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# Protect Our Woods

Winter 1995-Spring 1996

Numbers 30-31

## Unsustainable Future for Indiana

### Evansville Highway

The Draft Environmental Impact Study : Southwest Indiana Highway Corridor (Evansville Highway ), released in March, calls for building the Evansville Highway. We strongly disagree! This highway, if built, would cause a large part of wild and rural Indiana to disappear. The highway would directly take 4,857 acres, including:

Wetlands	31 acres
Forest	1,049 acres
Farmland	3,087 acres
Sinkholes	13

### Ruining the Country

Taking 108 to 120 homes, 1 or 2 churches, and 4 businesses would seriously displace rural people. Several family farms would be irreparably damaged. Development encouraged by the highway would further erode farms and farm communities, displacing existing rural people and wildlife. Existing businesses on SR 57 would suffer as traffic is diverted to the new highway. By the year 2020, SR 57 is predicted to lose 71% of its current traffic in Gibson County, 28% in Pike County, and 56% in Daviess and Greene Counties.

### Damaging Cities

Existing cities would also suffer. Traffic on US 231 is predicted to increase, but 15% less than if the new highway were not built. This represents a transfer of development away from the Jasper-Huntingburg area in Dubois County. A much more radical relocation of development from the Vincennes to Terre Haute section of US 41 would occur. However, the US 41 corridor is not studied. But the recent **Corridor 18 Feasibility Study** (I-69 from Canada to Mexico) shows that building a rural interstate along SR 57 would result in a massive transfer of traffic volume and associated economic development from the US 41 corridor to rural southwestern Indiana.] Traffic volume would increase in rural southwestern Indiana by 440% and decrease in the US 41 corridor by 39% by the year 2015. In contrast, upgrading US 41 to Interstate would increase traffic there by 132%. *continued on next page*

### Bloomington's Final Water Supply

by Bob Klawitter

Population growth, that doomed the native peoples and old growth forests of the Indiana Territory after 1800, now threatens Bloomington with an unsustainable future. Native Americans and the native forest ecosystem were overwhelmed by immigrant farmers coming into the Indiana Territory from the exploding population of Northern Europe. The European pioneer farmers quickly found that destroying the forest damaged the carrying capacity of the land. We do not have the deep glacial soils of Northern Indiana. The glaciers never reached here. We live in an eroded upland, with rock close to the surface. With the forest gone, our thin topsoils washed downstream. As people abandoned the ruined land, some of the forests grew back. But we have had trouble with water ever since.

### Forest Reservoirs

We live in the northeastern quadrant of one of the world's greatest watersheds, with 43 inches of rainfall a year. Water flows up the Mississippi valley into the Ohio River basin, where it falls from the sky as trees. Trees are 90% water. The massive trees of the dense hardwood forests of the Indiana Territory were towering reservoirs. They

*continued on next page*

### Action Alert!

Your Letters and phonecalls are urgently needed!  
See articles and addresses inside.

- Evansville Highway.....page 2
- Hickory Ridge Timber Sale.....page 4
- Jefferson Proving Ground.....page 9

## Your Donations Help Protect Our Woods



Photo by Jeanne Melchior

### Misleading the Public

The Draft EIS avoids analyzing US 41 benefits and costs by considering only an Evansville to Bloomington highway. In addition, ignoring the Bloomington to Indianapolis section of SR 37 reduces apparent costs in order to make the new highway seem worth building. But this important segment cannot be ignored. The new highway north to Bloomington would degrade 85% of SR 37 north of Bloomington to Service Level F: "traffic is backed up and motorists can expect long delays." The DEIS admits that SR 37 from Bloomington to Indianapolis will have to be improved, but considers it a separate project. This segmentation of what is essentially a single highway corridor project is likely to prove illegal in the lawsuits that will inevitably be filed. It is a shameless attempt to hide the true costs of the highway from the public.

### Public Comment

Public hearings will be held at 4:30 pm and 7:30 pm at the following times & places:

- May 28 Evansville Central High School
- May 29 Washington High School
- May 30 Bloomington Tri-North Middle School
- June 4 Pike Central Jr-Sr High School
- June 5 Bloomfield High School

The comment period will end August 1. Protect Our Woods, HEC, CARR, Hoosier Audubon Council, Indiana Sierra Club and others will send out a joint mass mailing to generate thousands of comments against this highway.

Please comment soon. Write to

Commissioner Stan Smith  
IN Department of Transportation  
Indiana Government Center North Room N755  
100 North Senate Avenue  
Indianapolis IN 46204-2249

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street or Box \_\_\_\_\_  
Town or City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Own Land in \_\_\_\_\_ County  
(optional)  
Membership \_\_\_\_\_ \$20.00  
Contribution \_\_\_\_\_ \$20 \_\_\_\_\_ \$40 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$ Other  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ send POW bumper stickers (\$1.00 or free with  
\$20.00 or greater contribution)  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Hoosier National Forest Map, \$5.00 each  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ 100% cotton T-shirt, \$12.00 each  
size SM L XL XXL  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ total enclosed. Make Checks payable to: Protect  
Our Woods, P.O. Box 352, Paoli, IN 47454-0352.

held the water on the land. Without these forest reservoirs we have become victims of cycles of flood and drought.

### Bloomington Water History

Bloomington sits on the Mitchell Plain between the sandstones and shales of the eroded Norman Upland to the east and the eroded Crawford Upland to the west. When it rains, water runs quickly out of these uplands, causing flooding. The limestones of the Mitchell Plain dissolve in water. Streams here flow underground through caves and channels dissolved in the limestone. These underground channels quickly fill up during heavy rains, flooding the surface landscape. The floods are brief. The water drains downstream rapidly, and we are left with water shortages.

The construction of Monroe Reservoir culminated a long history of water supply and water quality problems for Bloomington and Indiana University. In fact, IU once threatened to leave Bloomington if the city's water supply problems were not solved. A number of reservoirs proved to be temporary solutions. Twin Lakes is now a dryland sports complex. Lake Lemon is badly polluted, choked with vegetation, and abandoned as a water supply.

Finished in 1966, Lake Monroe's high quality water has allowed Monroe to become one of the fastest growing and most prosperous counties in the State. As a recreation resource, Lake Monroe brought \$21 million into the local economy in 1989. Now, after only 30 years, Lake Monroe is showing signs of trouble caused by (1) toxic pollution, (2) sedimentation, and (3) eutrophication. But there are no feasible locations left to build a reservoir to replace Monroe. Lake Monroe is Bloomington's final water supply.

### Toxic Pollution

Lakes can be polluted by dangerous industrial chemicals. Lake Monroe is still fairly clean in this respect. But there are warning signs of possible trouble ahead. Large mouth bass in the Ramp Creek area have reached the limit of edibility because of mercury contamination. By EPA standards, most of the lakebottom sediments are polluted with arsenic. Sugar Camp Creek Bay is heavily polluted with arsenic, and also polluted with chromium, nickel, and zinc. No one knows where these toxic metals are coming from. We do know they are present in industrial materials,

including construction and automotive materials, and they increase as traffic and runoff from pavement increases in a watershed.

## Sedimentation

Instream reservoirs like Twin Lakes and Monroe tend to fill up with sediments flowing in from erosion upstream. Bill Jones at IU's SPEA has just released a major draft study of Lake Monroe. Jones's research indicates that Lake Monroe will be completely filled with sediment in 5000 years at present rates. Not so bad. But sedimentation could increase by 10%, filling the lake in 500 years. Still doesn't sound too bad. But sedimentation could also increase by 100%, a rate that would fill the lake in just 50 years. What could cause such increases in sedimentation? According to the IU SPEA study: "Construction on steep slopes and shallow clay soils characteristic of much of the watershed has the potential to increase the current sedimentation rate 10- to 100-fold." Of course, long before the lake is filled in, it will be useless as a water supply. Long before that, its value as a recreational economic resource will go away.

## Eutrophy

Eutrophication occurs when overabundance of nutrients stimulates plant growth in lakes. Phosphorus is the limiting nutrient. As phosphorus increases, the lake becomes choked with weeds. Rotting vegetation lowers oxygen levels and fills in the lake faster with organic matter. Game fish are replaced by weed eaters like carp. Algal blooms may produce poisons that are not removed by water treatment.

Lake Monroe is already eutrophic. Phosphorus levels are so high in the upper basin that only lack of light penetration, caused by the muddy water, prevents potentially poisonous algal blooms. Carp may constitute 12% of the fish by weight. The IU SPEA study recommends reducing phosphorus coming into the lake by 72%.

Phosphorus is a key nutrient not only for water plants but also for human populations. Food production to support growing human populations can only be sustained by the addition of phosphorus to depleted soils. We mine phosphates and apply them to farmland, where they are taken up by plants and eaten by people, who then excrete them into our water supplies. As human population increases in the watershed, phosphorus increases in the lake, and the usable lifespan of the lake decreases.

So what limits sustainable development? It all comes back to growing numbers of people causing deforestation, soil depletion, and pollution. We live in a world that is rapidly becoming more eutrophic under the pressures of increasing human population. World population is expected to double in the lifetime of today's youth. The resulting population pressures threaten us as surely as they threatened inhabitants of this area in the year 1800. The future of Bloomington depends on limiting population growth in the Lake Monroe watershed.

## Scientists or Developers?

This is a watershed moment in Bloomington history. The original master plan for Monroe County land use developed by Susan Fernandez and her staff, with the help

of IU scientists, was a world-class document for watershed protection. Unfortunately, politicians have gutted it, resulting in a potential development boom in the watershed. Bloomington is not listening to scientists as it makes the decisions that will determine its future. It is listening to developers, whose only goal is to make a fast buck before retiring. Bloomington is already eutrophic, choking in its prosperity. But many more millions of dollars are to be made by building the city out into the Lake Monroe Watershed and the fragile karst plain. Developers have a short-term view of things. 50 years is a long time to sustain development for them. They will be rich, retired, and gone by the time the lake dies. But the rest of the community needs to take the longer view offered by IU's scientists.



*Photo by Chris Woods*

## CARR Gives POW Its Highest Award

At its annual meeting on November 2, Citizens for appropriate Rural Roads gave Protect Our Woods its 1995 Speed Bump Award: "Protect Our Woods has been an active and vocal supporter of CARR's efforts to present reasonable and environmentally responsible alternatives to the new terrain I-69 proposal. Their financial support has enabled CARR to produce the video *I-69: Myth vs Reality*."

"Protect Our Woods' members have spoken out in forums across Indiana and the Nation to protect our rural lands and slow destructive development."

"Protect Our Woods support has given us hope that our beautiful and bountiful forests, wetlands, and farmlands can be protected and will endure for future generations." Thomas R. Tokarski, President, CARR

Thanks, CARR. We are proud of this award. Your fight is our fight. Keep up the good work.

