



SIERRA CLUB

HOOSIER CHAPTER

Save the Back Country Area of Yellowwood State Forest from being Logged

In the 1970s and 80s, Republican Indiana Governors Orr and Bowen established three Back Country Areas (BCA) in state forests that would keep the backwoods intact and logging at bay ...and today they are no longer safe from being logged.

If each newly elected Governor of Indiana decided to chip away at our protected wild places set aside by previous administrations, it will undermine good bi-partisan work done for the People of Indiana by previously *elected* Indiana leaders. Setting aside a small part of our State Forests (SF) for Hoosiers to enjoy for generations was bi-partisan decision. Governors Bowen and Orr agreed that the Back Country Area of our state forests were legacies worth saving. Governor Holcomb is not the one who walked this policy back, it was Governor Mitch Daniels...but Governor Holcomb is the one who can save it.

Two years ago Indiana Forest Alliance formally proposed to the Indiana Division of Forestry, (IN DoF) that approximately 2,380 acres in Morgan-Monroe/Yellowwood State Forest (a forest unit of 51,000 acres) be designated High Conservation Value Forest, (HCVF). The IN DoF puts entire state forest tracts up for auction having their foresters mark the trees to be cut and then the independent logging companies come up with a bid which is typically below market value. The IN DoF facilitates logging in our state forests while claiming that they are “managing our forests for more diversity”. While they refer to this type of management as shelterwood-cutting, it sure looks like clear-cutting to me. Large tracts are removed thousands of acres at a time and there are no plans to save any sections from being auctioned to logging companies for timber. One of my Indiana Forest Alliance friends calls it, “clear-cutting in slow motion”.

Environmental groups and conservationists have waited two years for the Indiana DoF to share the BCA HCVF proposal and we want to save a portion of the BCA from being logged, ever. It takes 100 years for a tree to grow the size they are now in the BCA, more than a lifetime. There is plenty of private land in Indiana for the timber business, so why cut down our legacy? If every new administration in Indiana decides to walk back good policies, where will we end up? Over 150 years ago in 1858 the conservation of Central Park began, and the forest was saved for city dwellers still today. What if every newly elected politician was able to pick it

apart, slice and dice it and take a little piece to fund their administration? Hoosiers have a legacy right now and it is in the Yellowwood and Morgan-Monroe State Forest Back Country Area.

100 year old trees and old growth forests are rare and they are key in mitigating the ever increasing climate crisis. We have one chance to do this right, only a few years to turn this around so that we can enjoy our legacies. Plowing ahead and cutting down Mother Nature's most efficient green house gas filters will be a mistake. We don't have another 100 years to wait for our trees to grow back to efficiently store and filter CO2. These are OUR trees on OUR Public Land and OUR resources to help save us from the climate crisis. Because it is public land you have a say in what they do to our state forests. Please call Governor Holcomb and your legislators and ask that they save the Back Country Area of Yellowwood and Morgan-Monroe State Forests. The deadline for public comment is September 30th. Indiana Division of Forestry

<https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/state-forest-management/public-comment/state-forest-management-guides/>

Julie Lowe
Executive Committee Chair
Hoosier Chapter | Sierra Club