



[← Gridlock takes a summer break](#)

## [‘Timber!?’](#)

Posted on [August 10, 2022](#) by [David Loomis](#)



A student chalks a sidewalk in the Oak Grove at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 1995 during the first of several efforts to harvest White’s Woods. Photo by Tom Turify.

### *An opinion*

By David Loomis

INDIANA – “Timbering” came up during White Township supervisors’ July 27 meeting with the chair of their [Stewardship Committee](#), a citizens panel supervisors formed to insulate themselves from political wildfires they persistently set over [White’s Woods Nature Center](#).

“One of the things that creates a lot of tension,” [said](#) committee chair Barbara Hauge, “is the idea of timbering. That word seems to create a lot of anxiety with the members of the public.”

Right on cue, the word triggered some anxiety from township Supervisor Gail McCauley.

“It was never, ever a timbering plan,” Ms. McCauley [said](#). “It was never that. It never has been.”

Ms. McCauley’s trip to [Neverland](#) echoed an earlier assertion on the same subject at a supervisors meeting a year and a half ago. A guest speaker commented on the township’s “[logging plan](#)” for White’s Woods.

“We do not have a logging plan,” she [told](#) the tree expert addressing the January 2021 supervisors meeting. “There is not and never has been a logging plan.”

Once [again](#), thanks to Ms. McCauley for defining what the issue *isn’t*. The problem is avoidance by township supervisors to declare what their intention actually *is*.

MEANWHILE, other declarations have raised perennial concerns about supervisors’ intentions. For example, the contractor hired by supervisors to do whatever it is they want done [confirmed](#) in June 2020 that his initial plan called for taking “close to half of the volume” of the timber in White’s Woods. A 2007 proposal [recommended](#) removing 21 percent of the forest’s timber and selling it to raise revenue.



Barbara Hague, chair, White Township Stewardship Committee. Photo: UpStreet Architects website.

More recently, in March, Ms. Hauge [urged](#) her Stewardship Committee colleagues to consider “sale of timber” as a possible use of White’s Woods.

“Sometimes we have to sacrifice a bit of habitat to get people to appreciate it,” Ms. Hauge added. “We want people to love the area, even if we have to sacrifice habitat.”

Such public comments might explain why more than two-thirds of local survey respondents [since 1995](#) have said they want the woods left alone. The latest survey, scheduled for

[presentation](#) by IUP sociology professor Susan Boser to township supervisors at their meeting today, found a nearly identical response: More than two-thirds of respondents opposed selective timbering of the publicly owned 250-acre recreational forest.

Opposition to fiddling with the forest is likely to increase as Congress [moves](#) to pass historic climate legislation that [enhances the carbon-scrubbing value of trees on private and public lands](#). The law is likely to make White's Woods [even more valuable](#) untouched than timbered.

---

*David Loomis, Ph.D., emeritus professor of journalism at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, is editor of The HawkEye.*

*The HawkEye invites comments on this and other issues of community interest. Email [dloomis@live.iup.edu](mailto:dloomis@live.iup.edu) or click on the "contact us" drop-down menu, above.*