

4-22-07

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

White's Woods is a special place

White's Woods is an amazingly special place. It can be walked to from our courthouse in 10 minutes (granted with a little uphill involved!). Once there, a person can escape into a natural world containing beautiful naturescapes. There a person can feel a bit of wilderness in a small magical place. It is there that young people can find adventure and wonder.

I grew up wandering through White's Woods, and it formed my imagination. Following Spring Trail down to Boy Scout Bridge, I felt like I was deep in the woods. Sneaking down Stephenson Trail, I felt like I had found an ancient trail that nobody knew about but me. I learned tree species and plants, nibbled on birch and teaberry, swung from vines. I carry White's Woods with me wherever I go.

The Department of Natural Resources has recognized natural areas like White's Woods as special and has acknowledged that areas like these are a diminishing resource, places that are left to be natural. They recognize that not all places need to

feel the heavy hand of management.

Maturing trees do not need to be removed; in fact, they are an integral part of the complete forest. Even dying trees need to be protected. They provide shelter for species such as pileated woodpeckers that build homes inside the decaying trees; others live on the insects.

The canopies of bigger trees provide shade for the forest floor; which allows it to open up. These bigger trees give protection for owls from the predation of raptors. In other words, the truly rare species only move in when a forest is allowed to develop — un-management by the hands of man.

The timber proposal currently under consideration by the White Township supervisors breaks White's Woods into timber management plots. It recognizes these trees simply in monetary terms. Its aim is long-term and continuous thinning. This type of proposal goes far beyond management for safety. The health that it speaks to is short-sighted management

aimed toward removing trees before they are too old to sell. Moreover, and maybe most important, our citizens have spoken out against selective timbering both in a survey paid for by the township (2-1 against) and even more strongly in an online Gazette poll (3-1 against).

White's Woods has value beyond quick profit from timbering (which is meager, especially after considering costs and impact to damaged trails and roads and the side effects such as erosion). This unique place offers aesthetic value that translates into real money when people move into our small town in search of this type of amenity.

I could go on, but I invite people to walk up to White's Woods to see what I am talking about, and join the people who have spoken out against this proposal. Then please call your representatives and ask that they leave White's Woods to grow naturally.

It is 250 acres. Is that too much to ask?

Sean V. Howard
Indiana