

ALERT: [Comments Needed for Forest Plan Alternative](#)

By Barbara McKasson

The voices of people who believe in conserving the resources of Shawnee National Forest (SNF) are being drowned out by people who want to use the forest in a manner that damages the resource. It is imperative that more people write to the Forest Service to make sure they hear the conservationist point of view loud and clear. The seven issues that SNF planners have identified as needing change from the current SNF Forest Plan are:

1. Recreation Management
2. Wildlife Habitat Management and Biological Diversity
3. Watershed Resources
4. Forest Ecosystem Health and Sustainability
5. Mineral Resources
6. Roadless Areas, Wilderness, and Wild and Scenic Rivers
7. Land Ownership Adjustment.

The Forest Service needs to hear from YOU on these topics. Please personalize your comments by telling the Forest Service how these issues affect you. Please send in your comments preferably as an individual, not as a Sierra Club member. Discussion topics of particular concern to most environmentalists would include:

- > Protection of state and federal threatened and endangered species, plus other sensitive species should be a top priority in the SNF forest plan. The national forests are an important refuge for many of these species. The forest plan should not compromise any populations of these species.
- > End commercial logging in the SNF. This is a very fragmented forest, and the logging, plus logging roads, greatly increase the fragmentation. Less than 4% of wood supply for our country comes from our national forests. Many forest interior species that depend on large, contiguous blocks of forest would be negatively affected by timber cuts.
- > Recreation that does not destroy the resource plus wildlife habitat should be primary uses of the forest. Illinois has less than 2% of the land in public ownership. Shawnee National Forest is the largest "block" of public land in Illinois. For this reason, extractive and destructive uses of SNF should be minimized. Former Chief of the Forest Service, Mike Dombeck, recognized that recreation, tourism, wildlife and preservation of threatened species deserve a higher priority than in the past. This philosophy should be continued.
- > The two existing roadless areas, Burke Branch and Ripple Hollow, should remain roadless. These two areas, plus Camp Hutchins, should be protected in the Forest Plan at the level of wilderness protection. These three areas deserve to be designated by Congress as wilderness areas, so the Forest Service should protect their wilderness qualities. The decision whether or not to designate these areas as wilderness should be made by Congress, and not by the Forest Service.
- > Do not issue new oil and gas leases in SNF. Oil and gas are much more plentiful in other areas. The Shawnee Forest is the 3rd smallest forest in the country, and it is fragmented. Oil and gas drilling would cause further fragmentation and disturbance in SNF.
- > The eighty (80) designated Natural Areas in SNF should be protected from all incompatible uses and should remain closed to all recreation except hiking trails. These areas are among the few areas left in Illinois that have high quality native plant communities.
- > More horse trails should be designated so that horse use can be limited to designated horse trails. Illegal, poorly placed, user-made horse trails have caused terrible erosion of the land and sedimentation into streams in many areas in SNF.
- > Do not issue new leases for mineral extraction in SNF. Mining on leases granted before the FS purchased the land should be controlled to minimize surface disturbance. Do not renew temporary mineral leases.

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