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**Buckeye Forest Council, Heartwood and Ohio Sierra Club Appeal Forest Service Plan for Ohio’s Wayne National Forest**

*Forest Service Plan Opens 85% of the Wayne to Logging, Fails to Protect Important Natural Areas*

Columbus, OH—Eighty-five percent of the Wayne National Forest land base is open to logging if the U.S. Forest Service carries out their Land and Resource Management plan. The Buckeye Forest Council, Heartwood, and the Sierra Club Ohio Chapter filed an administrative appeal to the forest plan, challenging the scientific, legal and economic flaws of the plan.

“All over the country, citizens groups have been forced to challenge the Forest Service’s flawed priorities, said Brandi Whetstone, Executive Director for the Buckeye Forest Council. “The plan will deal a substantial blow to the Wayne National Forest by failing to protect important forest features and public recreation opportunities. Instead of using this opportunity to maximize protection for Ohio’s only national forest, the Forest Service has chosen to increase cutting against the people’s will.”

During the draft stages of the forest plan, the overwhelming majority of written and oral comments requested either a cessation of all commercial logging or substantially reduced logging as compared to the old forest plan from 1988. According to a poll conducted by Wright State University, just over 60% of Ohioans are opposed to commercial logging on public forest lands.

In addition to logging, the forest plan will increase road building, prescribed burning and oil and gas leasing. The Forest Service plans to log nearly 18,000 acres over the next ten to fifteen years, an area equivalent to 13,591 football fields. That area does not include part of the Wayne slated for permanent deforestation to make way for the Nelsonville bypass. The bypass will cross through 768 acres of the Wayne National Forest, the size of 582 football fields.

"The impacts of the Nelsonville Bypass were only minimally included in the Forest Service's management plan analysis,” said Loraine McCosker, Vice-Chair of the Ohio Chapter of the Sierra Club. "The Fish and Wildlife Service determination states that the bypass is 'likely to

adversely affect' the Indiana bat, a federally listed endangered species. The Ohio Sierra Club is very disappointed with the approach taken by the Forest Service because the management plan should include the cumulative effects of all actions taken in the forest."

Logging, road-building and oil and gas development will further fragment the forest and the combination of management activities on the Wayne will likely have serious impacts on threatened and endangered species, water resources, aquatic species, and public recreation.

The plan illegally rules out any opportunities to create future wilderness areas, and Ohio is only one of two states without designated wilderness. Overall, the Forest Service failed to provide adequate analysis about the cumulative impacts of their activities on the forest. The appeal cites several violations of key environmental laws established to guide the forest planning process, as well as violations of the Endangered Species Act.

Leigh Haynie, staff attorney for Heartwood, filed the appeal on behalf of the parties. Heartwood has also appealed the Mark Twain National Forest plan in Missouri.

“The unjustified and illegal forest plans put forth by the U.S. Forest Service demonstrate the unbalanced priorities of the current administration.” Leigh Haynie said about Forest Service plans. “It is unfortunate that the Forest Service appears to be more interested in timber harvesting and ecologically harmful management practices than following environmental laws.”

The Wayne National Forest is a precious natural area, supporting wildlife habitat, endangered and threatened species, and recreational opportunities for hiking, fishing, horseback riding and camping. According to a study prepared by the Wayne National Forest in 1996, the recreational services provided in the forest are a vital component of the economy in southeast Ohio. Expenditures by non-local visitors boosted the economy by more than $45.7 million. Recreation related spending supported 1,024 jobs and generated almost $25 million in annual income to southeast Ohio residents.

The Wayne National Forest is comprised of three areas in southeastern Ohio, totaling 238,000 acres. Every ten to fifteen years the Forest Service is required to revise the management plan for the Wayne. In 2002, the Forest Service started revising the 1988 plan and released its final plan on February 10, 2006***.*** Visit www.buckeyeforestcouncil.org for more information about the Wayne National Forest and for a map highlighting areas where the Forest Service permits logging in the Wayne.

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*The Buckeye Forest Council is a statewide, membership-based, grassroots organization dedicated to protecting Ohio’s forests and their inhabitants through education, advocacy and organizing.*

*HEARTWOOD is a regional coalition of grassroots groups that works to preserve the forests of the Eastern United States through education, advocacy, and citizen empowerment*

The Sierra Club Ohio Chapter