

A Citizens Preferred Alternative

The Citizens Preferred Alternative is based on several factors that reflect the changing global environment and society's desire to enjoy and preserve the forests on public land.

1. **Recreation.** The population of Indiana and neighboring states is steadily increasing. Citizens that enjoy various outdoor pursuits are limited to existing public land, and the CPA will provide expanded recreational opportunities. Trail mileage can be doubled. Access to public land will be increased, with parking lots established at all trailheads and isolated parcels. Users will be able to experience the forest in greater numbers.
2. **Heritage and Culture.** The Buffalo Trace was utilized by bison, native Americans, and early settlers as a primary transportation corridor. Not only is the Buffalo Trace present and well-preserved, but so are artifacts of those who used it. Early settlement in the area emanated from the Trace, so the area is rich in local pre-history and historical interest. Homestead ruins are present in many parts of the Buffalo Springs area. Rather than be subjected to logging/burning equipment and processes, the area should be preserved forever.
3. **Water.** Most of the Buffalo Springs area drains into Patoka Lake, which serves as a public water resource for an estimated 100,000 people. Logging introduces soil erosion, burning presents the opportunity for accelerated erosion and water quality impacts, and herbicide spraying releases pollutants into the air, soil, and water. Forests help ensure high water quality by acting as a filter and buffer. There can be no argument that a mature forest not subjected to logging will offer the best protection for the Patoka Lake water resource.
4. **Habitat for Forest-Adapted Species.** Bat species protected by the Endangered Species Act listing are present in the Buffalo Springs area. The Eastern Box Turtle is often observed, and is considered by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources as a species of special concern. A long list of the Regional Forester Sensitive Species are also present, as are many on the Indiana Endangered, Threatened and Rare Species List for Orange County. Logging and burning will disturb these creatures, whereas a protected area without logging and burning will provide them with the resources they need for long-term survival.
5. **Carbon.** The effects of the global climate crisis are alleviated by sequestration of carbon in large trees. Cutting them and opening the ground for the development of the typical brushy thicket will decrease the carbon sequestration. Encouraging a mature, unlogged forest increases carbon sequestration.
6. **Education.** The Buffalo Springs area is rich in geologic and biologic features, and cultural resources, that should be used as a springboard for education and research.
7. **Economy.** Orange and Crawford Counties are among the poorest areas in Indiana. The CPA will greatly enhance tourism in Orange County and the surrounding area. Restaurants, gas stations, local attractions, lodging establishments, outfitters and guides, as well as the various and sundry local businesses will benefit from increased use of the area.
8. **Preservation.** The Buffalo Springs area needs to be granted preservation under legal status as a protected federal area: a National Scenic Recreation Area, a National Historic Trail, a National Monument, or a National Park and Climate Preserve. This paradigm shift away from extractive income will require a new source of income for the USFS, and a shift in their resources and staff away from timbering management and toward recreation.

Buffalo Springs Restoration Project

The USFS, under the auspices of their legally-outdated Land and Resource Management Plan (2006), has proposed the largest and most destructive project in the history of Hoosier National Forest. The Buffalo Springs Restoration project includes:

Prescribed Fire.....12,135 to 15,100 acres
Pine Thinning1,558 acres
Hardwood Thinning1,131 acres
Selection957 acres
Herbicide Treatment.....771 acres.
Pine Clearcut707 acres
Shelterwood516 acres
Stand Improvement.....255 acres

The USFS proposes to perform logging on 5,124 of the 10,500 acres in the Buffalo Springs area, and expects this to occur over a period of 12 to 15 years. Almost half of our publicly owned forest in the project area will be impacted by cutting, and nearly all of it (along with other nearby publicly-owned land and perhaps private land) will be burned on a three-year rotation over 25 years.



The aftermath of a USFS logging project in Crawford County, IN. Is this the legacy we should leave our grandchildren, on a much larger scale?



WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

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savehoosiernationalforest.com



We are also on
FaceBook.

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DID YOU KNOW?

The HNF in Orange County is home to the finest existing remnants of the famed Buffalo Trace. Established a thousand years ago by migrating bison, it has been used by native Americans and early settlers as a transportation corridor through the wilderness.

WATER QUALITY CONCERNS

The Buffalo Springs project may impact water quality in the Patoka Lake and Lost River watersheds. These are both important watersheds in southern Indiana. Patoka Lake serves as the water resource for over 100,000 customers in south-central Indiana, an area where ground water resources are generally not suitable or sufficient for many uses. The Lost River watershed is a complex area with a substantial amount of subterranean drainage that includes many species of rare cave-adapted organisms. Its hydrogeology is not well understood, although it is a delicate feature in our landscape.

Surface water runoff from the Buffalo Springs project will enter one or the other of these watersheds, with the potential to impact water quality.

A BETTER ALTERNATIVE

Protect Our Woods believes that the forests in our area are too valuable to be cut for timber sales. As the population of our region grows at an ever-increasing rate, the need for mature forest land for recreation and carbon sequestration grows with it. The magnificent mature hardwood forests of the northern Hoosier National Forest, including the Deam Wilderness Area and nearby Nebo and Hickory Ridges, are crowded with people pursuing recreation in the woods—horseback riding, picnicking, hiking, backpacking, birdwatching, mushroom hunting, hunting, fishing, and enjoying nature. Forest users have increased to the point that the USFS is considering limitations on dispersed camping.

Our society needs more publicly-available mature forest for recreation: hiking, backpacking, hunting, mushrooming, birdwatching. It is only natural to utilize the Hoosier National Forest for this purpose—it is, after all, land that belongs to the people. As the USFS states, nearly 3/4 of the hardwood stands in the Buffalo Springs area are 60 years old, or older. The pine stands are a similar age. This is exactly what should be left alone to develop into old-growth forest.

Carbon sequestration offsets some of the causes of climate change. Carbon sequestration in mature hardwood forests is perhaps the least costly way to combat climate change. The answer is to just let the big trees grow; they are more effective at carbon sequestration than young forest.

We envision an Orange County for future generations with old-growth forest on public lands that all people can use and enjoy. We are outdoors-oriented people that understand that nothing equals the solitude and beauty of being among big trees.

Our vision requires a paradigm shift for the USFS, away from providing trees for commercial logging, and toward a management plan more consistent with the National Park philosophy. That change must be done carefully so the forest is does not experience further damage. The scientists and managers of the USFS can do that on behalf of the people, it just requires a different mindset, strategy, and objective.