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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am opposed to the implementation of the Houston South Vegetation Management and Restoration Project including the Supplement.

The proposed Houston project is located in areas known for highly erodible soils, high slopes and intersects many riparian zones as defined in the USDA Forest Service's own Manual. The Forest Service, and specifically Hoosier National Forest (HNF), has proven time and time again that they are incapable of fully implementing adequate BMPs to prevent erosion and sediment transport both over space and time. If the planned logging and burning activities in the Houston South Project area are implemented, it is highly likely that anywhere from 2 to 5 times the amount of sediment normally measured in streams would be observed, eventually reaching the South Fork of Salt Creek and Lake Monroe, the main water supply for 145,000 people of Monroe and Brown Counties, Indiana. Lake Monroe is currently impaired for Blue-Green Algae Blooms annually from excess nutrients. Nutrients travel on sediment. In addition, extreme weather events have increased in frequency and intensity and any logging in areas such as South Houston even with properly implemented BMPs is likely to erode badly during these extreme precipitation events.

The reasoning put forth by the HNF to justify the Houston South Project are simply stated and put forth without peer reviewed documentation, to restore the proper balance of Oak and Hickory trees to other tree species in the forest. The forest is fully capable of restoring it it can be left alone and tampered with. Brown County State Park, located adjacent to the HNF in Indiana with similar slopes and soils, was fully clearcut during the 1920s. It has been allowed to grow nearly unfettered for approximately 100 years at this point. The forest in the Park is truly representative of a natural balance of various tree species. Fire has been rare, but the undergrowth--shrubs and scrub, has died out due to forest shading mostly. The diversity of tree species in the Park is outstanding. Why Mr. Chaveas, supervisor of the HNF, believes that they need to intervene drastically in forest succession to reach the final point is beyond me to guess. In addition, U.S. Rep. Erin Houhchin, who represents the Houston South area, has introduced bill SB. 2990 in the house which would designate the Houston South Project area a part of the Deem Wilderness expansion area. A desperately needed expansion as Deem Wildernes is currently loved to death and overused.

Please do not approve the Houston South Vegetation Management and Restoration Project and Supplement. Let the Forest be.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Christy A. Crandall, Ph.D.