



TERI ENCISO/Gazette

WHITE TOWNSHIP supervisors tabled a plan that calls for the removal of numerous trees from White's Woods Nature Center after area residents filled the office building during a meeting Wednesday to raise concerns about the plan.

Supervisors table tree-removal plan

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"That's part of the plan," he said. "That's not the whole objective."

The plan allows for 22 acres of the area to be left untouched as a nature reserve, Babyak said. He said he conducted a natural diversity index and there are no threatened or endangered species in the immediate and surrounding areas of the forest.

Richard SeEVER, of White Township, questioned if other trees could be damaged in the logging process. He cited a California study that states during logging, an estimated 6 to 14 percent of trees not slated for cutting get damaged by equipment, harming the tree.

Babyak said that in California, logging culture is different.

Ronald Lunardini, of 12th Street, cited research that only 50 percent of an area will regenerate as healthy forest after a cut.

James Calhoun, a 23-year township resident, asked why the results of a 1995 survey that showed township residents voted 2-1 in favor of not cutting the forest are no longer relevant to supervisors. The township went through a similar debate in 1995.

"If you do it (implement the plan) without consulting the voters ... that would be a decision by a dictatorship," he said.

He received no public reply from the board regarding the

survey.

Calhoun also showed photos of Babyak's prior work, citing a lack of regrowth in a forest owned and logged by Babyak. Babyak argued that the photos were irrelevant, as there were different aspects to the timbering of the woods in the photos, and all forests aren't the same. Michael Scott, of White Township, also brought photos of other forests to show damage that has been done by other loggers.

Solicitor Michael Delaney deemed the photos irrelevant for the same reason.

Supervisor Gail McCauley defended the management plan and cited a recent discussion with a forest expert from West Virginia University. She said that the professor assured her that the plan sounded solid and the amount of trees slated for cutting is not a heavy harvest.

Township resident Barbara Barber spoke about the good experience she had when she decided to remove trees from her 5 acres of land. She hired a quality forester and Amish workers who used horses to ensure her property would not be damaged.

"It looks just as nice, but better," she said of her land. "It's still beautiful back there. It's gorgeous."

Audience members argued that the plan wouldn't be implemented using horses, but rather backhoes, skidders and other

large pieces of equipment.

Nancy Hayward, of White Township, asked how the deer population would be affected by the plan. Babyak and audience members argued about whether or not the plan would increase or decrease deer population in the woods.

Babyak said that deer should migrate to areas that are cut to eat the branches and shrubs, but will migrate back to their original location after it's all gone. Other audience members said they believe it could displace deer into backyards and roadways.

Either way, Babyak said, deer overpopulation will need to be addressed in the area, as it is out of control.

Another public concern is the intended use of the funds that could be generated through the logging. Peter Bucklen, of Indiana, wanted to know how much of a factor money was in the issue.

Supervisor Eugene Gemmill addressed those concerns, breaking down the figures involved with the plan. Spread out over a 10-year period, the money averages to about \$16,000 per year for the township.

"Do you think we're trying to ruin a forest for \$16,000 a year?" Gemmill asked. "It's a management program we're talking about."

The money, said Robert Overdorff, board chairman, would

likely be used to pay for costs associated with White's Woods, such as insurance.

Because of misinformation and rumors in the community, namely a poster on a tree at Indiana University of Pennsylvania that incorrectly frames the issue, Delaney said he believes people are filled with "unnecessary rage." He suggested concerned individuals obtain copies of the report for review until a future meeting.

Copies of the management plan are available at the township office for \$8.50, the normal price of 25 cents per page by the township.

Garner, Overdorff and others assured the public that a midnight decision would not be made about the plan.

"Until you are all informed, let's let it go," Delaney said. "These supervisors are nowhere near a conclusion."

The next step for the project will be discussion at a later meeting, possibly at a location that can accommodate a large audience, Garner said. To find out if the item is on the agenda for discussion, people can inquire by calling the township office the Friday before a scheduled meeting, when the agenda is completed.

Garner and supervisors were pleased with the turnout and happy to have the public input, he said.

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Tree-removal plan tabled

Concerned crowd fills meeting room

By MARGARET HARPER
Gazette Staff Writer

White Township supervisors tabled discussion of a forest stewardship and management plan that calls for the removal of numerous trees from White's Woods Nature Center after area residents packed the office building and raised concerns about

the plan Wednesday evening.

Local residents questioned supervisors and Dave Babyak, a local forester who drafted the plan, about how it could negatively affect the forest. People openly voiced opposition to the plan and filled all available seats, stood along the walls and sat on the floor.

Others spilled out into the hallway, as there still wasn't room for everyone in the meeting area. The official

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guest sign-in sheet for the meeting showed 44 signatures.

The plan, drafted by local forester Dave Babyak, calls for the removal of 555,000 board-feet of trees from the forest in a 10-year period, said Babyak, who has 35 years of experience in forestry. According to Babyak's projections, the proposed harvested timber translates to 61 percent of the forest's estimated growth over the next 10 years.

If harvested today, the timber would be worth \$166,000, he said. Right now, there are 2.65 million

board feet of marketable saw timber in the forest. A 1995 inventory showed 1.9 million board feet, Babyak said.

The primary goal of the plan, Babyak said, is to protect and enhance the natural resources of the forest. By taking out the trees that are expected to die or are choking the growth of healthier trees, the forest can flourish, Babyak said.

While the proposed removal of the trees is a component, it's not the main purpose, he said.

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DAVE BABYAK