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Protect Our Woods

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FRANK VOYTAS RETIRES

by Bob Klawitter

Hoosier National Forest Supervisor Frank Voytas has retired. Voytas began his Forest Service career on the Deschutes in Oregon, but worked most of his life in the north woods of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and New Hampshire. His appointment as Supervisor in 1987 began a new era on the Hoosier. Biological preservation and recreation have replaced timber production as management goals. Botanists have replaced timber sale planners. Protect Our Woods will give Voytas an Honorable Lifetime Membership.

At his retirement dinner, Forest Service people spoke warmly about how good it has been to work under Frank. Several emphasized both his commitment to ecological restoration and the free hand he has given HNF staff to create their own projects. This management style has sometimes frustrated forest activists questioning inappropriate restoration and recreation projects. Appeals of forest openings and prescribed burns have been denied without addressing the issues. We have attributed at least some of this unresponsiveness to the policies of Frank's boss, Eastern Region Forester Butch Marita.

At 61 and looking young and fit, Voytas says he is retiring for personal reasons. But he admits disappointment that the Wayne NF was taken away from him when the Wayne-Hoosier was split apart following congressional direction. Voytas asked to be appointed Supervisor of the Wayne, but Marita refused for fear that the Wayne would be "Hoosierized." And activists remember that they felt compelled to make a big fuss in 1991 to keep Marita from removing Voytas from the Hoosier. As the Forest Service downsizes, is early retirement removing the wrong people from lead-

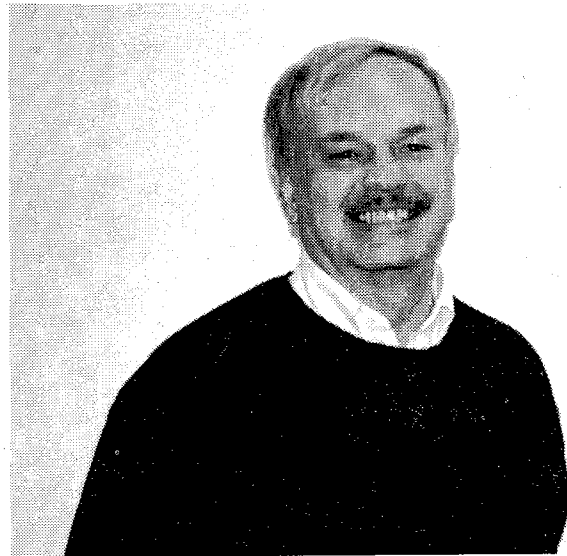


photo courtesy of U. S. Forest Service

ership positions? Things would certainly be different in the Eastern Region if Frank Voytas were Regional Forester.

VIGILANCE NEEDED

Frank Voytas talked with our Executive Director at length about the future of the Hoosier and the role of Protect Our Woods. The vigilance of forest activists is needed to keep management from backsliding and to keep it moving toward more biological protection. Frank says advance budgeting for three years and the

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Forest Plan will keep the Hoosier going in the present direction. Frank expects Acting Supervisor Ken Day and his staff to continue current policy.

But the Eastern Region's emphasis on ten-year average annual timber targets could mean heavier cuts to make up for lost years, when a new Supervisor is appointed. This is already happening on the Shawnee. A USDA hiring freeze may prevent appointment of a Supervisor for some time. But a production-minded Supervisor could bring cutting up to pre-1985 levels of 11 million board feet for several years. Likewise, full funding could increase wildlife openings to reach the Plan ceiling.

Informed of our proposed lawsuit to force the Chief to answer our appeal of the 1991 Plan Amendment, Frank says the new Chief of the FS, Jack Ward Thomas, the biologist responsible for the Spotted Owl management plan, should be sympathetic. The Plan Amendment of 1991 recognizes the overwhelming importance of unfragmented old growth, but compromises on the details to gain the support of game and timber constituencies. Edge habitat is superabundant in Indiana, Frank says, and the timber industry should get to work protecting timber resources on private lands

PROTECT NEBO RIDGE

Frank thinks we need to advocate maximum protection for the Nebo Ridge area. This is the most biologically intact part of the Hoosier National Forest, and was the first choice of wilderness advocates, who accepted the Deam as a compromise. Protect Our Woods has asked the FS to do nothing to further compromise Nebo Ridge's wilderness character. Frank says the Hoosier is an important national precedent for ecology-minded managers on other Forests. Forest activists here must continue to insist on good science and public participation, Frank tells us. We should also give the Forest Service people credit when we see them doing a good job.

We asked Andy Mahler, Protect Our Woods' first president, now Heartwood Coordinator, for his com-

ments on Frank Voytas' retirement. "Frank was the best of the current crop of Forest Service leaders," according to Mahler. "Unfortunately, they didn't recognize his value, and thwarted him at every turn. The Forest Service is an agency heavily degraded by 30 years of mismanagement. Its shade-intolerant leadership is badly in need of regeneration. Frank made an enormous difference, and I looked for him to take his vision of public access and scientific management to a larger arena. But the Forest Service eliminated his prospects for meaningful contribution. There is a very important role for Frank in private life, just as there has been for former Supervisor Claude Ferguson, and I look forward to working with him."

PLEASE HELP US MAKE ENDS MEET

As the anti-environmental movement grows, environmental organizations grow poorer. Partly it's hard times. People living closer to the edge have less money to give. But it's also partly enmity. Some corporations and United Way resist environmental workplace giving. Some foundations begin to reconsider their funding for environmental advocacy. Large environmental organizations downsize, cutting staff. Small ones, with only one or two staff to cut, may disappear. Meanwhile, Indiana's environmental programs are crashing and gambling threatens massive development of Patoka and Lost River watersheds.

Please send your membership contribution or donation if you haven't already. We need cash now to contest riverboat and casino gambling at Patoka Lake. With only 10 of 19 companies reporting, gamblers have spent \$2.6 million to influence voters statewide. **FACING THE BIG BUCKS ARE THE LOCAL CHURCHES AND PROTECT OUR WOODS.**



GAMBLING ON PATOKA?

In May or November 1994, voters in Crawford, Orange, and Dubois Counties will decide for or against a Patoka gambling boat. Crawford County voters will also decide on a boat for the Ohio which would likely include a mega development nearby. J & K Enterprises proposes a \$70 development in Dubois County, including a casino boat, 15-acre onshore pavilion, with a hotel, golf course, and shopping mall on nearby private land. And Minnesota Investment Partners is holding the West Baden dome hostage, threatening to let it fall in unless they get a casino license for it.

TILLERY HILL STILL AT RISK

JIM FOWLER STILL AFTER TILLERY HILL?

Jim Fowler was leafleted when he spoke at Indianapolis public library on January 6, as a guest of the Indianapolis Zoo. Tom Cobb and Ed Paynter were asked to leave, but first handed out about 100 leaflets. Later, Fowler told a reporter that he was hoping to meet with the Governor. "WHICH JIM FOWLER WILL WE HEAR TODAY?," asked the leaflet.

"1. Jim Fowler, naturalist and friend of the wild, speaking out to protect wild life and preserve its habitat, or

"2. Jim Fowler, advocate for the development and paving of Indiana's natural heritage for the profit of himself and a few other out-of-state interests...?" The leaflet tells readers what they can do. Please do!

WE ARE STILL AFTER JIM FOWLER!

1. Ask Jim Fowler to sever his connection with Patoka Partners, and to publicly advocate preservation of Tillery Hill. Write Jim at:

1. Fowler Center, 131 E 69 ST., New York NY 10021-5158. Call 212-744-3441.

2. Ask the Indianapolis Zoo Director to take a public stand against Tillery Hill. Write Director Roy Shea, Indianapolis Zoo, 1200 W Washington St., Indianapolis IN 46222. Call 317-630-2001.

3. Ask Governor Bayh, as part of his Heritage Trust initiative, to order IDNR to withdraw the development proposal issued under Governor Orr. Write Governor Evan Bayh, Statehouse, Indianapolis IN 46204. Call 317-232-4567.

BOOM AND BUST?

Gambling is spreading everywhere. Indiana's 11 riverboat licenses have already stimulated competition from Illinois and Kentucky. And State Senator Lawrence Borst of Indianapolis is quoted by the Associated Press as wanting 3 more casino licenses for the White and Wabash Rivers: "If it's going to create jobs, why not create jobs throughout all of Indiana?" As gambling sprouts up everywhere, there is less reason for anyone to travel as far as Patoka Lake or French Lick.

Any local economic boom as a result of getting in early would be quickly followed by local economic collapse. There aren't enough workers for existing local jobs, according to Orange County factory managers. And Dubois County has essentially full employment. The thousands of jobs promised by casino operators would bring thousands of desperate people to the area, especially since many jobs will be temporary, part time, and low-paying. Once the gambling boom subsides, the area's economy and environment will be burdened with thousands of poor.

OR SIMPLY LOOTING?

But the boom is an illusion. 90% of the money spent at the casino and associated development will come from the local area, within 100 miles. This money would be spent in the local area anyway, on other businesses, providing jobs for their employees. Not only will the casinos compete with local commercial centers, but gambling money will flow out of the area to investors in the casinos. J & K expects to ship as much as \$36 million every year to outside investors. Is this economic development or just looting? The fates of rural human and natural communities are tied together. The damage to human communities will have its coun-

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terpart in damage to forests and watersheds from highway and residential development. Development will deforest the Patoka watershed and shorten the life of the lake as a water supply for much of south central Indiana. Lost River's classic cave ecosystem will be endangered by highway construction and traffic.

WATER LINE OPPOSED

OUR OBJECTIONS SET BACK 85 MILE PIPELINE

Responding to our objection, FmHA did not fund Patoka Lake Regional Sewer and Water District's 85-mile Phase V water line into rural Dubois, Pike, Gibson, Spencer, and Warrick Counties in 1993. However, an EA issued MARCH, 1994, rejects our request for a complete EIS and finds that, despite many facts to the contrary, the pipeline would have "no significant impact." POW maintains that an EIS is not only justified, but necessary. The Hoosier Environmental Council has joined our request for an Environmental Impact Statement for the project. Barb Lollar of HEC's Legal Defense Fund has provided legal research.

Executive Director Bob Klawitter's 19-page comment on the need for an EIS concludes: "The communities of the project area have reached a key moment in their history. They must decide whether to abandon their rural heritage and the prosperity and quality of life that it provides, in order to pursue the population growth and economic development offered by government subsidies to infrastructure such as and including the proposed Phase V water project. Once these infrastructures are in place, there will be no turning back.

"Some people suggest that zoning could mitigate the adverse impacts of growth induced or accommodated by these infrastructures. But zoning is highly unpopular in these rural areas, and the business of zoning is variance and rezoning under the influence of the financial resources of development interests. An EIS, with its requirements for high quality information and serious public involvement, will give local citizens as well as planners and officials what will undoubtedly prove to be a last chance to consciously choose the future of their area. This is the purpose of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)."



NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Our opposition to the Phase V pipeline has far-reaching national implications. FmHA has been incorporated into the federal Rural Development Administration, where it continues to fund rural construction projects. RDA, HUD (Housing and Urban Development), and the Federal Highway Administration are key agencies implementing long standing federal policy of replacing traditional rural occupations and lifestyles with manufacturing, tourism, and residential development. In the name of fighting rural poverty, these agencies carry out Congressional porkbarrel policy relocating people and resources from the city to the countryside.

Our comments point out the clear contradiction between RDA's rural development mission and FmHA's environmental mission. NEPA regulations require FmHA to assist farms and rural towns by protecting "important farmlands and forestlands, prime rangelands, wetlands, and floodplains" (7 CFR Ch. XVIII § 1940.304). These resources are considered so important and sensitive by FmHA that limiting cumulative effects of FmHA programs on land use in the United States is the purpose of FmHA's environmental program: "The Nation's farmlands, forest lands, rangelands, flood plains, and wetlands are unique natural resources providing food, fiber, wood, and water necessary for the continued welfare of the people of the United States and protection from floods. Each year, large amounts of these lands are converted to other uses. Continued conversion of the Nation's farmlands, forest lands, and rangelands may impair the ability of the United States to produce sufficient food, fibers, and wood to meet domestic needs and the demands of export markets. Continued conversion of the Nation's wetlands may reduce the availability of adequate supplies of suitable-quality water, indigenous wildlife species, and the productive capacity of the Nation's fish-



Shoreline erosion on Patoka Lake

