

Supervisors must ease off timbering issue in White's Woods

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White Township Supervisors, at their recent meeting, seemed annoyed that anyone would think they had “a timbering plan” for White’s Woods Nature Center. Careful reading of the Millstone Woodlot Management Plan, commissioned by the supervisors, clarifies why citizens think it’s a logging plan.

The Millstone plan uses the words: “timber” (57 times), “harvest” (36), “landings” (20), “skid” (18), “woodlot” (15), “haul” (14), “log” (12), “board” (11), “skid roads” (9), “Bdft” (8), “merchantable” (5), “merchantable timber” (4), “log landing” (4), “prime grade” (4), “veneer” (4), “biome” (1), “ecology” (0) and “canopy” (0).

A reasonable person would conclude it’s about logging and timbering.

The proposed value of trees to be removed (first phase only) was “\$61,329,” with “net revenue” (profit) of “\$39,965.44.” Although one logging excuse was “too many tulip poplars,” the logging list includes oaks and maples.

Oddly, supervisors worry that WWNC’s fire risk is like the far West, ignoring the fact that most Appalachian deciduous forest fires spread through the understory. WWNC’s healthy tulip poplar canopy naturally limits understory overgrowth, slowing fire propagation.

Bplant.org notes that “mature trees (tulip poplars) are highly resistant to low-to-moderate intensity fires, often more resistant than oaks,” and “the absence of low branches also prevents ground fires from reaching the canopy.” Fire-prone San Diego County, Calif., recommends tulip poplars in their “inland coastal” microclimate because of their fire resistance. According to the U.S. Forest Service, “once bark is thick ... tulip tree becomes extremely resistant to fire damage.”

Mature stands of tulip poplars are things of beauty worth preserving. According to the National Park Service at Shenandoah National Park, “the tulip tree is often a dominant species in mature forest communities within the park.”

Bill Reid, chief ranger of The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor, wrote that the tulip poplar flowers ... high in the crown ... produce abundant pollen and nectar to many pollinators, such as honeybees, native bees and hummingbirds, (and hosts) ... caterpillars, including the tulip tree silk moth, and tiger swallowtail caterpillars.”

White Township supervisors need to ease off timbering in WWNC. Invasive species and fire fears are poor excuses for logging. Mother Nature has done well with WWNC. Don't mess with it.

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