

Senate Bill 275: The Case for Restoring Old Growth Forests



WHAT DOES THIS BILL DO?

This bill designates at least one undivided area comprising at least 30% of each of Indiana's 13 State Forests as an "Old Forest Area." It prohibits the Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources from conducting or allowing timber management in these Old Forest Areas. The bill provides that the designation of the Old Forest Areas may not affect hunting, fishing, and other recreational uses, or the maintenance of access roads, or rights of access through the State Forests.

WHY IS THIS BILL NEEDED?

Because the Division of Forestry (DOF) intends to log 97% of our State Forest acres over the next 20 years, this bill is needed to ensure a more balanced management of our State Forests that maintains areas for wilderness recreation, tourism, and forest research.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ESTABLISH OLD FORESTS IN OUR STATE FORESTS?

Protecting old forests will ensure that the only state lands available for wilderness recreation in Indiana remain intact. Old Forests will prevent soil erosion on steep slopes, protect water supplies, support declining native species that thrive in deep forest habitat, and store carbon.

WHY SHOULD THEY BE SET ASIDE?

Unlogged, older forests serve as ecological reference areas for scientists to study processes such as regeneration, and natural resistance to diseases and pests that occur in older forests. They also allow foresters to analyze the impacts of timber management in the remaining forest. In fact, prior to 2005, the DOF had an official policy to set old forest aside as control areas to meet these objectives -- a policy supported by hundreds of scientists today.¹ Abandoning this policy to suit the one-sided views of a few timber industry-backed foresters is subjecting our State Forests to needless risk from a policy dominated by timber production.



WHY A 30% SET ASIDE?

Prior to 2005, under Indiana state policy, 40% of State Forests were aside from logging. It is reasonable to set aside 30% of State Forest to fulfill the multiple-use mandate for Indiana's State Forests. SB 275 is meant to protect what previous administrations have protected, such as Old Forests, two of the three Back Country Areas, steep slopes, developed recreation areas, and other ecologically-sensitive areas that were not being logged prior to 2008. In their certification audit, the DOF said that Nature Preserves and Back Country Areas would be protected as older forest areas. Despite this assurance, Back Country Areas are currently being logged.

HOW WILL THIS BILL IMPACT THE TIMBER INDUSTRY?

Very little. Data from the Division of Forestry indicate that State Forests are providing only 4.5% of the timber sold in Indiana each year.² Plus, public timber sales compete with timber sales on private woodlands.

HOW WILL THIS BILL IMPACT REVENUE FOR THE STATE?

Not timbering some of our State Forests will reduce logging revenue. However, recreation user fee programs for state forest wilderness usage in other states are generating funds comparable to logging -- without the costs. For example, in Maryland, backpackers pay \$10 per night for wilderness camping with a self-pay system that generates \$125,000 per year from one State Forest. Here in Indiana, State Park user fees generated \$22 million in 2015. A system of recreation fees in Indiana State Forests that generates 12% of this amount could replace all of the gross revenue from logging on State Forests, with none of the costs.

HOW WILL THIS BILL IMPACT THE STATE AND LOCAL ECONOMY?

Local communities benefit more from increased tourist dollars and higher property values than from logging. In Vermont, a state with a large hardwood forest industry, forest recreation generates \$1.9 billion in gross state product and provides 10,050 jobs, compared to \$455 million in gross state product and 4,802 jobs from logging, furniture, and the wood products industry. Tourism bureaus from Brown, Monroe, and Scott Counties are all supportive of less logging in Indiana's State Forests. Outdoor recreation is creating five times as many jobs as the timber industry in the Eastern national forests.³

WHAT WILL SB 275 MEAN TO HOOSIERS?

Presently, public land acreage set aside from logging and open to recreation amounts to only 1/300th of an acre per Hoosier.⁴ Hoosiers deserve more of their public lands to be managed for their enjoyment as wild nature. State Forests are our heritage; they belong to all Hoosiers.

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REFERENCES

- 1) Letter from Dr. Leslie Bishop, Ph.D., and 227 Indiana scientists to Governor Holcomb, November 2, 2017. On Indiana Forest Alliance website: <http://bit.ly/2Fid79H>
- 2) In 2016, there were log receipts of 313,966,064 board feet and \$0.449 per board foot paid to landowners. (http://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/files/fo-Hrdwd_Imp_2016.pdf). The 2015-19 State Forest Strategic Plan sets a target to cut \$14 million board feet per year. (https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/files/fo-State_Forest_Strategic_Plan_2015_2019.pdf)
- 3) The US Forest Service budget data from 2014 indicates that outdoor recreation on the National Forest System supports about 205,000 jobs, contributing about \$13.6 billion to the Nation's gross domestic product each year. In comparison, the generation of forest products from the National Forest System is supporting 42,000 jobs and contributing \$3 billion annually to America's gross domestic product. (from United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, "Fiscal Year 2014 Budget Overview", April 2013, p.5.
- 4) State and federal land in Indiana set aside from logging or vegetative manipulation for ecological protection and the public enjoyment of nature amounts to 221,000 acres. This is composed of approximately 104,000 acres of the Hoosier National Forest, 14,000 acres in the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, 102,000 acres in state parks and nature preserves and 1,000 acres of recreation areas in the State Forests (see Final Environmental Impact Statement, 2006 Hoosier National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, Chapter 2 – Management Alternatives, pp. 2-26, 2-35, & Table 2.1).