

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/28/2023 3:27:10 PM

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Comments: The Sheltopee Trace Association is concerned with efforts to protect the scenic corridor of the trail. We understand that the Trace as a whole is not specifically defined as a "Prescription Area" but must rely upon the perscription of the section it crosses. The STNRT has no "Scenic Integrity Objective" or SIO assigned to it." Again we must rely upom the SIO in the area it crosses. This effectively means to us the Trace has no real protection. Past experience have shown that timber harvesting has paid little respect to the presence of the Trace.

In this specific area, Big Perry (and that section of the Sheltopee) lies within a "Ruffed Grouse Management Prescription Area". This prescription area has a low to moderate SIO assigned by the Forest Plan. A moderate SIO is described as: "Changes/impacts are noticeable but remain visually subordinate to the scenic character described". The Ruffed Grouse Management Area can be found on page 73 of chapter 3 in the plan. Description is: "Ruffed Grouse Emphasis areas represent an early-aged forest mosaic within the larger mature forest landscape. Species associated with seedling/sapling forest habitat flourish and contribute to overall landscape diversity".

No mention of the STNRT is found in the description.

The Sheltopee in places like the Red River Gorge or Clifty Wilderness have a Very High SIO because that's what the Prescription Area has assigned to it. Nice designation but its highly unlikely that timber projects will happen in the Gorge along the Trace given its status. Looking to the past, when Elk Lick project was completed, the lack of a SIO specific to the Trace enabled the timber company to log right up to the trail, removing many large trees, shade cover along the Trace even though the Ranger indicated that it would not occur.

In order for this project to move forward we would request that the entire length of the ST immediately get assigned a high Scenic Class and a Prescriptive Area of its own. What sense does it make to assign a High Scenic Class to the Zilpo Scenic Highway and not the ST.

We understand that this would require a change to the Trail Master Plan. For over 5 years we have been waiting for this Master Trail Plan with little or no progress in sight. In the meantime, timber projects along the Trace are in progress or are planned that will impact the scenic integrity of the trail.

Thank you for your consideration of your request.

Steve Barbour

Executive Director, STA