

# White's Woods: potential for more than timber

You might not know it's there, or if you do, you might not know where it is, but I promise you have seen it. White's Woods Nature Center sits at the end of North 12th Street — only three blocks from Philadelphia Street and seven blocks from the IUP Oak Grove. White's Woods is a forest that majestically overlooks Indiana. There are no signs showing how to get there, there are no maps of the area if you find it and the signs in the park are rotting from old age. You might wonder why this park has been so neglected, or what kind of a park this is? My answer would be one of great potential!

When IUP President Tony Atwater moved to Indiana, I got to meet and talk to him when he came to my photography studio to be photographed for a billboard that was being done for the Alice Paul House. President Atwater told me then of his vision of the town and campus becoming more unified, and he spoke of some of his ideas to make this happen. As I walked down Philadelphia Street last week, I saw artist's renditions of what the town will soon look like, and realized that President Atwater's vision was now coming to life; unfortunately, as one landscape is about to be beauti-

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 fied, another's beauty is being threatened.

The White Township Supervisors have commissioned a proposal to extract timber from White's Woods. They call this "stewardship" or "forest management," but the summary sheet is all about "thousands of board feet," tree types and their monetary value.

Value: This is a word that is almost always associated with money, but what about the value of green spaces for people to enjoy?

White's Woods is a rare piece of property in the Indiana area; it is rare because you can walk through it without seeing the flat rotting stumps associated with commercial logging. The forest floor of White's Woods is shady, cool and covered lushly with green

ferns and other shade-loving plants. In the future, how many places like White's Woods will exist, and will White's Woods even be one of them? It will be if people with vision can see its potential, and look at the value it possesses now, and will possess as it is left to grow into one of the few "Old Growth Forests" of Pennsylvania.

White's Woods needs help. It needs the support of the community to ask the supervisors to see past what it can do for them in revenues over the next 10 years; but instead, see the revenue — and value — it could bring to the community far into the future. As eco-tourism becomes more than just a buzzword, White's Woods could bring people from far out of the area, to visit our campus, our soon to be renovated downtown area, and for forest related activities such as hiking, mountain biking and cross-country skiing. As a nature center, White's Woods could teach what a different type of "forest management" can do for the planet and for a community. Field trips of the future youth can walk through a forest that has the feel of a grand cathedral, and learn about the natural places that are vanishing from the planet, but to do this, White's Woods needs a plan.

Better parking areas need to be considered, and public restrooms are a must. A plan needs to be drawn up to offer ideas of how to connect White's Woods with the projects in motion, implemented by President Atwater. With a greater vision, we can see what is not only here now, but what will be here in the future. Alumni will return someday and see something they could only imagine as they read this letter to the editor. Children who walked through White's Woods to bring awareness to the threats of timbering will bring their grandchildren to a place they helped to forge and preserve.

The sign that stands at the entrance of White's Woods reads: "A gift from White Township to the community." Let us treat this gift with respect and integrate it more with our community — not just for us, but also for the generations we will never meet and their children who will walk the paths we started today. To learn more about what's happening with White's Wood's visit [friendsofwhiteswoods.com](http://friendsofwhiteswoods.com) or [myspace.com/woodsfriend](http://myspace.com/woodsfriend).

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