

# White's Woods should be left to nature

Imagine a walk through White's Woods with your family — parents, children, perhaps grandparents, even the family dog — on a brisk, sunny winter day. The silence of the winter is interrupted only by your voices and the occasional snap of a twig underfoot. The pristine, freshly fallen snow is disturbed only by the footprints of animals in their natural habitat and your own tracks along the trail.

Now, fast forward to spring, and imagine another walk through White's Woods. This time, the sprouting leaves on trees offer the promise of summer and the sounds of birds fill the air. The occasional ripple of a stream signals the melting of the winter snow.

**NEXT, MOVE** ahead to summer and imagine escaping the heat of the pavement to cool off under the natural air conditioning of the forest canopy. The gentle breeze carries the subtle scent of blooming wildflowers, and the sounds of the forest echo through an area largely untouched by human technology for more than 50 years.

And finally, fast-forward again, this time to autumn, for a hike through the woods to see the splendor of the fall foliage and hear the leaves rustle at your feet.

Throughout these excursions, your family experiences the changing of the seasons and the beauty of nature. Your children receive a biology lesson unparalleled in any book. You escape the noise, the pollution and the stress of our high-tech society — within a few minutes of your front door!

Now, imagine an alternative scene, one likely to result if the proposed selective timbering of White's Woods is implemented by the White Township supervisors. Hear the buzz of the chainsaws, the crash of falling trees and the rumble of the truck engines. Smell the exhaust fumes of the timbering equipment. Look at the sky through the holes in the forest canopy, once filled with leaves.

Struggle to ford through the tangled, thorny briars of multiflora rose and the densely overgrown Japanese knotweed that have taken over the forest floor, and wade through the muddy

tracks of bulldozers and skidders as you skirt the sections of forest cordoned off for timbering.

Imagine teaching your children the biology lessons learned when man uses a recreational forest for profit and permanently changes the ecosystem. And if you want to show them a true natural forest, head for Quehanna Wild Area or Cook Forest, because you won't find it within walking distance of Indiana anymore.

**THE DECISION** to timber White's Woods rests on two issues. First, is selective timbering going to improve the health of the forest or will it result in the changes described above? The supervisors and their consultant would answer those questions, respectively, "yes" (it will improve the health) and "no" (it will not cause an undesirable outcome). However, by their own admission, the results of selective timbering are largely unpredictable, and their timbering plan does not begin to address these questions.

Second, is timbering of White's Woods what the people

of White Township and Indiana want? A survey of township residents, conducted by the supervisors in 1995 at considerable expense to township taxpayers, revealed a resounding "NO," with a two-to-one margin opposed to timbering. Even stronger opposition is evidenced in the online survey recently conducted by The Indiana Gazette. Sixty-nine percent oppose timbering, 8 percent believe that the issue needs more study and only 22 percent believe timbering is a good idea for the Nature Center. Is there some other evidence to show that timbering *is* the wish of the community?

The proponents of this ill-conceived plan have failed to demonstrate to their employers, the taxpayers, that selective timbering is in the best interest of the Nature Center and will not, in fact, result in an ecological disaster. Unless and until they do so, White's Woods Nature Center, "a gift from the people of White Township to the community," should be left to nature.

Susan S. Dahlhelmer  
Indiana

WASHINGTON — A lawmaker who also is a child psychologist wants Congress to better define when a university can release students' mental health information to their parents.

Last week's massacre at Virginia Tech shows the need for such legislation, said Rep. Tim Murphy, R-Pa.

Virginia Tech student Seung-Hui Cho, 23, went on a shooting spree in a dormitory and classroom building on campus, killing 32 people and himself.

It is unclear what, if any, contact the university had with Cho's parents — even after a professor removed him from class for violent writing and disruptive behavior.

Murphy said he would introduce a bill that would allow a university to notify a student's parents without fear of violating privacy laws if that student is deemed to be at risk of committing suicide, homicide or physical assault.

The Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 allows access to records in case of an emergency or to protect the health of a student.

Parents also can be notified if the student consents.

But the law is written too vaguely, Murphy said in a letter to House colleagues.

"There are many examples where information was not released to parents or guardians regarding a student's mental health, which led to miscommu-

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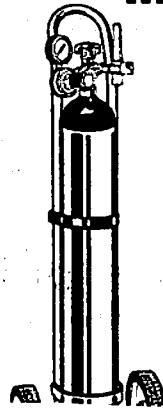
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