

Buffalo Springs

I am writing on behalf of those that oppose the US Forest Service plan to desecrate our forest. I first want to say that I am truly disheartened by an organization that is supposed to be the protector of the forest, instead across this entire country the US Forest Service is looking to execute plans to strip the forests they are supposed to protect of their valuable resources. During a time of urgency in protecting our world from climate change and management of carbon you would believe that the most powerful country in the world would be doing everything possible to reduce climate change and increase carbon capture. Instead, this government agency is doing less than most third world countries. Just like the original proposal we had to write our opposition to; we know that our forest is only looked at by the US Forest Service as “Board Feet”. While I want to say something in this opposition that will magically cause a cease in these plans, there is no extent that this organization is willing to go to get its way.

When we last had to jump through hoops back in 2021 to submit comments in opposition to this proposal it was done during very busy holiday periods and you had substantial resistance from the citizens of the area, hunters, hikers, environmentalists, and even loggers. As a matter of fact, your *“Consideration of Comments for Buffalo Springs Restoration Project Environmental Assessment”* took you 382 pages to basically tell everyone that their concern didn’t mean anything, and you will continue to do what you want, when you want. This is in no way an acceptable response from an agency that we fund to protect our valuable resources. Below is a list of my previous comments that was poorly answered by your organization.

1-104	Michael Stewart 12/19/2022	Regardless of what direction the management of these forests receive, I as well as many others DEMAND an Environmental Impact Statement be completed. This Buffalo Springs (BS) project will turn these multiple use lands into something only enjoyed by loggers. This plan is designed to turn the forest into a manageable crop to be harvested over and over as the stands grow. I am not against timber production, but it should be done only on the private lands like my family had to do. Multi-Use should mean that what I do on these public lands should not directly affect the quality for others that also have rights for the use of the lands. Logging, repeated burning, and spraying would certainly take away many others right to the Multi-Use	<p>The EA: “Shall briefly provide sufficient evidence and analysis, including the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternative(s), to determine whether to prepare either an EIS or a FONSI” (36 CFR 220.7(b)(3)(i)).</p> <p>The Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960 is a federal law that directs the Forest Service to develop and administer the renewable resources of timber, range, water, recreation, and wildlife on national forests for multiple use and sustained yield of products and services. The Forest Service is to maintain in perpetuity an output of the various renewable resources of the National Forests.</p>
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		terminology used in the Forest Service Management Plans.	
1-105	Michael Stewart 12/19/2022	<p>In October 2021 I received my notification for the Scoping Plan for the Buffalo Springs Area. I like many never thought anything of it because we had never heard of Buffalo Springs. Deception has appeared to be the name of the game from the beginning. Notifications were not sufficient, and many never received a notice, public announcements were not made on local radio stations or newspapers. The maps that describe the areas affected are very poorly defined as you only had a map printed on a 8 ½" x 11" piece of paper that covers over 200K acres. Far more details must be included on a map that will break down each sections treatments as well as expected action schedules. The public comment periods are in our opinion being purposely placed in the middle of busy Holiday schedules (Thanksgiving and Christmas) to ensure that the public doesn't have the time to review and comment in the 30-day comment period to oppose the Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA). I am asking for the comment period to be extended or a rerelease of the Draft Environmental Assessment, so people have time to actually review and comment their thoughts.</p>	<p>A list of public outreach actions can be found at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/hoosier/?cid=FSEPRD872762</p> <p>The scoping letter was posted on our website, 325 hardcopy letters were mailed, and 42 emails were sent with the scoping letter attached.</p> <p>Detailed information on the Proposed Vegetation Treatments can be found at: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/00b0f32be3884187b6fd927d02b474d1. Information includes the Proposed Action, Basal Area, Age of stand (year of origin), Total Trees Per Acre, Forest Vegetation Type, and Size in Acre. This information has been available on the HNF website since March 2022.</p> <p>Improvements to the scoping maps were made prior the release of the draft EA.</p>
1-106	Michael Stewart 12/19/2022	The current 2006 Forest Management Plan is outdated and must be updated to support climate changes and protections on many endangered, protected, and prevalent creatures and organisms that call this place home.	<p>Project level analyses is tiered to the Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, but the latest relevant science is considered as projects are analyzed. The Forest Service initiated formal section 7 consultation and conference under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 on April 19, 2023. The results of consultation have been added to the Final EA.</p>
1-107	Michael Stewart 12/19/2022	"Citizens Preferred Alternative to the Buffalo Springs Restoration Project" is the best and preferred course of action because it takes everyone's wishes into consideration and truly makes a path towards the future and looking to the forest as asset as something other than	Alternatives must meet the purpose and need ((36 CFR 220.7 (b)(2)). NEPA requires agencies to consider alternatives to the proposed action that are reasonable and feasible. The stated goal of a project (Purpose and Need) dictates the range of reasonable alternatives.

		<p>board feet. I want to see this place protected as a “National Historic Trail” (Recreation, Preservation, Conservation) protecting the actual buffalo trace and many artifacts, karsts, creatures, Fungi, native medicinal plants, and web of unexplored life beneath the forest floor. I want to see organized activities such as a Volksmarch (common in Germany) where people do simple organized walks through the forest and specific areas. I want a “NEW FOREST PLAN”, one that involves other tracts of lands within the original HNF purchase area. Bringing the adjoining private lands into the management plan is the true answer to many of our problems. Purchase of new tracts of land to increase the HNF is also a much better use of funds. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that the Federal Agencies must consider a full range of alternatives, including alternatives that protect the area’s extraordinary history, hydrology, geology, recreational opportunities, giant trees, scenic beauty, and forest biodiversity, without logging and burning the forest.</p>	<p>The “Citizen’s Preferred Alternative” does not meet the purpose and need set forth in the Buffalo Springs Restoration Project proposal and would not fulfill Forest Plan direction associated with the goal of maintaining and restoring sustainable ecosystems.</p> <p>The Forest Plan states, “We are committed to an acquisition and exchange program to consolidate NFS lands, to resolve encroachments, and to protect significant cultural resources, areas of historical interest, and unusual habitats” (p. 2-4).</p> <p>The Hoosier NF’s Plan authorizing this Project remains valid until revised or amended. This project is consistent with and implements the Forest Plan. The Forest Plan guides all natural resource management activities for the Hoosier National Forest.</p>
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My comment 1-104, very clearly that these forests are supposed to be multi-use forests and that your use shouldn’t interfere with my use, at least not permanently. Your response stated, “The Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960 is a federal law that directs the Forest Service to develop and administer the renewable resources of timber, range, water, recreation, and wildlife on national forests for multiple use and sustained yield of products and services. The Forest Service is to maintain in perpetuity an output of the various renewable resources of the National Forests”. I had to go look up the Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960 on your website, and noticed that it also says the following, ***“After the act was signed in 1960, the Forest Service was active in managing the national forests where all resources (timber, wildlife, range, water, and outdoor recreation) were treated equally”***. How can you say you are treating all of these equally when you will be destroying the habitat of hundred if not thousands of animals, reptiles, bats, birds, insects, and microorganisms? How can you be equally to the 100K+ people that require Patoka water to be clean and clear? How can you be equally to those that want our forest for outdoor recreation? How can you be equally to those that just want to see nature’s beauty as they drive through the countryside instead of the clearcuts that will be created? Please tell me how much consideration was input into the

development of the “Multiple-Use and Sustained Yield Act of 1960” towards climate change and carbon capture? I would like you to tell me how much consideration was input into the current 2006 Forest Service Management Plan in regard to climate change and carbon capture! I also mentioned the following statement in my previous comments “The logging will actually destroy the roads that the already economically depressed population has provided and receive no benefit in return. You have already received letters from county commissioners opposing this plan because of the damage it will do to our infrastructure”. I did not see a reply to this comment at all, but even if someone else ask the question and there was a reply, it won’t change the outcome unless you are prepared to repair and repave the many miles of roads that will see damage from these actions. Even if a repave is part of the plan, it is a waste of our tax dollars.

My comment 1-105, was about the deception used by the US Forest Service from the beginning. You used Buffalo Springs for the first time since no one in this area had ever heard that name, because it isn’t a real place. You failed to adequately notify people living in and around areas of interest, and then provided very poor information on what was being done and where it was being done at. Your reply *“The scoping letter was posted on our website, 325 hardcopy letters were mailed, and 42 emails were sent with the scoping letter attached”*. A simple Google search for Orange County Indiana has approximately 19,867 people living with these borders. I don’t feel that your 325 letters and 42 emails justify an actual notification of residents affected. The 30-45 days provided for the initial response for comment to most of the county wasn’t sufficient, but in your desire for deception to residents that would oppose it was perfect. Now several thousand people don’t have a voice because they didn’t comment to the original proposal, **THAT THEY DIDN’T KNOW ABOUT!**

Our proposed “Citizens Preferred Alternative to the Buffalo Springs Restoration Project” was completely ignored as expected because you say *“The “Citizen’s Preferred Alternative” does not meet the purpose and need set forth in the Buffalo Springs Restoration Project proposal and would not fulfill Forest Plan direction associated with the goal of maintaining and restoring sustainable ecosystems”*. The reason this plan won’t fulfill Forest Plan directions is because it doesn’t allow you to rape the forest of its resources. It allows everyone to have a say in how it should be managed, and it doesn’t support the direction of the entire US Forest Service onslaught of forests from coast to coast. Our Country not only County demands that the US Forest Service start working for the people instead of against them.

“Save Hoosier National Forest” is a Facebook site that we started in October 2021 to help get the word out about this terrible project. It now has over 2400 supporters and somehow your 325 letters and 42 emails we sufficient for you to say you put the word out. Hundreds of people have dedicated thousands of hours of their valuable time and many thousands of their hard-earned dollars have been spent to help get the word on your plans since then. This is not how a Government for the People should work; we should not have to take you to court over and over to get the wishes of the people to be met. I will not give up my efforts to stop you from destroying these beautiful forests that I grew up in and still to this day love to walk through. If your organization is allowed to continue our forest will be filled with the many invasives seen not far from the borders now because you are creating the habitat the need to get started. Kudzu loves the early successional forest areas, and you are willing to prep the soils just for it.

Michael R Stewart
Save Hoosier National Forest

- (b) (6)
- The name of the proposed project (Buffalo Springs Restoration Project), the name and title of the responsible official (Christopher Thornton District Ranger of the Tell City Ranger District) and the name(s) of the national forest(s) and/or ranger district(s) (Hoosier National Forest and/or Tell City District)