

Research shows people opposed to selective timbering in White's Woods

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A new research project to assess community members' experience of White's Woods, as well as citizens' preferences regarding this community forest's future, was just completed.

Over two-thirds of survey respondents were opposed to selective timbering of the area. Both selective timbering and limited season bow-hunting were perceived as having a negative impact on White's Woods, the ecosystem, and on the individual respondents.

Survey participants indicated that White's Woods was critically important to the Indiana community for nature conservation, air quality and wildlife preservation.

The research project, titled "White's Woods Community Interest Study," was led by Dr. Susan Boser of IUP's Sociology Department, who worked in collaboration with doctoral students Adam Jones, Joseph Fetzer, Richard Patterson, Noura Agbere and Amal Alqahtani.

Two primary questions drove this research: How does the public use White's Woods? And how do the public and key stakeholders view White Township Supervisors' potential changes (selective timbering, limited-season bow hunting, etc.) to White's Woods?

Overall, this current research indicates that, as in the past, the public is opposed to the potential changes to White's Woods. The possibility of selective timbering in particular is a major concern, because of its potential impact on stormwater runoff, the local ecosystem, and the ability of the public to use the park.

The issue of stormwater management was identified as a particularly important problem for survey respondents with a large majority indicating that White's Woods plays a major role in protecting the surrounding area.

A 32-question survey was distributed to a large, diverse sample of the Indiana community with the assistance of 10 different community organizations. The research team also conducted a series of qualitative semi-structured interviews with key community stakeholders to obtain their perspectives regarding White's Woods.

The complete results of the White's Woods Community Interest Study will be presented at a one-hour Friends of White's Woods-sponsored webinar at 4 p.m. Thursday. A question-and-answer period will follow the presentation.

To register for the webinar, which is open to the public, please send an email to info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org.

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