



PROTECT OUR WOODS

P.O. Box 352, Paoli IN 47454

Dear Friends,

Many of you have heard of the group PROTECT OUR WOODS. You know of the work that has been accomplished in three areas:

- * Informing local residents of the issues surrounding the management of the publicly-owned Hoosier National Forest.
- * Aiding local residents to become involved in the discussion of how the Hoosier National Forest should be managed.
- * Representing the interests of local residents in dealing with the Forest Service, as well as with government agencies, the news media, and other groups concerned with these same issues.

Two parts of the Forest Service Land & Resource Management Plan for the Forest are unpopular locally: 1.) Off-road vehicle (ORV) trails on 11,160 acres of the Forest including the Little Africa area of Orange County. 2.) Clearcutting in tracts of up to thirty acres.

THE ORV PROPOSAL

Local residents and officials object to the proposed ORV trails not just because of the increased noise, litter, trespass, and law enforcement problems expected to arise, but also because of the threat to wildlife, watershed, recreation, and the quality of life for neighboring landowners. Seventy-one percent of the land within the boundaries of the Forest is privately owned, including fifty-five percent of the land in the proposed ORV areas. These factors were not adequately considered in planning for ORVs.

The Forest Service received over seventeen hundred comments on the ORV proposal. A summary of these comments is being written by Forest Service employees from the Bedford office to be sent to the Regional Forester in Milwaukee for a final decision. It is not clear what criteria the Regional Forester will use to make a decision, but he has stated that it will take at least six months to a year. If, as is most likely, he decides to allow some ORV trails, that decision will become a part of the Plan and be subject to the appeals process, and may wind up in court.

CLEARCUTTING AND THE APPEALS PROCESS

The Regional Forester has already approved plans for clearcutting and road building throughout the Forest. In the Orange County area, clearcutting is the only timber harvest method to be employed, and every acre is scheduled to be cut (except Pioneer Mothers Park), most within eighty years. Miles of new road will be built even though most of the Forest (85%) is already less than half a mile from a regularly travelled road.

This Plan has been appealed by a number of groups and individuals. The appeal will proceed no matter what the decision on ORVs. It is now up to the Regional Forester to decide whether to withdraw the Plan. If he doesn't, the appeal goes to the Chief of the Forest Service who can also decide to withdraw the Plan or let it be. Finally, the Secretary of Agriculture can decide whether to hear the appeal. If he decides to let the Plan stand as is, or if he declines to hear the appeal the matter will wind up in court. All of this could take years. That is why it is important for PROTECT OUR WOODS to remain active and to keep local residents informed.

PROTECT OUR WOODS

PROTECT OUR WOODS is made up of local residents: people who own homes and businesses in or near the Hoosier National Forest, and others, like hunters, hikers, and horseback riders, who are concerned about the management of the Forest. Members have given their time and effort, and have spent their own money as well, in telephoning, writing and printing, travelling, organizing and speaking. In order to continue to operate, we need your help.

The appeals process is likely to take a long time, and a legal challenge will be expensive. If you would like for members of PROTECT OUR WOODS to continue to speak out at public hearings, and to meet with state and federal representatives and agencies, to express the concerns of local residents on the management of the Forest, then become a member of PROTECT OUR WOODS.

For a five dollar contribution you will receive a PROTECT OUR WOODS bumper sticker and the newsletter. A special category, "Friends of PROTECT OUR WOODS", has been established for those who are unable to participate actively, but support PROTECT OUR WOODS with a contribution of twenty-five dollars or more.

When you send in your membership, please tell us what issues are most important to you. Please share your newsletter with interested relatives, friends, and neighbors. If you would like additional copies of the newsletter, bumper stickers (\$1 each), or more information, or if you have any suggestions or would like to offer assistance, please contact one of the people listed below or write to PROTECT OUR WOODS, P.O. Box 352, Paoli IN 47454.

338-2227 David Roberson	723-2538 Jerry Murphy
347-2098 Mark Stein	723-2723 MaryBeth Gibbons
365-2226 Maria Crecelius	723-2837 Don Stafford
678-2416 David Ort	723-4408 Marie Matthews
723-2430 Andy Mahler	936-4068 Susan Phillips

If you would like to help from your own home, write letters to:

Larry Henson Regional Forester 310 W. Wisconsin Av. Milwaukee, WI 53203	R. Max Peterson Chief, Forest Service USDA Building Washington, DC 20013	Richard Lyng Sec'y of Agriculture USDA Building Washington, DC 20013
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Tell them how you feel about the Forest Plan and the ORV proposal.

John F. Seiberling, Chairman House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Public Lands 812 HOB Annex #1 Washington, D.C. 20515	John B. Augsburger, Chairman Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee State House Indianapolis, IN 46204
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Request hearings on management of the Hoosier National Forest.

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 6, 7	President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, Indianapolis (PROTECT OUR WOODS members in attendance)
March 13, 14	PROTECT OUR WOODS Research Committee field trip to Forest Service office (3527 10th St, Bedford) to read and evaluate public comments on ORV proposal (public welcome)
March 15	Walking tour of the Africa Cemetery led by Carol Morris

A HISTORY OF PROTECT OUR WOODS

In early October, Orange Countians received a letter from the Forest Service informing them of the opportunity to respond (by 12-27-5) to a proposal to construct ORV trails in the forest. The area proposed was shown on an enclosed map and included "Little Africa."

The threat to the forest and to the area residents' way of life left many feeling frustrated. An outlet for these feelings came at the first public meeting in Paoli on the ORV issue, organized by a handful of concerned citizens. A great deal of information was shared that night including: the need to write to Harold Godlevske, forest supervisor and Larry Henson, regional forester; the fact that the public was not involved in the decision-making process on the proposal; the belief of Mr. Gerald Farlow, local realtor, that the land surrounding the forest would be devalued; the opposition to the proposal by Mr. Kenneth Hager, county commissioner (and subsequently all three commissioners); the fact that the ORV proposal was the last part of an overall LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN for the Hoosier National Forest, all others parts having been finalized.

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The grass roots group PROTECT OUR WOODS began forming the night of the November 15 meeting although at that time it was just on the level of exchanging ideas and plans of action. The name PROTECT OUR WOODS was agreed to by 13 people at a strategy meeting in the third week of November. Daily phone contact was established and numerous planning meetings were held. A flyer describing the goals and objectives was written and distributed throughout the county.

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One of the individuals had previously been attempting to contact a representative of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The proposed ORV trails endanger a cemetery, the remaining landmark of a community of Black settlers who arrived in Indiana via the "underground railroad."

The effort paid off when on Saturday, November 23, 1985, two NAACP members arrived from Jeffersonville to tour the "Little Africa" graveyard. They brought the matter to attorneys for the organization in Indianapolis who have referred it to the national level.

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Rick Redman of WHAS-TV heard of the controversy in Orange County from a member of the Audubon Society in Floyd Knobs and toured a clear cut as well as the cemetery on November 25, 1985. Many more people were alerted to the forest proposal as a result of this television coverage. Mentioned also was a large meeting being planned in Paoli by members of PROTECT OUR WOODS. Much of the following ten days was spent preparing for that meeting, as well as one held in

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Yes, I would like to become a member of PROTECT OUR WOODS. Here is my \$5 contribution.

Name _____

Street _____

Town _____

<p>As a "Friend of PROTECT OUR WOODS" I would like to contribute:</p> <p>\$ _____</p>

November to alert local organizations of the plans for their woods.

Dec 5
Since it was agreed that the Forest Service was doing very little to inform the public, PROTECT OUR WOODS members took on the task. The large meeting held on December 5, 1985, was a means to get the facts to as many people as possible. The main ingredient necessary would be knowledgeable speakers to explain what was being sprung on the county by the Forest Service. Members agreed on Claude Ferguson, an ex-forest supervisor and opponent of ORVs and Don Goodwin, a forester whose property borders proposed trails in Brown County.

Press releases were sent to almost 20 newspapers and radio and television stations to ensure public awareness. More than 200 people attended the meeting where it became very clear how people in the area felt about ORVs in the forest. Petitions were signed and people urged to send letters to Larry Henson and Harold Godlevske.

Since the large meeting on December 5, 1985, members of PROTECT OUR WOODS:-have attended a meeting on the forest issue sponsored by the Coalition for a New Age,-met with a representative from Senator Dan Quayle's office at the Orange County complex,-rented the Paoli school cafetorium to speak to individuals who had not heard about the Forest Service cancellation of their public meeting,-worked with Representative Frank McCloskey's office and Senators Lugar and Quayle's office for the extension of the comment period,-met with Harold Godlevske at his office in Bedford,-spoke to the Kiwanis Club, Homemakers Extension Club, the Soil and Water Conservation District,-met with Harold Godlevske and Larry Henson in Bloomington,-attended a public meeting held by Representative Frank McCloskey,-toured "Little Africa" with Sanford Gentry photographer for the Bedford TIMES-MAIL,-participated in a public hearing given by the Dept. of Natural Resources on outdoor recreation,-toured Pioneer Mothers and Little Africa with the Bloomington group FOREST WATCH, -and participated in the public hearing given by the President's Commission on the American Outdoors in Indianapolis,-also discussed the ORV proposal with Rick McIntyre, -communicated by letter and telephone with Representative Donald Dean and St. Sen. Joseph Corcoran the support for Bill 1207 introduced by Rep. Dean to limit the time the Forest Service has to acquire land to 1990 (from 2021) and support for an interim committee to be established to study the management techniques of the Forest Service.

The framework exists for an organization, but the future direction/continuation of PROTECT OUR WOODS depends on your input!

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