SPORTS COMMUNITY LEISURE BUSINESS FIND A JOB E-EDITIONS

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES

Leave White's Woods alone, once and for all

September 12, 2022 6 hrs ago



For 27 years, citizens have sent White Township a message: Leave White's Woods alone. They want *no* timbering (yes, they know what selective timbering is – they don't want that either), no picnic area, no pavilion, no landscaping — nothing that alters the pristine beauty that is White's Woods Nature Center.

How do we know? In 1995, the township mailed ballots to every household; of 2,463 returned, 62 percent opposed the plan. Plan withdrawn.

In 2007, the Gazette conducted an online opinion poll. Of 747 responses, 69 percent opposed that plan. More than 1,000 local citizens signed petitions opposing the plan. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) ruled that timbering 21 percent of the forest was excessive. Plan abandoned.

In 2020, Friends of White's Woods surveyed park users. Ninety-eight percent of 229 respondents opposed that plan. So did 80 letter writers (July 2020), 28 email responders (February 2022), and more than 1,200 petition signatories from Western Pennsylvania (July 2020). DCNR vigorously criticized the plan.

Last week, results from a study completed by Dr. Susan Boser's doctoral research class were released. Of 289 respondents, 68 percent oppose selective timbering (19 percent favor).

But the township never withdrew the 2020 plan and continues to explore ways to alter the park — and they want more data.

However, when the township wanted to improve/change the rec center at East Pike twice within the last five years, they surveyed only 487 facility users and 2,817 guardians of Indiana children. The response rates were 24.6 percent and 11.1 percent, respectively. This was considered enough data for the township to make decisions about the rec center, but more than 4,000 surveys about timbering plans are not enough? Why not?

Contrary to the township's assertions, each of the plans was a timbering plan, as evidenced by their titles and subtitles: Timber ... Appraisal and Timber Sale Recommendations (Beale, 1995); Timber Harvest Schedule (Forest Stewardship and Management Plan, Revenue Projections, Babyak, 2007, p. 18); Select Timber Harvest (White Township Stewardship Plan ... White's Woods Tract #1, Lawer, 2020, p. 19).

It can only be inferred that the township wants data that supports timbering and ignores data that opposes it. The township should listen to constituents' voices and abandon the timbering plan, once and for all.

Ellen Chinn

Indiana