestic sewage, pesticides, and heavy metals from mining. Dams have isolated sickle darter populations and limited their movement.

“When we protect the sickle darter’s future, we’re also safeguarding our own,” said Harlan. “People need healthy water and healthy rivers, just like the animals who live in them.”

The sickle darter is one of the largest darters, growing to be nearly five inches long with a prominent black side stripe, and can live up to four years. It uses its large mouth and pointed snout to feed on larval mayflies, midges, riffle beetles, caddisflies and dragonflies. Its scientific name is *Percina williamsi*, honoring renowned biologist Jim Williams who has been working to describe and protect freshwater species from the southeastern United States for more than half a century.



Sickle Darter photo courtesy Conservation Fisheries Inc.

New Analysis: 40% of US Wildlife, Ecosystems Are Imperiled

50-Year Assessment Magnifies Urgent Need for Protection



by Tierra Curry

WASHINGTON, DC — A new report on the status of US wildlife conservation reveals that 40% of animals, 34% of plants, and 40% of ecosystems nationwide are at risk.

Released this February, the analysis — *Biodiversity in Focus: United States Edition* — was compiled by NatureServe, a nonprofit organization that assembles conservation data from a national network of scientists and organizations.

“This grim assessment adds to the mountain of science showing that we’re creating an extinction crisis,” said Tierra Curry, a senior scientist at the Center for Biological Diversity. “It’s suicidal of us to pretend that business as usual is more important than safeguarding the natural world we all depend on.”

The study is the most comprehensive to date on the status of U.S. ecosystems. It found that 51% of grasslands and 40% of forests and wetlands are at risk of range-wide collapse. Only 12% of U.S. lands are currently protected.

“Grassland loss is the biggest U.S. environmental disaster that gets the least attention,” said Curry. “Conversion of grasslands to suburban sprawl and pesticide-intensive agriculture is a primary reason we’ve lost 3 billion birds, and why we could lose monarch butterflies and vital pollinators.”

Among animals, the evaluation found that freshwater species such as mollusks, crayfish, and amphibians are the most threatened groups because of water pollution and dams. Insects like butterflies, bees, and dragonflies are also highly imperiled, with 37% of US bee species facing extinction.

For plants, nearly half of cactus species are vulnerable, making them the most jeopardized plant group. Around 30% of ferns and orchids are at risk, as are 20% of tree species.

“By taking nature for granted we’ve pushed natural systems to the brink of collapse,” said Curry. “We’ve been so neglectful for so long, but we can create a different world that doesn’t exploit nature and vulnerable human communities for never-ending sprawl and consumption.”

Several policy proposals could provide solutions to the biodiversity crisis. The Recovering America’s Wildlife Act, which will be re-introduced in Congress, would provide more than \$1 billion to states, Tribes, and agencies for species conservation. The Extinction Prevention Act would provide funding to the US Fish and Wildlife Service to recover the most endangered groups of species. Biden’s America the Beautiful Initiative is facing a ticking clock on enacting protections for 30% of US lands and waters.

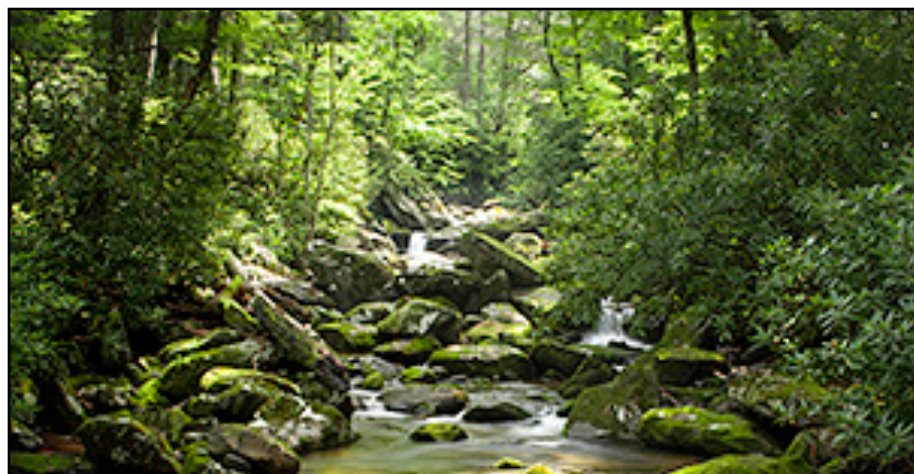


photo courtesy Appalachian Voices

Two Ohio Waterways Nominated for Strongest Clean Water Act Protections

Outstanding National Resource Waters Status Sought for Big Darby, Little Darby Creeks



by Will Harlan

COLUMBUS, OH — The Center for Biological Diversity and its partners filed a formal request with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency on February 1, seeking the highest level of protective designations for the Big and Little Darby creeks near Columbus. The Outstanding National Resource Waters designations would afford the creeks the strongest level of protection under the Clean Water Act.

Heartwood member groups in Ohio, the Midwest, and across the country joined the Center in calling for the designations.

“The Big and Little Darby creeks are national treasures that deserve the highest level of protection,” said Will Harlan, a scientist at the Center. “They’re two of the most biologically diverse waterways in the country and the lifeblood of central Ohio. It’s heartbreaking that increased pollution has caused steep declines in their rare and endangered species.”

The Big and Little Darby creeks shelter more than 100 species of fish and 44 mussel species. Five of these mussels — rabbitsfoot, rayed bean, northern riffleshell, snuffbox, and clubshell — are endangered. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has also proposed protecting the longsolid, another imperiled mussel species in Big Darby Creek, under the Endangered Species Act. In addition, the Big and Little Darby creeks contain federally designated critical habitat for endangered mussels.

The Big and Little Darby creeks are already designated national scenic rivers because of their outstanding aquatic biodiversity. However, sprawling suburban development and pollution from sewage treatment plants have caused steep declines in fish and mussel populations. Big Darby Creek has twice been named one of the country’s most endangered rivers in the past decade.

The Center is urging the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency to boost protections for the Big and Little Darby creeks as the agency considers its triennial water quality standards review. The Ohio Environmental Council, Darby Creek Association, and American Rivers joined the Center in submitting a request for Outstanding National Scenic Waters designation, which provides stronger safeguards against new sewage treatment plants and other point sources of pollution.

More than 3,000 people submitted public comments to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency during its triennial review. The agency is expected to make a decision on the proposed designation in the next few months.

“Outstanding National Resources Waters designation is urgently needed to protect this world-class watershed in Columbus’ backyard,” said Harlan.



map by DarbyCreekAssociation.org

10,000-acre Jellico logging project threatens endangered species, recreation, nearby communities



by Chris Karounos and Whitney Hamblin

KENTUCKY — The Jellico Mountains are on the southern edge of the Daniel Boone National Forest along the Kentucky and Tennessee state line. Here the Appalachian foothills turn into the steep slopes of the Appalachian Mountains, giving rise to remote forests, hosting some of the highest tree and aquatic species diversity in the country.

The geology and geography of the area creates a rich diversity of both flora and fauna. The eroded sandstone has formed gorges, cliffs, waterfalls, rock shelters, natural arches, bridges, and caves that provide critical habitat for many endangered, threatened, and rare plant and animal species. The opportunities for outdoor recreation are plentiful here and provide solitude and adventure to those seeking a relationship with the natural world. This area is also home to nearly 1,300 acres of secondary old-growth forest, much of which is proposed to be clear cut.



photo by Jim Scheff, Kentucky Heartwood

A proposed US Forest Service project includes nearly 5,000 acres of clearcutting and 5,000 acres of selective logging and thinning. When forested areas are clear cut, they become vulnerable to landslides and erosion. The steep Jellico Mountains are not suitable for this type of logging. Clearcutting, coupled with record-breaking rains and catastrophic storms, has caused landslides on other recently logged Forest Service land in eastern Kentucky.

Legacy impacts from coal mining, along with significant problems with invasive plant species, add to the challenges of protecting and restoring this unique area. The threat of flash flooding in the valleys is amplified under these compounding conditions. We have seen first-hand the devastation that extreme weather events have caused across eastern Kentucky in the past few years. Protecting this forest also means protecting the people who live there.

Landslides not only erode the soil and damage the mycelial networks that the forest depends on to regrow, but they also have the potential to push endangered aquatic species to extinction through sedimentation of waterways. Jellico Creek is one of the main waterways that curves through the bottom of these mountains. Along with its gorgeous blue-green color, it holds some of the last remaining critical habitat for the Cumberland darter (*Etheostoma susanae*), a fish that is found in isolated populations only in the upper Cumberland River system of Kentucky and Tennessee. Other endangered species like the Cumberland elktoe and blackside dace could also be imperiled.

Kentucky Heartwood closely monitors Forest Service activity in the Daniel Boone and advocates for protecting and defending Kentucky’s public wildlands. The community at the base of the Jellico Mountains initiated an incredible public campaign to

A Growing Grassroots Movement Demands More Action on Climate



by Scot Quaranda

ASHEVILLE, NC – Together, over the last four presidential administrations we have been demanding federal action on climate change. Time and time again, big corporations and partisan politics derailed every effort to address this growing threat to our planet. And now, finally, thanks to people power and persistence, the movement has grown strong enough to make climate a top tier issue. This has created the space to pass major climate legislation in the US – the Inflation Reduction Act.

We can celebrate our movement and the passage of the first piece of federal climate legislation in the US while also recognizing that it is deeply flawed.

We can acknowledge that significant investments in renewable energy and funding for some communities that pollution harms are steps in the right direction. At the same time, this legislation exposes our Southern communities from the Gulf South to Appalachia and the Atlantic Coastal Plain to more harm because it includes more subsidies and regulation rollbacks for the expansion of the gas, oil, and bioenergy industries.

Communities that have been fighting for years on the frontlines of this expansion will continue to bear the brunt of the pollution and ecological destruction. The lives of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and those living at or near poverty have once again been sacrificed to placate the financial interests of the industries responsible for climate change.

The legislation will lead to more forests logged on public and private lands for bioenergy.

It continues to enable the expansion of logging and wood markets in conflict with scientific warnings that logging and wood production are contributing to climate disruption and are polluting environmental justice communities.

It will make it easier to greenlight the Mountain Valley Pipeline, which citizens have pushed back after years of tireless organizing. The Inflation Reduction Act will accomplish some positive things, but the fight for climate justice in the US is far from over.

People power created the foundation for the passage of this bill. People power is the only hope we have for ending a cycle of exploiting the most vulnerable for the economic benefit of a few. Dogwood Alliance will continue to focus on building the people power to mobilize action for bigger change at the international, federal, state, and local levels.

As long as there are acceptable human and ecosystem sacrifice zones, we will not solve the climate crisis.

We believe in a vision where major investments in climate solutions are made in communities that have suffered the most from climate destroying industries. Those impacted need to be at the table, and their solutions need to be part of the democratic process in designing climate policy. We believe in a future where every community can breathe clean air, drink clean water, and have the resources necessary to adapt and survive through a changing climate. We believe that real climate solutions must work with nature and not against it. The only way to get there is expanding the power of people through grassroots mobilization.



photo courtesy Dogwood Alliance

Jellico from page 15

“stop the chop” in response to the Forest Service’s scoping analysis. The highlight of this public involvement was a town meeting that community members held with the Forest Service. With over 100 people in attendance, the room was packed with local residents who oppose the project, from property owners who will be directly affected to career loggers who acknowledged the risks involved with logging on such steep slopes.

As a result, over 300 comments were formally submitted to the Forest Service in opposition to the project, including several highly respected environmental legal non-profits (Center for Biological Diversity, Southern Environmental Law Center, and Kentucky Resources Council). This coalition is regrouping to prepare for the next phase of the project, the Environmental Analysis public comment period, which is expected in June 2023.



Lauren Kallmeyer, director of KY Heartwood. photo by Tina Camp Scheff

The area’s forests rival some of the largest and most diverse we see in the region. Towering basswood, hickories, and oaks are accented by yellowwood trees, which are one of the rarest endemic trees in the eastern US. North-facing slopes are filled with medicinal herbs like black cohosh and goldenseal. One fall day, we discovered a rare Appalachian gentian flower tucked into the sandstone cliff line. Both the Appalachian gentian and black cohosh are on United Plant Savers “species at risk” list from overharvesting and habitat loss, reminding us of the richness that still exists here in Kentucky as well as the sensitivity of these populations.

Every decision we make today will leave generations of people growing into adulthood with questions about why we chose profit and extraction over protection. We are running out of time to blame it on ignorance. The old growth forests that used to dominate the landscape of eastern Kentucky are a thing of the past. With what little secondary old growth we have left, every measure to ensure its protection should be our utmost priority. The climate crisis is nipping at our heels, and these forests are one of our greatest assets in combating climate change through the drawdown of greenhouse gases. The forest is our solution, and it is worth more standing.

A groundswell of well-organized community opposition has stopped logging projects on national forests in the past. The Jellico community will continue to rally opposition to halt this project as the Forest Service moves on to the next phase. In order to get this project withdrawn, we will continue to engage local residents, news outlets, environmental law firms, and politicians to take a stand.

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Cop City model threatens forests in Pittsburgh



by Alice Smith

PITTSBURGH, PA – “No Cop City Anywhere! Defend the Forest Everywhere!” This is the rallying cry emerging out of Atlanta. Organizers on the frontline in the Weelaunee Forest urge us to understand that their fight is inseparable from the work to be done close to home. The health of one forest is linked with the health of the ecosystem and biome; the unchecked power of Atlanta’s paramilitary police force is linked with the power of policing across the nation. More literally, we must be aware that similar projects may be underway in our own backyards.

In Pittsburgh, this call has awakened many of us to the looming possibility of a massive police training facility being built here.

In 2021, the city acquired a large parcel of land from the federal government. This land, which sits on the bank of the Allegheny River just west of Highland Park, currently contains an abandoned VA hospital complex. Satellite images show that more than 90 acres of it are tree-covered, creating a forested buffer zone between development and the waterline. The city announced plans to use this land for “a state-of-the-art Public Safety Training Academy, a Public Safety Department and Emergency Management headquarters, a home for police K-9 and mounted units,” and more. The new center would train police from 13 surrounding counties – allowing cops across the region to share new crowd control and protest suppression tactics.

At the time of the transfer, city officials said that moving old public safety facilities from the valley below the proposed site would allow for new green infrastructure to alleviate annual flooding problems along a major thoroughfare and the site of a buried stream. The need to address stormwater flooding is dire; multiple people have already died in flooding on this street, and floods will only become more common and more severe as climate change continues. We badly need to invest in climate adaptation, mitigation, and resilience across our region. But we cannot make progress if fixing one known problem is bound up with an unrelated, massively expensive and multi-year project.

The current status of Pittsburgh’s Cop City project is unclear. Citizens hoped that a new mayor might have new priorities but he seems to remain committed to the project despite widespread community calls to defund the police and skyrocketing costs. Some early coverage included estimates of “north of \$100 million”, and late last year city council members said that the costs had risen significantly. Because of this, the mayoral administration is reportedly considering other sites for the training facility.

A change of site would not impact our opposition to this project. As both environmentalists and believers in a just world, we must oppose cop cities anywhere. Even if not a single tree were felled in the construction of such a training facility, it would still siphon funds away from social goods and expand the resources of police who surveil, intimidate, arrest, and murder with impunity.

It is important to understand that expanding police resources is a never-ending spiral. In 2016, a Pittsburgh police training center replaced Community College of Allegheny County’s Arts Center, with the explicit goal of “more police officers on city streets.” Even before that move was underway, then-mayor Bill Peduto was saying that it was insufficient and another training center would be needed. In 2023, even as city police have blatantly announced their intention to violate a city council ordinance and resume traffic stops that disproportionately target black drivers, the new administration has announced plans to dramatically increase police presence downtown and remains committed to constructing our own cop city.

A coalition of local activist groups has formed in solidarity with the Atlanta forest defenders and the Stop Cop City movement. Support can take many forms: raising awareness of their fight during the Week of Solidarity in February, joining them on the ground for the Week of Action in March, and helping to raise bail and legal funds for incarcerated protestors. One of our aims is to make the construction of a new cop city in Pittsburgh politically impossible. We have begun reaching out to both local politicians and to other local activists working to oppose the militarization of civilian police departments.

If you are in the area and have ideas or want to help, please reach out to stopcopcitypgh@proton.me. And if you live elsewhere, do some investigating into your own city or county budget to see whether they have similar plans.

No cop city anywhere; defend the forest everywhere!



photo courtesy StopCopCitySolidarity.org



Above: the map shows the former VA Hospital complex, surrounded by forests (highlighted in orange) that form a key habitat corridor along the Allegheny River. Image prepared by Alice Smith

Below: a banner drop in solidarity from a highway bridge photo courtesy StopCopCitySolidarity.org



Liberty and Conservation Biology in the Appalachians



by Steven Krichbaum, Ph.D

We live in interesting times, in more ways than one. Politically, in the US we've seen the the recent reintroduction of the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act ("NREPA"), the reintroduction of the the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act (S.1499, H.R. 2795), the push for nationwide infrastructure improvement, the Biden administration's announcement of the "30 x 30" initiative (to "protect" 30% of our nation's lands by 2030), and the President's release of an Executive Order seeking "climate-smart" management policies for the USDA and USDI, the agencies overseeing National Forests (NF) and Bureau of Land Management lands (BLML), National Parks (NP) and National Wildlife Refuges (NWR), as well as National Monuments, National Recreation Areas, and National Scenic Areas.

While all this is going on, the "management" taking place on our National Forests is worse than it's ever been in my 33 years of involvement with forest protection. All over the country, the Forest Service is implementing the largest logging and burning projects ever. The proposed Buffalo Springs timber sale (TS) on Indiana's Hoosier NF is just one monstrously bad example (ca. 5000 acres of logging, 15,000 acres of burning, and 6 miles miles of new permanent roads). There are plenty of others. On the George Washington NF in VA and WV, just the past few years have brought the North Shenandoah Mountain TS (3,878 acres of intensive logging and 5,249 acres of burning); the Sandy TS (1,883 acres of logging, 1,456 acres of burning, 5.4 miles of "temporary" roads smashed through the Forest); the Potts Creek project (551 acres of "regeneration" logging, 682 acres of thinning, 4,952 acres of prescribed burning, 8.2 miles of temporary roads); and the proposed Archer Knob TS (over 4000 acres of logging and 2400 acres of burning). All these projects impact/harm/devastate rare and sensitive species and old-age forests.

The overlapping intersection of these initiatives and policies, a point unlike any other in our lifetime, finally focuses the public eye on today's most crucial issues. Now is the time to finally advance the clear solutions that have previously not achieved the attention they are due. And more than just attention is due: these concerns demand action and funding. This goes way beyond political parties and partisanship. This is about everybody — *public lands*, the shared commonwealth of *all Americans*.

Forest Service and BLM lands are increasingly perceived as invaluable for their extensive tracts of wild areas, treasures that have largely disappeared from private properties. The problems facing them, and the opportunities, are systemic, and systemic issues require systematic action. Ad hoc and half-baked responses are not good enough.

People are waking up to recognize a fundamental fact: wildlands are freedom. Not just a sanctuary for wildlife, but for liberty, pure and simple the only places left where we can be truly free of the lies and politics, the bigots and bullies, and the corporate-government monitoring and takeover of every aspect of our lives. These truly are the lands of the free.

The Plexus: the Ultimate Cancel Culture

"Given the interconnected nature of climate change, loss of biodiversity, land degradation, and air and water pollution, it is essential that these problems be tackled together now." (United Nations Environment Programme, 29)

These three drivers of the apocalypse are the ultimate cancel culture, not just brushing aside history and canceling human liberty and happiness, but canceling creation — life itself. Current public lands management is in

many ways not just a disgrace to science and reason and democracy, it's a manifestation of a basic disdain for the Creation. And a sneering contempt for the intelligence of any American with more than two neurons to rub together.

When America's National Forest system was started over a hundred years ago, there were far fewer of us and far more wild places. In just my puny lifetime, the global human population has almost tripled. The National Forests were initially established in response to the desecrations and depredations of massive cutting by the timber industry and the recognition of the need to protect public watersheds. Over time, the timber industry took over the Forest Service, a textbook example of "agency capture" by the very forces the agency was originally meant to counter and control. Extraction and exploitation, logging and road building, have become the norm. To facilitate and subsidize destructive extraction, the regulations for the NEPA and NFMA and ESA, the laws directly guiding NF management, have been diluted and polluted (i.e., "streamlined") to the point of annulity by various administrations and lawmakers.

The US Forest Service has now become a rogue agency, with countless gigantic logging/burning/roading projects taking place across the country. Much of the logging and other exploitation is intentionally done out of sight, behind "beauty strips" and away from well-traveled roadways and viewpoints. Going into more remote areas actually exacerbates the impacts. For the Forest Service, the appearance of careful management is indeed the careful management of appearances.

To further mislead the public, much of the logging and road building occurring on our NFs are now disgracefully and dishonestly labeled "restoration" by the Forest Service. For example, the North Shenandoah Mountain Restoration [sic] Project on the GWNF in VA and WV and the Buffalo Springs Restoration [sic] Project on the HNF in Indiana, to my knowledge the largest timber sales ever on those forests. The NSM "restoration" project comes complete with 76 miles of bulldozer-fabricated permanent, temporary, and logging skid roads

and burn lines. The fact that the USFS now disingenuously refers to just about all of their management regime as "restoration" and being for forest "resilience" does not make the habitat destruction and carbon loss and emissions go away. Smashing through our forests for tens of miles with bulldozers and chainsawing thousands of acres to the ground is not really restoration or protection. "Restoration" has become just another specious prevarication to describe the same old logging.

But all is not lost, not by a long shot. What our NFs and BLMLs need above all are retention policies, i.e. mandating avoidance of impacts so that these places can become and remain intact and healthy. In the categories of "protected areas" used globally by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), most of America's NF and BLM acreage do not even qualify as being "protected" at all. What America and the world sorely need is new federal legislation that takes the dozers, skidders, log trucks, and chainsaws out of the agencies' hands. As long as the current legal and administrative structure remains, all our National Forests will continue to be faced with a steady stream of logging and other destructive projects. Long-term systemic structural change is essential. We can't afford puny thoughts.



Mature canopy trees marked for logging in the Owen-Putnam state forest, Indiana. Photo by Lora Kemp

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Protection of Forests: Simultaneously Addressing the Three Overarching Catastrophes

The greatest disaster driving ecological meltdown and loss of biodiversity is arguably not climate change, but the rampant destruction/degradation/fragmentation of wild habitat — in other words, the direct alteration and expropriation of lands by humans.

Forests, along with oceanic algae, are the greatest carbon sinks on Earth. So, from a climate standpoint, reducing deforestation and forest degradation, plus accomplishing proforestation and reforestation, are every bit as important as reducing emissions. See August 2019 IPCC report at <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/srccl/>.

Logging forests (what some term “harvest” — as if the most complex terrestrial ecosystems on the planet are a crop they planted) is by far the greatest source of carbon emissions from forested land. Far more than results from fire or natural disturbances such as insect damage and blowdown (see Harris et al. 2016). Nationwide, logging operations account for ca. 85% of carbon emissions from forests. And while doing this emitting, they also reduce the potential for carbon sequestration. Emitting carbon and reducing carbon sinks at the same time — *not climate smart*.

Protecting forests is an essential strategy in the fight against climate change. And unlike some strategies for cooling the climate, it doesn't require costly and complicated technology (Law and Moomaw 2020). Some solutions are beneficial to more than one issue and in this case the co-benefits are enormous — the protection and restoration of intact forests not only reduces carbon emissions and pollution, it also conserves biodiversity. (UNEP, 111)

Indubitably, the rehabilitation achieved by “proforestation”, and through it achieving the actual protection and restoration of forests, confronts and positively counters all three of the overarching issues/catastrophes at once. With the confluence of ongoing mass extinction/extermination, climate change concerns, and the 30 x 30 initiative, the time is ripe for pushing proforestation as the fundamental working principle behind the urgently needed improvement and modernization of the legal, regulatory, and management framework for National Forests, BLMs, and other public lands.

Proforestation: The ProForest Initiative and The National Strategic Forest Carbon Reserve

Proforestation means “growing existing forests intact to their ecological potential” (Moomaw et al. 2019). In other words, protecting standing intact forests and letting them grow and develop in complexity to their natural old growth state. See the 2019 peer-reviewed paper authored by Drs. Moomaw, Masino, and Faison published by the journal *Frontiers in Forests*. The paper's title says it all: “Intact Forests in the United States: Proforestation Mitigates Climate Change and Serves the Greatest Good.” Forests of older and larger trees sequester far more carbon than do those of younger smaller trees.

So, a climate-smart strategy for the public's forests starts by protecting them in order to maximize carbon sequestration and reduce carbon emissions. Climate-smart care for public forests entails proforestation — protecting standing forests by simply keeping them standing. This is in addition to reforestation and afforestation programs.

The USDA and USDI should actively promote proforestation on public lands through a new overarching policy that can be called “The ProForest Initiative”. Promulgation of The ProForest Initiative by the USDA/USDI will systematically implement truly “protecting” 30% of our nation's land by 2030 for biodiversity enhancement and carbon sequestration. Implementation of this ProForest Initiative will result in a National Strategic Forest Carbon Reserve system on NFs and BLM lands; this is somewhat based upon the concept behind the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve (Law and Moomaw 2021, Law et al. 2022). By doing this, the US government will also stop competing with private landholders and stop shipping our public forests overseas, and forcing taxpayers to pay for it. If they are actually needed by Americans, timber and wood products can and will be supplied by the private sector. Of course, simultaneous with all this, we can and must vastly intensify our reduction, reuse, and recycling of wood products, as well as a host of other goods. It's all connected.

Ants and Plants



by Jillian Bar-av

I have a small patch of bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) growing in my yard in the suburbs of Baltimore, Maryland. This area used to be predominantly farmland, and before that, the land of the Susquehannock and Piscataway people. I have a large vegetable garden, an herb garden, a newly established little woodland garden, and some untended areas along the edge of the lawn by the fence. It is in one of these untended areas that bloodroot decided to show up several years ago.

Its appearance was very welcome, like having an old friend show up. That is how I feel about lots of medicinal plants, especially wild ones. And while bloodroot does have medicinal properties, my interest in it is much less pragmatic. The reason I like bloodroot is that I simply like to be in its presence. It makes me feel good, the way it feels good to just sit with an old friend.

Last year, as I was watching “my” patch of bloodroot flower and form seed pods, I was reading a book called *The Seed Keeper*, by Diane Wilson. The book follows several generations of Dakota women exploring their relationship with seeds. The main character in the book had become totally disconnected from her heritage, yet when she felt seeds in her hand, something awoke inside her that had been dormant, just like a seed waiting for the right conditions to spring to life.



Bloodroot flower
photo by Rock Emmert

There is a passage in the book that describes the relationship between bloodroot seeds and ants, which piqued my curiosity. Since the book is a novel, I wanted to do my own research on this connection, and I found out that it was true. Bloodroot is a myrmecore, which means it relies on the dispersal of its seeds by ants. Trilliums, violets, and Dutchman's breeches are other woodland flowering plants that also rely on this method of seed dispersal.

Here is how it works. There is a part of the seed called the elaiosome which contains fats, proteins, and other nutrients. This part of the seed attracts the ants via olfactory cues.

The ants then harvest the seeds, bring them back to their nest, feed the elaiosome to their larvae, and discard the bare seed into their nitrogen-rich refuse pile either inside or outside the nest. It is a symbiotic relationship in which the ants get food for their larvae, and the seeds in turn are dispersed and “planted” by the ants in rich soil that the ants themselves have made.

This understanding of the role that ants play in our planet's ecology brings me back to the year 1994, the year of my first Heartwood Forest Council and, subsequently, my first Earth First! event later that summer. It was at the Earth First! gathering that I participated in something called a Council of All Beings. I had no idea what this was beforehand. We were told to go off alone for a bit of time and to find something to connect with. Then we were supposed to come back to the group and speak for that entity, to give it a voice.

I wandered off, found a quiet place, and sat for a long time. Nothing was coming to me. I was getting nervous. I had no idea what I would say when we were called back to the group. Just before I heard the call to come back to the group, I saw a trail of ants walking along a log. I thought about it, and although I had no idea what kind of role ants might play in our environment, I was sure they did something necessary and important for the balance of our natural world, something that was probably being overlooked since they were so small. I came back to the circle and represented the voice of ant.

At that Council of All Beings, I had no idea of the symbiotic relationship between ants and myrmecorous plants. I also did not know that ants play a role in turning and aerating the soil, allowing water and oxygen to reach plant roots. Yet, somehow I did know. I knew it in my heart.

And that is what Heartwood is all about. Knowing in our hearts that we are all connected.



Bloodroot seeds, with eliaosomes.
photo by Jillian Bar-Av

Shawnee National Park and Climate Preserve is Illinois' Best Idea



by John B. Wallace

ILLINOIS – The movement to transfer the Shawnee National Forest out of the control of the USDA Forest Service (FS) and into the US Department of Interior Park Service (NPS) to become the Shawnee National Park and

Climate Preserve is gaining momentum.

Late last fall, a Freedom of Information Act Request uncovered numerous hidden documents submitted by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Natural Heritage and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) biologists in response to two large logging and burning projects on the Shawnee, documenting the proposed failures by the FS in its “one size fits all” approach to management. The IDNR Natural Heritage and INPC biologists disproved FS claims that commercial timber harvesting will improve or restore forest health to the Shawnee. The state biologists definitively documented the fact that the projects not only “fail to recognize the scarcity of old growth forests,” but also unequivocally confirm the fact that the logging operations, “will adversely affect components of the native biodiversity and ecosystem processes of relatively intact forests.” The FS is required to consult with IDNR Natural Heritage and INPC biologists, yet they chose to ignore the biologists' concerns and their responses. A final decision notice was issued to implement one project in August and logging began on the other project area in June, in direct defiance of President Biden’s April 21, 2022, *Executive Order on Strengthening Forests* and directing the agency to inventory and conserve all mature and old growth forests.

The Illinois Audubon Society, the oldest non-governmental conservation organization in the state, endorsed the initiative and the Carbondale City Council adopted a resolution supporting the proposed Shawnee National Park and Climate Preserve (SNP&CP). The City of Carbondale resolution consisted of 14 paragraphs confirming support for the proposal and authorized the Mayor of Carbondale to write to the Illinois

congressional delegation and to pursue support from other southern Illinois municipalities, county and state government officials to join Carbondale in support of the proposed SNP&CP.

The Shawnee Park and Climate Alliance is a new organization dedicated solely to the initiative of forming Illinois’ only national park and the nation’s first national preserve committed to proforestation which limits management activities to protecting biodiversity and furthering recreation opportunities, thereby also mitigating climate change through effective carbon sequestration and storage.

Presentations have been given to several county boards, to state representatives, a state senator and congressman whose districts contain the Shawnee, and to aides for both Illinois senators. While questions have been asked, all seem to be interested in the SNP&CP initiative, regardless of party affiliation.

Opposition to the proposal has solidified as well. All those countering the SNP&CP initiative rely on both misinformation and disinformation to support their arguments. As a result, a new “Myth Busters” document has been drafted by both Shawnee Park and Climate Alliance and Shawnee Forest Defense.

Supporters of the SNP&CP initiative are growing and have started traveling north to spread the message that Illinois not only deserves to have a national park, but that Shawnee is by far the best candidate. The news that this nation longs to establish a system of climate preserves is also being touted as is the fact that the NPS with its commitment to preservation, to recreation, and to education is the perfect agency to carry out that charge.

The Shawnee National Park and Climate Preserve is Illinois' Best Idea.

For more information on the initiative see www.shawneeforestdefense.org and www.ShawneeNtIPark.org.

