

# Continued citizen input for 'Woods'

All who value the natural world owe a debt of gratitude to the Indiana-area citizens who worked to prevent timbering in White's Woods Nature Center.

The individuals who contributed their resources to this enterprise were ably led by John Coffman, president of Friends of White's Woods, and Tom Simmons, organizer of Neighbors of White's Woods.

Others who "spoke for the trees" were the registered voters of White Township who took the time to return their survey forms. We can also thank the White Township Supervisors for ultimately responding to the wishes of their constituents by unanimously voting not to harvest trees in this natural area.

Now that the future of the trees is secured, it is time to think ahead to the future of White's Woods Nature Center. As we do so, it is worth reiterating two points that were raised during the dialogue of the past months.

First, we are very much in need of a long-range plan for White's Woods, but one that recognizes that White's Woods is neither a managed woodlot nor a recreational area to be categorized with ballfields and playgrounds. The uniqueness of this site demands a unique approach — one that will ultimately conserve its

natural values and minimize human impacts.

This view is clearly shared by a majority of those returning the recent survey, with 40 percent of respondents asking that no changes be made to the existing setting, and an additional 40 percent suggesting modest additions that would be compatible with the wooded natural setting.

Second, White's Woods was a gift to the "community," which any reasoning person would assume includes not only the residents of White Township, but also of Indiana Borough. If we exclude the citizens of Indiana from participation, we are losing the help of a large group of talented and committed individuals.

An approach to long-range planning that would make use of the energy and community spirit engendered by recent events would be to give greater emphasis to community participation. The White Township Supervisors could best serve the community by appointing a citizen's advisory group that can work with the Parks and Recreation department to develop a plan for White's Woods that allows appropriate public use of the area, but with minimal impact on values that make it unique.

As we look to the future of White's Woods Nature Center, it must be with recognition that none of us truly own the land. The future will judge by how well we care for this precious resource as it passes through our hands.

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