

# **The Social Context of the Shawnee National Forest in Southern Illinois**

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This report identifies major areas of conflict over forestry as a means of analyzing the social context of the Shawnee National Forest (Shawnee NF) and its role in the Southern Illinois region. Secondary data sources including but not limited to forest planning documents from the 1986, 1992, and 2006 SNF plans, media analysis, the 2003 Social Assessment for the SNF (Welch and Evans 2003), legal documents, and material from stakeholder groups were analyzed in the context of the region to provide this framework. Additionally, a limited number of stakeholder interviews were conducted. This analysis is limited to 10 counties in Southern Illinois: Alexander, Gallatin, Hardin, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Saline, Union, and Williamson.

## **Key Findings**

- Long-standing conflict over the direction of the Shawnee NF has greatly influenced its management.
- We identified conflict in seven areas but focused on two identified as the most overarching conflicts in the forest: recreation management and forest management.
- Recreation management conflict stems from a rapid increase in trail-riding in the 1990's and the associated aspect of commercial horse campgrounds. Proponents of equestrian use advocate fewer restrictions on trail-riding. Others advocate restrictions to prevent resource damage. The recent USFS Trails Designation Project has been completed to address these issues in the four most heavily impacted watersheds in the eastern part of the Shawnee. A court-issued injunction in 1996 ended ATV/OHV use, another area of recreation management conflict.
- Forest management has been a long-standing conflict. Some advocate preserving the national forest and preventing timber harvests while other advocate timber harvests for natural and economics reasons. A court-issued injunction in 1996 ended commercial timber harvests, but the 2006 forest plan allowed commercial timber harvests as a means of ecological restoration of the oak-hickory forest.
- There were some concerns over economic impacts of the Shawnee NF on the region as well as the financial burden on local governments, especially in areas of high federal ownership.
- Concerns emerged regarding Dixon Springs. Environmentalists question the legality of Dixon Springs Agricultural Center (DSAC) operation on Shawnee NF land, while DSAC research is, to some extent, hindered by restrictions on research methods, namely agricultural chemical usage.

- Other project research has identified an influx of in-migrants, but a decrease in population for the region. In-migrants, many of which are retirees returning to the region, alter the social dynamics of the region. Effects and the implications from this process for Shawnee NF policy are discussed within this report.

## Forest Profile

The Shawnee NF covers parts of the Shawnee Hills and Illinois Ozarks in the Southern Illinois counties of Alexander, Gallatin, Hardin, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Saline, Union, and Williamson (see Tables 1 and 2). The Shawnee NF consists of 285,000 heavily fragmented acres in a purchase area of nearly 840,000 acres.<sup>1</sup> Contiguous areas exist in the seven federally-designated wildernesses totaling almost 10% of total forest lands as well as over 15,000 acres designated to other purposes.<sup>2</sup> A narrow corridor connects two main sections of the forest, one section bordering the Ohio River in the east and the other extending to the Mississippi River in the west. Nearby cities include Cape Girardeau, Missouri in the west, Paducah, Kentucky in the south, and the Illinois cities of Carbondale, Marion, and Harrisburg in the north. The SNF is administered through the Forest Service office in Harrisburg and two ranger districts, Mississippi Bluffs and Hidden Springs.

Table 1: Forest Ownership in 10 Southern Illinois Counties

<i>County</i>	<i>Total Land Area (acres)</i>	<i>National Forest Area (acres)</i>	<i>National Forest Area (Percent of land)</i>
Alexander	151,300	26,100	17.3%
Gallatin	207,200	11,300	5.5%
Hardin	114,100	27,500	24.1%
Jackson	376,400	47,300	12.6%
Johnson	221,500	15,300	6.9%
Massac	153,000	2,700	1.8%
Pope	237,400	83,700	35.3%
Saline	245,300	10,500	4.3%
Union	266,400	24,900	9.3%
Williamson	271,500	0 <sup>a</sup>	0.0%

<sup>a</sup>Maps of national forest ownership include a parcel in Williamson County of unknown acreage. Data source: Schmidt, Thomas L., Mark H. Hansen, and James A. Solomakos. 2000, Illinois' Forests in 1998 (Resource Bulletin 1998), St. Paul, MN: North Central Research Station.

<sup>1</sup> USDA Forest Service. (2006). *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*. Harrisburg, Ill.: USDA Forest Service.

<sup>2</sup> Illinois Wilderness Act of 1990, H.R. 5428, 101st Cong. (1990). Retrieved from Lexis/Nexis Congressional Database.

Table 2: Forest Cover by County (1998)

<i>County</i>	<i>Oak-hickory cover (acres)</i>	<i>Oak-hickory cover (%)</i>	<i>Maple-beech-birch cover (acres)</i>	<i>Maple-beech-birch cover (%)</i>	<i>Total Forest Land (acres)</i>
Alexander	33,900	47.9%	18,700	26.4%	70,700
Gallatin	14,900	35.9%	2,100	5.1%	41,500
Hardin	48,700	75.5%	10,400	16.1%	64,500
Jackson	74,400	54.0%	21,500	15.6%	137,700
Johnson	50,200	62.5%	20,000	24.9%	80,300
Massac	15,000	51.2%	7,000	23.9%	29,300
Pope	83,900	55.6%	26,500	17.6%	150,900
Saline	34,100	59.1%	8,600	14.9%	57,700
Union	51,600	57.3%	29,100	32.3%	90,000
Williamson	32,100	36.6%	8,300	9.5%	87,800
Total	438,800	54.1%	152,200	18.8%	810,400

Data source: Schmidt, Thomas L., Mark H. Hansen, and James A. Solomakos. 2000. *Illinois' Forests in 1998* (Resource Bulletin 1998). St. Paul, MN: North Central Research Station.

Major forest types in the ten-county region include oak-hickory (54.1% in 1998) and maple-beech-birch (18.8% in 1998). Other forest types include oak-pine, oak-gum-cypress, and elm-ash-cottonwood. Steep terrain is typical throughout the area.<sup>3</sup> Slope averages 25-30% and elevation lies between 300 feet and 1,064 feet above sea level.<sup>4</sup>

The greater Shawnee NF region is affected by two major socioeconomic trends—high poverty and low population density.<sup>5</sup> Welch and Evans attributed much of the problem to recent coal mine closings and a negative effect of the 1990 Clean Air Act and its regulation on high sulfur coal common to Southern Illinois. Further analysis reveals high poverty rates and high unemployment in an area suffering from coal mining reductions coupled with marginal agricultural land even before the founding of the forest.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, Welch and Evans highlight the inverse relationship between poverty and population in the region as a situation for the forest to remedy by bringing economic activity to these rural, sparsely-populated areas.<sup>22</sup> In the years after its establishment, the national forest purchased lands from farmers and reforested damaged unproductive agricultural lands. The CCC and WPA provided thousands with jobs in the region, many that worked on projects within the Shawnee NF.<sup>23</sup> Currently, the Forest Service does not sell a large amount of timber nor directly provide a large number of jobs. Many residents

<sup>3</sup> Schmidt, Thomas L., Hansen, Mark H., & Solomakos, James A. (2000). *Illinois' Forests in 1998* (Resource Bulletin NC-198). St. Paul, Minnesota: USDA Forest Service North Central Research Station.

<sup>4</sup> Carroll, Joanne Connie. (1992). *Species Composition Changes on Clearcut Sites in the Shawnee National Forest of Southern Illinois*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois. p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Welch, David., and Evans, Tom. (2003). *A Social Assessment of the Shawnee National Forest* (CIPEC Summary Report No. 5). Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University-Bloomington, Center for the Study of Institutions, Population, and Environmental Change.

<sup>6</sup> Soady, Fred W., Jr. (1965), July, The Making of the Shawnee. *Forest History*, 3-16.

view and have viewed the Shawnee NF as being an economically negative influence as early as 1979.<sup>7</sup>

The Shawnee National Forest brings visitors to the forest region. In 2002, the Forest Service estimated a total of 534,764 visits, including 35,829 wilderness visits. Project interviews with regional stakeholders and forest managers highlighted doubts in the validity of these numbers. The Forest Service report demonstrated that a large number of visitors are local residents, but many visitors are also out-of-state or central and northern Illinois residents. Wilderness drew a much higher rate of out-of-state and out-of-region visitors, though wilderness results were clouded by a small sample size.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, a 1999 Forest Service survey of residents of the greater Chicago area in Cook County (2000 population: 5.3 million) determined that about 4.5% of respondents had made the 342-mile trip to the Shawnee NF in the preceding year.<sup>9</sup>

### **Establishment of the Shawnee NF**

The movement for a national forest in Illinois began as early as the 1920s, and by 1930 this movement was quite established in the Chicago area, largely a result of the *Tribune's* support.<sup>10</sup> A May 21, 1930, *Chicago Tribune* article detailed plans of the Chicago Izaak Walton League, a conservation organization leading the movement, to establish a more local source of lumber while reclaiming forestlands and creating public parks.<sup>11</sup> The Weeks Act of 1911 authorized the purchase of private lands in the eastern United States and the establishment of the National Forest Commission, but it was not until the Clark-McNary Act of 1924 that land purchase solely for forest protection was approved.<sup>12</sup> In June of 1931, the state legislature approved the establishment of a national forest.<sup>23,27</sup>

Two separate proposed purchase units, the Shawnee in the east and the Illini in the west, amounted to nearly 600,000 acres. Forestry and farming practices had severely degraded soils and the forests were in poor condition in an area where farming and timber yielded little or no profit. The National Forest Commission approved the purchase of the two proposed units in Illinois on August 30, 1933.<sup>23</sup>

Initial purchases yielded a much larger and less fragmented Illini unit, a trend illustrated today by the characteristics of the western half of the forest. By the end of the

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<sup>7</sup> Interviews conducted by SIRAP researchers; Spencer, D., & Beasley, R.I. (1979). *The Economic and Geographic Impact of National Forest Land on Counties in Southern Illinois*. St. Paul, Minnesota: USDA Forest Service North Central Research Station.

<sup>8</sup> Kocis, S.M., English, D.B.K., Zarnoch, S.J., Arnold, R., Warren, L. (2002, June) *National Visitor Use Monitoring Results, Shawnee National Forest, Draft for Forest Review*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: USDA Forest Service Eastern Region.

<sup>9</sup> Dwyer, J.F., Barro, S.C. (2001). Linkages in the use of recreation environments across the urban to ex-urban spectrum by urban residents. In USDA Forest Service. *Proceedings of the 2001 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium* (General Technical Report NE-289). Newtown Square, Pennsylvania: USDA Forest Service Northeastern Research Station.

<sup>10</sup> Toole, Arlie W. (1943, October), Shawnee National Forest. *Egyptian Key*, 43-45.; Soady (1965)

<sup>11</sup> Aim to Reforest Million Acres of Illinois Land. (1930, May 21). *Chicago Tribune*, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Toole 1943; United States Forest Service, International Programs. Celebrating a Century of Service: A Glance at the Agency's History. Retrieved July 16, 2007, from <[http://www.fs.fed.us/global/wsnew/fs\\_history.htm](http://www.fs.fed.us/global/wsnew/fs_history.htm)>.

first year, 40,880 acres had been purchased in both units. By the time that World War II spending took precedence over land purchase, 185,126 acres had been purchased.<sup>23</sup>

As part of President Roosevelt's New Deal programs, the forest employed thousands, including 2,000 Civil Works Administration workers and at least 600 Civilian Conservation Corps workers by the fall of 1933. On September 6, 1939, President Roosevelt officially created the Shawnee NF, as the combination of the Shawnee and Illini purchase units. The Shawnee NF continued to employ workers in programs until 1941. These programs helped develop infrastructure within the forest as well as reforest cleared areas.<sup>23</sup>

Crews reforested several thousands acres with mostly shortleaf pine, black locust, and loblolly pine until the beginning of the war. Planting resumed again after the war. The units remained geographically-separated until 1963 when the purchase area was expanded across Saline, Williamson, and Johnson Counties to connect the units. At the time of publishing in 1965, F.W. Soady's "The Making of the Shawnee" noted that 3,400 acres had been reforested in the original Illini unit, and 34,000 acres had been reforested in the original Shawnee unit. Plans for more planting continued beyond 1965.<sup>23</sup> The 1985 Draft Environmental Impact Statement noted that the Forest Service was reforesting 1,000 acres per year.<sup>13</sup>

## **The Current Shawnee National Forest Plan and Opposition**

The 2006 Land Resource and Management Plan and the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Shawnee National Forest were prepared as part of the process mandated by the National Forest Management Act of 1976.<sup>14</sup> The act is an amended version of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Act of 1974 and includes provisions recognizing the role of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the Multiple Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960. The NFMA requires that a plan and the accompanying environmental impact statement are to be prepared at least once every fifteen years and that the public is to be involved with "development, review, and revision."<sup>15</sup> The environmental impact statement is prepared under the direction of the NEPA as mandated by NFMA. The National Environmental Policy Act requires analysis of environmental effects of "major federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment."<sup>16</sup> These actions include the preparation of a forest plan and other major management activities on the Shawnee NF.

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<sup>13</sup> USDA Forest Service. (1985). *Draft Environmental Impact Statement*. Harrisburg, Illinois: USDA Forest Service, Shawnee National Forest.

<sup>14</sup> National Forest Management Act. 16 U.S.C. 1600 (1976).; USDA Forest Service. (2006). *Executive Summary of the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Land and Resource Management Plan*. Harrisburg, IL: USDA Forest Service, Shawnee National Forest.

<sup>15</sup> NFMA of 1976

<sup>16</sup> USDA Forest Service. Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook. *Forest Service Handbook*. (1909.15). Retrieved from <[http://www.fs.fed.us/cgi-bin/Directives/get\\_dirs/fsh?1909.15](http://www.fs.fed.us/cgi-bin/Directives/get_dirs/fsh?1909.15)>.

The plan revision process for the Shawnee NF began in October 1999, when Forest Service officials began the scoping process to determine “needs for change.”<sup>17</sup> The Forest Service issued a “Notice of Intent” to revise the forest plan in March of 2002. The Forest Service developed four alternatives to meet different management goals.<sup>18</sup> After several public meetings and many public comments, the Forest Service proposed one of the developed alternatives and later issued the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and the Proposed Land and Resource Management Plan in March of 2005.<sup>19</sup> Following more public meetings and a comment period in which 2,315 written comments were received, the Forest Service revised the drafts and the Federal Register published the “Notice of Availability” for the Final Environmental Impact Statement and the Land and Resource Management Plan on June 9, 2006.<sup>20</sup>

The following analysis reviews the main points of a number of documents and sources. These sources include: 1) 2006 plan; 2) the plan comment and approval process; 3) articles from local newspapers, primarily the *Southern Illinoisan* of Carbondale; and 4) Welch’s and Evans’ social assessment for the forest. A review of these materials provides a sense of the major issues that face the forest and the region today.

The Executive Summary for the 2006 forest plan noted major changes since the 1992 Amended Land and Resource Management Plan. These changes cover the major areas of tension within the forest. The Summary categorized the changes, which it also characterized as “significant issues,” as watershed resources; biological diversity and wildlife and aquatic habitat; recreation management; forest ecosystem health and sustainability; minerals management; wilderness, roadless and wild and scenic rivers; and land ownership adjustment.”<sup>21</sup> Each of these areas is an area of conflict, and the list of topics as a whole encompasses most of the conflict within the forest. Recreation management and forest management are discussed first because of their importance to the debate over the direction of the Shawnee NF.

## **Recreation Management**

Recreation has been the center of conflict on the Shawnee NF for many years. In 1996, in *Sierra Club, et al. vs. United States Department of Agriculture, et al.*, the district court of Southern Illinois nullified the 1992 forest plan and issued an injunction against ATV/OHM (all-terrain vehicle/off-highway motorcycle) usage as well as commercial

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<sup>17</sup> USDA Forest Service. (2006). *Appendices, Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan*. Harrisburg, Illinois: USDA Forest Service, Shawnee National Forest. p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* p. 24.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p. 24, 135; Environmental Impact Statements; Notice of Availability, 71 Fed. Reg. 33,445 (June 9, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> USDA Forest Service. (2006). *Executive Summary of the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*. Harrisburg, Illinois: USDA Forest Service, Shawnee National Forest.

logging and oil and gas leasing within the forest.<sup>22</sup> This decision, the result of inadequate environmental analysis rather than the impacts of ATV/OHM use, specifically noted that “this decision does not in any way suggest that the Forest Service should not attempt to provide this type of recreation in the Shawnee.” However, the 2006 plan did not allow ATV/OHM usage, much to the dismay of ATV users. In a 2005 article in Carbondale’s *Southern Illinoisan*, a public relations official attributed this decision to a lack of human and financial resources within the Forest Service and mentioned on-going equestrian management as the issue taking precedence.<sup>23</sup>

Equestrian issues are the source of the most conflict within the Shawnee NF. The importance of equestrian issues is witnessed in media analysis of the *Southern Illinoisan* from 2002 to 2007 and also in Elizabethtown’s *Hardin County Independent* from 2003 to 2005. Letters to the editors about the Shawnee National Forest nearly all pertained to equestrian issues.<sup>24</sup> This issue takes the traditional form of equestrians wanting more access to the forest pitted against environmentalists—both groups unhappy with the Forest Service.

In 2006, the Forest Service issued a Trails Designation Project Phase 1 Final Environmental Impact Statement for the four most impacted watersheds in the eastern part of the forest. The major equestrian advocacy organization, the Shawnee Trail Conservancy, filed comments on each draft. The organization advocated the designated, well-maintained trails that Forest Service plans called for, but the organization did not agree with being restricted to only these trails.<sup>25</sup> The plans closed many miles of “user-created” trails, which in turn, closed access to forest lands from adjacent private property without special-use permits.<sup>26</sup> The Shawnee Trail Conservancy also objected to limited group size in wilderness areas and closures in designated Natural Areas of the forest.<sup>42</sup>

The written comment submitted on behalf of the Illinois Sierra Club and the Heartwood organization on the 2006 Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Land and Resource Management Plan, was predictably different from the Shawnee Trail

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<sup>22</sup> Sierra Club, et al. vs. United States Department of Agriculture, et al., No. 94-CV-4061-JPG, 1995 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 21507, at (S.D. Ill. September 25, 1995); Sierra Club, et al. vs. United States Department of Agriculture, et al., No. 94-CV-4061-JPG, 1996 U.S. Dist. Lexis 21038, at (S.D. Ill. March 20, 1996).

<sup>23</sup> Malkovich, Becky. (2005, March 15). ATV damage investigated: Officials say illegal vehicle use hurting Shawnee forest. *Southern Illinoisan*, pp. 1D.; USDA Forest Service. *Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*. Harrisburg, Illinois: USDA Forest Service, Shawnee National Forest.

<sup>24</sup> Scott, M. Richard. (2006, May 4). A Memorable Experience [Letter to the editor]. *Southern Illinoisan*, p. 4A.; Dixon, Chad. (2006, April 11). A Shawnee Mess [Letter to the editor]. *Southern Illinoisan*, p. 4A.; Hughes, Bob. (2005, December 20). Proof is on the Ground [Letter to the editor]. *Southern Illinoisan*, p. 4A.; Varnum, Betty. (2005, November 29). The Equestrians are Not Guilty [Letter to the editor]. *Southern Illinoisan*, p. 4A.; Cooper, Joshua. (2004, March 4). [Letter to the editor]. *Hardin County Independent*, p. 3.; Dudley, Mike. (2004, March 4). [Letter to the editor]. *Hardin County Independent*, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Granneman, Linda. Shawnee Trail Conservancy. *Letter to Shawnee National Forest: Re: Proposed Land And Resource Management Plan*. Retrieved June 2007, from <<http://www.shawneetrailconservancy.com/>>; Granneman, Linda. Shawnee Trail Conservancy. *Letter to Shawnee National Forest: Trails DEIS*. Retrieved June 2007, from <<http://www.shawneetrailconservancy.com/>>.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*; USDA Forest Service. (2006, February). *Record of Decision, Trails Designation Project, Phase I*. Harrisburg, Illinois: USDA Forest Service, Shawnee National Forest, Hidden Springs Ranger District.

Conservancy's written comment. The environmental organizations expressed concerns over resource damage related to equestrian use, law enforcement and seasonal closures. They commented on the lack of enforcement ability for keeping equestrians on the trails and on the lack of specificity dealing with seasonal and wet-weather closures of trails.<sup>27</sup>

Both groups identified inaction by the Forest Service as major problems. Environmentalists highlighted a lack of enforcement, while equestrians identified with poor trail maintenance. In *Shawnee Trail Conservancy, et al. v. Hurston Nicholas, et al.*, the Conservancy charged that the Forest Service failed to complete its duty of trail maintenance. Although the case was dismissed, the decision chastised the Forest Service for not properly utilizing its limited resources, including volunteers provided by equestrian interests.<sup>28</sup> In *Glisson, et al. v. United States Forest Service, et al.*, environmentalists accused the Forest Service of not enforcing the law in regard to commercial equestrian campgrounds.<sup>29</sup>

Commercial equestrian campgrounds have become a major part of the economy in many areas of the Shawnee National Forest.<sup>30</sup> In fact, a 2005 article in the *Southern Illinoisan* attributed 77% of equestrian traffic in the Lusk Creek Wilderness area to traffic from these campgrounds.<sup>31</sup> Many recognized resource damage as a result of the high traffic from these entities. The Forest Service recognized the economic role of these campgrounds in the Record of Decision for the Trails Designation Project.<sup>32</sup>

Equestrians tout the economic boost from trail-riding activity to this economically depressed region. The Shawnee Trail Conservancy website claims that trail riders bring \$3.8 billion dollars into the Illinois economy each year.<sup>33</sup> A 2005 *Hardin County Independent* article advertising a trail riders' meeting, similarly asserted that trail riders brought \$16 million into Southern Illinois in 2003.<sup>34</sup> Stakeholder interviews questioned the validity of these numbers.

Environmentalists object to the free use of the forest by these commercial campgrounds. The joint Sierra Club-Heartwood written comment advocated charging fees to commercial users and returning it to the forest for trail maintenance.<sup>44</sup> Likewise, letters to

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<sup>27</sup> Bensman, Jim. (2005, June 20). *Comments of the Sierra Club on the Draft Forest Plan and DEIS for Shawnee National Forest*. Letter to the Forest Service.; Mark Donham (personal communication, July 10, 2007)

<sup>28</sup> *Shawnee Trail Conservancy, et al. v. Hurston Nicholas, et al.*, 343 F. Supp. 2d 687 (S.D. Ill. 2004).

<sup>29</sup> *Glisson, et al. v. United States Forest Service, et al.*, No. 3:99-cv-4189-JPG, 2006 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 76528, (S.D. Ill. Oct. 12, 2006).; Muir, J. (2005, April 15). Motions filed in Shawnee Forest deal. *Southern Illinoisan*, p. 1B.

<sup>30</sup> *Record of Decision, Trails Designation Project, Phase 1*, 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Muir, Jim. (2005, April 15). Motions filed in Shawnee Forest deal. *Southern Illinoisan*, p. 1B.

<sup>32</sup> Dixon, Chad. (2006, April 11). A Shawnee Mess [Letter to the editor]. *Southern Illinoisan*, p. 4A. Malkovich, Becky. (2005, April 21). Management plan proposed for Shawnee Forest. *Southern Illinoisan*, p. 1B.; McRoy, Mike. (2006, May 17). Only the rich can play [Letter to the Editor]. *Southern Illinoisan*, p. 4A.

<sup>33</sup> Shawnee Trail Conservancy Website. Retrieved June 2007, from <www.shawneetrailconservancy.com>.

<sup>34</sup> Public Invited to Trail Riders'/Landowners' Meeting. (2005, May 19). *Hardin County Independent*, p. 1.

the editor in the *Southern Illinoisan* complained about these commercial entities “that profit from our public land.”<sup>35</sup>

## **Forest Ecosystem Health and Sustainability**

The 2006 forest plan highlighted “ecological restoration” for maintaining and converting forest to oak-hickory as a major priority. In the 1992 Record of Decision for the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, “Contributing to the Growth of the Local Economy” and “Providing Timber Products” were listed as two management concerns. In addition, a section on cost-efficiency detailed that the selected alternative, one of the five alternatives presented in the plan revision process, was the only profitable alternative.<sup>36</sup> In 1996 *Sierra Club, et al. vs. United States Department of Agriculture, et al.*, the court-issued injunction against commercial logging effectively ended this strategy. It should also be noted that the court refused to issue an injunction against ecological restoration.<sup>37</sup> The recently issued 2006 forest plan seeks to continue commercial logging only as an avenue to “enhance healthy forests.”<sup>38</sup>

Ecological restoration was proposed on the Shawnee NF to maintain or convert to oak-hickory forest in order to preserve historical forest cover and biodiversity within the forest.<sup>39</sup> Many components of the proposed ecological restoration, including prescribed burning, even-aged management of hardwoods, and conversion of pine stands to hardwoods, were contentious issues in the comment process and are sure to continue to be issues with the Shawnee NF.

The *Hoosier-Shawnee Ecological Assessment*, a Forest Service study prepared largely by scientists “most of whom were not employees of the USFS or the federal government” under the direction of the USDA North Central Research Station, is the basis for much of the 2006 forest plan including the plans for ecological restoration.<sup>40</sup> The assessment cited several sources which attributed declining oak-hickory forest to more passive management that included the removal of fire and harvesting from ecosystems.<sup>41</sup> Still, there is much controversy over the issue, and in 2006, Heartwood, an environmental

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<sup>35</sup> Dixon, 2006, April 11. *Southern Illinoisan*.; McCroy, 2006, May 17. *Southern Illinoisan*.

<sup>36</sup> USDA Forest Service. (1992). *Record of Decision, Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Amended Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*. Harrisburg, Illinois: USDA Forest Service, Shawnee National Forest.

<sup>37</sup> *Sierra Club, et al. v. United States Department of Agriculture, et al.*, 2006.

<sup>38</sup> USDA Forest Service. (2006). *Record of Decision, Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*. Harrisburg, Illinois: USDA Forest Service, Shawnee National Forest.; *Executive Summary of the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Land and Resource Management Plan*, 2006.

<sup>39</sup> *Record of Decision, Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*, 2006. p. 13.

<sup>40</sup> *Heartwood, Inc., et al. v. United States Forest Service, et al.*, 431 F. Supp. 2d 28 (S.D. Ill. 2006). Thompson 2004; *Appendices, Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan*, 2006.

<sup>41</sup> Thompson 2004. p. 51-52.

organization, successfully filed suit against the Forest Service for withholding drafts of this document.<sup>42</sup>

The ruling in this case only provided drafts of the Hoosier-Shawnee Ecological Assessment to the plaintiffs, but it also declared the committee that prepared the Hoosier-Shawnee Ecological Assessment an advisory committee under the Federal Advisory Committee Act.<sup>43</sup> Plaintiffs, Heartwood and Mark Donham, filed appeals on the 2006 forest plan through the Forest Service's administrative appeals process, arguing that FACA violations provided an "improper reliance on what is alleged to be the 'illegal' Hoosier-Shawnee Ecological Assessment." This appeal was denied.<sup>44</sup> According to Donham, litigation to acquire injunctive relief against the forest plan is an option available. Donham contends that to achieve injunctive relief against the plan, his side will only need to prove the harm caused by this plan based on "scientific rationale that is concocted" by an "illegal" committee.<sup>45</sup> This conflict between the Forest Service and Heartwood is sure to continue into the future. Additionally, it brings about the possibility of another injunction similar to the 1996 ruling that invalidated the previous forest plan. Nevertheless, it is likely that the Shawnee NF will see further litigation over this issue.

Donham's contentions with the Hoosier-Shawnee Ecological Assessment parallel comments in the appendices of the Final Environmental Impact Statement regarding the plans for ecological restoration. Some do not agree with the need to manage for oak-hickory forest cover and some do not agree with the Forest Service on how to manage for oak-hickory.<sup>46</sup> The Forest Service states that a conversion from oak-hickory to beech-maple results in a loss in biodiversity.<sup>47</sup> The Forest Service advocates prescribed fire and restoration cuts to maintain oak-hickory forest. The FEIS justifies prescribed fire by noting its ability to reduce leaf litter and shade in the understory, two factors that it stated favor maple establishment. Proposed restoration harvests take two forms in the Shawnee. The Forest Service proposed to remove nonnative pine plantations originally planted to recover deforested lands, and the Forest Service proposed shelterwood timber harvest methods to oak-hickory stands to maintain conditions favorable for oak-hickory regeneration and maintenance of the oak-hickory overstory.<sup>48</sup> Some believe that pine harvest is unnecessary and succession to hardwoods should be allowed unimpeded.<sup>49</sup> Comments expressed doubt at the effectiveness of shelterwood cuttings on oak-hickory maintenance. Some commented that cutting oaks and hickories out of the overstory

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<sup>42</sup> Heartwood, Inc., et al. v. United States Forest Service, et al., (2006).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> USDA Forest Service. (2007, February 16). *Shawnee NF Revised Appeal Decision*. Washington, D.C.: USDA Forest Service, Washington Office. Retrieved June 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Mark Donham (personal communication, July 10, 2007)

<sup>46</sup> Ibid; *Appendices, Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan*, 2006.

<sup>47</sup> *Appendices, Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan*, 2006. p. 210.

<sup>48</sup> *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*, 2006. p. 93.

<sup>49</sup> Bensman (2005); Donham (personal communication, July 10, 2007)

would not work to increase oak-hickory coverage while other comments expressed doubts more generally.<sup>64</sup>

## **Watershed Resources**

Objections to the Forest Service's protection of watershed resources fall under the context of two other previously discussed areas: recreation management and forest management. There was opposition against timber harvesting in these watersheds designated as "water-supply watershed areas."<sup>50</sup> The Forest Service responded by acknowledging the negative effect of harvesting on stream sedimentation, but also noted that "vegetation management and maintaining the goals of the water-supply watershed management prescription are not mutually exclusive." The Forest Service plans to mitigate sedimentation included site-specific analyses.<sup>64</sup> The Forest Service addressed concerns about recreation management, primarily equestrian management, by referencing the low impact of these activities on water quality as identified in the FEIS.<sup>51</sup>

For the 2006 forest plan, the Forest Service revised its riparian area management for the whole forest. The Executive Summary stated that Mississippi and Ohio River floodplains would receive special management and other riparian area protections would be changed.<sup>52</sup> Protections included a minimum 100-foot filter strip around wetlands, a minimum 25-foot filter strip around ephemeral streams, and variable width filter strips dependent on multiple factors around intermittent and perennial streams.<sup>53</sup> One comment from the appendices questioned the width of ephemeral and intermittent stream protection, and the Forest Service responded that these streams were adequately protected.<sup>64</sup>

## **Biological Diversity and Wildlife and Aquatic Habitat**

Conflicting views on wildlife habitat have led to friction over the issue of biological diversity. Environmentalists' views on the importance of forest interior habitat clash with hunters' needs for "turkey, grouse, deer, and other game species."<sup>54</sup> Forest interior species, especially neotropical migrant bird species that require large areas of unbroken forestland, were first integrated into the 1986 forest plan as part of the comment and revision process.<sup>55</sup> The plan called for monitoring populations of Kentucky warblers, a

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 188. Bensman 2005.

<sup>51</sup> *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan*, 2006. p. 55.

<sup>52</sup> *Executive Summary of the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*, 2006. p. 6.

<sup>53</sup> *Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*, 2006. p. 40-41.

<sup>54</sup> Welch and Evans 2003.; Bensman, Jim. (2005, June 20). Sierra Club, Illinois Chapter, Shawnee National Forest Committee. *Letter to Shawnee National Forest: Forest Plan Revision Comments*; Mark Donham (personal communication, July 10, 2007)

<sup>55</sup> USDA Forest Service. (1986). *Record of Decision, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*. Harrisburg, Illinois.: USDA Forest Service,

“management indicator species” and setting aside “Old Growth Reserve Areas.” The appendices for the forest plan also noted the existence of minimally-managed roadless areas that would provide interior species habitat on at least 33,946 acres.<sup>56</sup> In 1992, the amended plan provided seven 1100-acre non-managed Forest Interior Management Units (FIMUs).<sup>57</sup> The 2006 plan provided for these species by stating that all forestlands over one mile in diameter are management areas for interior species.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, the Forest Service changed its previous policy of non-management of these areas by providing for active management to promote oak-hickory forest to benefit the habitat.<sup>59</sup> The joint Sierra Club-Heartwood organization written comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement expressed many concerns with Forest Service’s plans to actively manage these areas, a topic further explored in the forest ecosystem health and sustainability section.<sup>60</sup>

The 2006 plan included a Large Openlands management prescription to provide habitat for grassland species, notably Henslow’s sparrow and the northern bobwhite.<sup>61</sup> A 2004 environmental assessment completed by the Forest Service on proposed openlands management noted the focus on forest interior species and lack of openlands management contributed to a decline in openlands habitat.<sup>62</sup> The 2006 plan continued the strategies of the 2004 Environmental Assessment, mainly removing woody species and non-native species through fire, plowing, and disking.<sup>63</sup>

## Minerals Management

The 2006 forest plan and accompanying environmental impact statement identified lands administratively available for lease and the accompanying restrictions. The Forest Service highlights its legal obligation to make lands administratively available for oil and gas leasing and minerals exploration.<sup>64</sup> Wilderness areas are not available for minerals exploration. Some fragile areas of the forest have a “no surface-occupancy” restriction applied. The plan implemented several seasonal restrictions to minerals exploration and

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Shawnee National Forest.; USDA Forest Service. (1986). *Appendices, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*. Harrisburg, Illinois: USDA Forest Service, Shawnee National Forest.

<sup>56</sup> 1986 *Appendices, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*. p. I-70.

<sup>57</sup> USDA Forest Service. (1992). *Amended Land and Resource Management Plan*. Harrisburg, Illinois: USDA Forest Service, Shawnee National Forest.

<sup>58</sup> *Executive Summary of the FEIS, Shawnee National Forest*, 2006.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*; *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*, 2006.

<sup>60</sup> Bensman 2005; Mark Donham (personal communication, July 10, 2007)

<sup>61</sup> *Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*, 2006.; USDA Forest Service. (2004, April). *Environmental Assessment, Openlands Management, Shawnee National Forest*. Harrisburg, Illinois: USDA Forest Service, Shawnee National Forest. Retrieved June 2007, from <[http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/shawnee/projects/projects/ea/2004/openlands\\_ea.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/shawnee/projects/projects/ea/2004/openlands_ea.pdf)>.

<sup>62</sup> *Environmental Assessment, Openlands Management, Shawnee National Forest*, 2004.

<sup>63</sup> *Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*, 2006.

mining. It is important to note that areas available for mining are subject to NEPA environmental analysis before the Forest Service is able to authorize exploration.

Most comments in the appendices of the FEIS were against authorizing minerals exploration. The Forest Service cited its legal obligation to make lands available but was quick to highlight its policy of reviewing each site before mineral, oil, or gas activities.<sup>64</sup>

### **Wilderness, Roadless and Wild and Scenic Rivers**

Environmentalists and Forest Service officials staunchly disagree on designation of additional wilderness areas. Congress designates wilderness areas, but the Forest Service recommends areas suitable for wilderness. Potential wilderness evaluation for the 2006 forest plan was the only part of the plan that the administrative appeals process determined inadequate. In response to the Heartwood organization's appeal, Gloria Manning, Reviewing Officer for the Chief of the Forest Service, directed Forest Service staff to "review any potential roadless areas under 2,000 acres in size and consider their suitability for inclusion in the inventory of potential wilderness."<sup>65</sup> Prior to the release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement, 2006 forest plan, and the administrative appeal decision, the Illinois Sierra Club and Heartwood organization written comment devoted more space to this issue than any other in the groups' comment.<sup>66</sup> Likewise, the Forest Service devoted an appendix to the issue as part of the FEIS as well as a lengthy response in the "Comments and Responses Related to Plan Revision or the DEIS" section of the appendices.<sup>64</sup>

The 1986 forest plan first recommended areas for wilderness study in the Shawnee National Forest.<sup>64</sup> In 1990, Congress recognized these recommendations, and designated these seven wilderness areas in the Illinois Wilderness Act of 1990. These areas included over 26,000 acres. Additionally the Act named nearly 3,000 additional acres for future designation with the stipulation that these lands would be available for minerals exploration for the following eight years. In the event of the discovery of these minerals, the Act also stipulated an additional twelve year period of mining. It stated that in this period of exploration and possible mining, the area would be managed for its eventual inclusion in wilderness area.<sup>67</sup> In 1998, these areas became part of the federally-designated wilderness in the Shawnee NF.<sup>68</sup> The 1992 forest plan recommended the over 4,000 acre Ripple Hollow area for study stipulating the acquisition of mineral rights in the area.<sup>69</sup> These rights were never acquired.<sup>70</sup> Wilderness area has not changed since

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<sup>64</sup> *Record of Decision, Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*, 2006. p. 20.

<sup>65</sup> *Shawnee NF Revised Appeal Decision*, 2007.

<sup>66</sup> Bensman 2005; Donham (personal communication, July 10, 2007)

<sup>67</sup> Illinois Wilderness Act of 1990.

<sup>68</sup> *Appendices, Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan*, 2006. p. 70.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.; Amended Land and Resource Management Plan*, (1992).

<sup>70</sup> *Appendices, Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan*, 2006. p. 70, 77.

1998, and the 2006 forest plan listed 28,144 acres as current congressionally-designated wilderness.<sup>71</sup>

The current context of the conflict over wilderness areas goes back to the 1970's and the federal Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE) process. In this process, nine areas were inventoried.<sup>72</sup> These areas, Bald Knob, Burden Falls, Burke Branch, Clear Springs, Garden of the Gods, Lusk Creek, Murray Bluff, Panther Den and Ripple Hollow include all current wilderness and areas of contention today. These areas have been divided and renamed in some cases but still constitute the entirety of contentious non-wilderness areas and current wilderness areas with one exception. One additional area of contention, 961-acre Camp Hutchins, was not included in the RARE process.

The current areas of contention include Murray Bluff, Burke Branch, Ripple Hollow, and Camp Hutchins.<sup>73</sup> The former three choices were parts of the RARE inventoried roadless areas that were not designated wilderness in 1990.<sup>74</sup> The Forest Service stated in 2006 that to eventually be designated wilderness these areas must first meet "roadless area criteria" as stated in the Forest Service Handbook. The Forest Service documented their evaluation of three of these areas in the Appendix C of the Final Environmental Impact Statement—areas that the Forest Service determined were three areas in the Forest "with the greatest apparent opportunity to meet the roadless criteria." Murray Bluff is not specifically included in the appendix.<sup>64</sup>

The Forest Service illustrated rationale for not including these three areas. The criteria for evaluation as stated in the Forest Service Handbook defined suitable roadless areas as natural areas, minimally influenced by human activities. Nonnative vegetation, recent harvest, and roads all disqualified areas. The Forest Service documented two of these areas, Burke Branch and Ripple Hollow, as not having met numerous criteria. Ripple Hollow still had the 1,000 acres of privately-owned mineral estate that prevented wilderness study on the area in 1992.<sup>64</sup>

The Forest Service interpretation of one criterion, "The location of the area is conducive to the perpetuation of wilderness values,"<sup>75</sup> led to the administrative appeal decision and according to the appendix, this criterion was the reason for exclusion of the Camp Hutchins area from roadless inventory.<sup>76</sup> In the appendix, the Forest Service cited a letter from the regional forester that recommended 2,500 acres as a suitable minimum size for the conditions required to meet wilderness values. He also noted that this was not a required minimum. In the appendix, the Forest Service stated that it had evaluated all areas over 2,000 acres.<sup>64</sup> The appeal decision found that this was an arbitrary number and that "factors such as topography, influences of water bodies, and proximity to type and

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<sup>71</sup> *Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*, (2006). p. 161.

<sup>72</sup> *Appendices, Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan*, 2006. p. 69.

<sup>73</sup> Bensman (2005); Donham (personal communication, July 10, 2007)

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid. Appendices, Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan*, 2006. p. 69.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* p. 75

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*; *Shawnee NF Revised Appeal Decision*, 2007.

use of roads, population centers and other sights and sounds of human activity must be considered". The appeal ordered Shawnee officials to reevaluate smaller areas.<sup>77</sup> Forest Service officials reviewed these areas and found no potential wilderness.<sup>78</sup>

The Executive Summary also included Wild and Scenic Rivers evaluation with wilderness section. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 protects free-flowing rivers with unique characteristics. It divided these rivers into three categories: wild, scenic, and recreational rivers with criteria for wild rivers the most stringent and criteria for recreational rivers the least stringent. The Forest Service identified six candidate rivers—all recreational with a section of one of the rivers scenic.<sup>64</sup> The 2006 forest plan provided a management prescription for these rivers until study and possible subsequent congressionally-designated inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.<sup>79</sup> The comments cited in the comment-response section of the appendices dispute the Forest Service's level of classification of each of the candidate rivers.<sup>64</sup>

## Land adjustment

In October of 2004, the Deputy Undersecretary of Natural Resources and Environment approved a 60,000-acre purchase area along the Mississippi River.<sup>80</sup> The 2006 forest plan recommended to Congress that the forest's proclamation boundary should expand to include this area, known as the Middle Mississippi Purchase Unit.<sup>81</sup>

The Forest Service's land adjustment policy also changed to a prioritization of situations for land acquisition. Land adjustments "needed to carry out programs specified, prescribed, or endorsed by acts of congress or department policy (e.g., wilderness)" were the first priority.<sup>82</sup> The next two priorities included consolidating desirable land and acquiring other valuable lands, respectively.<sup>83</sup>

The conflict on land adjustment focuses on land purchase and land exchanges. One comment opposed land adjustment because of its effect on equestrians. Another comment opposed exchange because its effect on habitat of the exchanged area.<sup>64</sup> The comment prepared jointly by the Sierra Club and Heartwood opposed "cut and swap" land exchanges in which a party logs an area before exchanging land with the Forest Service.<sup>84</sup> This comment also supported more specifically designating high-priority consolidation

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<sup>77</sup> *Shawnee NF Revised Appeal Decision*, 2007.

<sup>78</sup> USDA Forest Service. *Addendum to Appendix C, Appendices, Final Environmental Impact Statement*. Harrisburg, Illinois: USDA Forest Service, Shawnee National Forest.

<sup>79</sup> *Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*, 2006. p. 52.; Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 16 U.S.C. 1271-1287 (1968). Retrieved July 10, 2007, from < <http://www.rivers.gov/wsract.html>>.

<sup>80</sup> Establishment of the Middle Mississippi Purchase Unit; Alexander, Jackson, and Union Counties, State of Illinois. 70 Fed. Reg. 4816 (January 31, 2005).; *Executive Summary of the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Land and Resource Management Plan*, 2006. p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> *Record of Decision, Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resources Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*, 2006. p. 34.

<sup>82</sup> *Land and Resource Management Plan, Shawnee National Forest*, 2006. p. 49.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* p. 49.

<sup>84</sup> Bensman 2005; Donham (personal communication, July 10, 2007)

areas. The Sierra Club-Heartwood comment addressed Dixon Springs Agricultural Center, a major focus of the Southern Illinois Regional Assessment Project.<sup>85</sup>

### **Dixon Springs Agricultural Center (DSAC) and Other Agricultural Issues**

In addition to the points of conflict highlighted in the key findings of this report, issues with particular relevance to the Southern Illinois Regional Assessment Project and agriculture in Southern Illinois have emerged. The Sierra Club-Heartwood written comment questioned the rationale for Dixon Springs Agricultural Center's operation on Forest Service land and also questioned its continued operation without NEPA analysis.<sup>86</sup> The Forest Service response noted that DSAC was established under the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act of 1937 for purposes consistent with its current uses. The Forest Service justified the University of Illinois presence at DSAC under the Hatch Act of 1887. The appendices also detailed the land exchange between the Farm Security Administration and the Forest Service and the agreement on long-term management of DSAC.<sup>64</sup>

The Forest Service comment response recognized Dixon Springs Agricultural Center's current value to the region rather than its original purpose of providing to only the local area. The response also left open the option of a land exchange between the University of Illinois and the Forest Service to resolve ownership issues.<sup>64</sup> Stakeholder interviews brought up the issue of researchers' limited ability to research using agricultural chemicals on Forest Service land.

Interviews with Pope County farmers identify issues with the Shawnee National Forest not identified in the forest planning process. One interviewee said:

*"Everyone in Pope County has attitude that we are a county of 4,000 people who gets their land use dictated by the government."*

Another farmer said:

*"[The Forest Service] has just stopped any economic activity because you can't do anything. There are no jobs. . . you'd think in Pope County with 42% of it owned by the Forest Service they would at least have an office or something, but they don't even have a building."*

Tax base is also an important issue to these farmers. The interviewee continued:

*"There's no tax money that goes to help pave the street. . . originally, the school districts got some money from timber sales, but the extreme environmentalists don't allow trees to be cut in the Shawnee National Forest."*

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<sup>85</sup> Bensman 2005 p. 124.; Donham (personal communication, July 10, 2007)

<sup>86</sup> Bensman 2005 p. 16-17.; Donham (personal communication, July 10, 2007)

Other farmers echoed these thoughts on tax base and environmentalists. Additionally, a comment letter written by the Pope County Clerk contained in the appendices of the FEIS confirms this stance on tax base issues. The letter also brings up effects of low financial resources on county law enforcement and rescue services.<sup>64</sup> While these tensions are most noticeable in Pope County, where 35.3% of land was in Forest Service ownership in 1998,<sup>87</sup> this tension is sure to exist in adjacent counties with high rates of federal ownership. Some stakeholders doubt the validity of these concerns, but nevertheless, negative perceptions exist.

## **Stakeholder Perceptions**

Stakeholder interviews revealed a range of attitudes on the Shawnee Forest. Stakeholders identified the general public's awareness of forest issues while also identifying a general ambivalence within this group. Stakeholders recognized conflict as a result of entrenched groups not fully representing the majority views. However, various stakeholder interviews revealed more moderate views in the generally ambivalent public.

Stakeholders identified the equestrian issues as the center of conflict in the Shawnee NF. They attributed this to a rapid growth of the trail-riding economy in the early- to mid-1990s. Stakeholders recognized the sizeable economic impact of the horse campgrounds and the associated trail-riding.

Forest ecosystem management was a second major source of conflict that stakeholders commonly identified. Many identified lack of management as a major problem on Forest Service lands. Likewise, many blamed a small group of environmentalists for stalling management on the Shawnee NF and for perceived economic and natural consequences.

Stakeholders made connections between the equestrian and forest management conflicts. Multiple-use advocates tended to advocate active forest management and more freedoms for equestrians. Opponents advocated for less active forest management and more restrictions on equestrians use.

SIRAP farming survey results reveal that "national forest ownership/management" was perceived as a threat by 67.2% of respondents in the southeast region of Southern Illinois (Pope, Hardin, Massac, Saline, and Gallatin counties), fourth of sixteen ranked possible threats. "National Forest ownership/management" dropped to eleventh out of sixteen for the region, and only 45.2% of farmers identified this as a threat region-wide. The combination of two areas of tension (extent of national forest ownership as discussed in the agricultural issues section and forest management in the Shawnee NF) clouds this result but shows a discontent with the Forest Service in this region.

## **Discussion**

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<sup>87</sup> Schmidt, Hansen, and Solomakos 2000.

The context of conflict in the Shawnee NF provides a framework for analyzing change in the forest. These dynamics, in turn, provide the region with changing threats, assets, and opportunities. A correlation analysis of indicators for the Southern Illinois region (reported elsewhere) identified trends also revealed by interviews and qualitative analysis. Migration from a different county and the percent of national forest in a county were positively correlated. In contrast, population change and percent national forest were inversely related. Interviewees discussed the loss of young people to the struggling local economy, while they also spoke of the more recreationally-minded in-migrants, especially retirees. They speak of retirees, a large proportion originally from the region, moving in for the small town atmosphere coupled with the outstanding natural environment of the region. These correlations and observations allude to closely related population and economic dynamics that are currently associated with the natural environment of the region, including the Shawnee NF.

A conversion is beginning to occur from an extractive resource-dependent forest region to a tourism- and recreation-focused natural amenity-based forest region influencing the purpose of the forest. The fourteen years between the 1992 Amended forest plan and the 2006 forest plan showed a marked difference in the stated purpose of the forest. The 1992 plan emphasized the development of timber and mineral resources while the 2006 forest plan and the 2006 Trails Designation Project put a larger focus on ecosystem and recreation management. The 2006 plans attempted to address concerns related to these dynamics.

In-migration and recreational residents are indicative of amenity-based communities and these people have an effect on their regions. Studies document in-migrants and recreational residents as more environmentally concerned and long-term residents as more concerned about the local economy.<sup>88</sup> Accordingly farmers, long-term residents, express disapproval of environmentalists and also express a concern for economy.<sup>89</sup> Farmers interviewed in this project identified a demand for land and high land prices typical in amenity-based communities.<sup>90</sup> The changing roles of the natural environment in the region may be, in part, a cause of the conflict over forest management.

The amenity-based transition, however, has effects other than environmental conflict. It may offer a boost to local the local economy as it has elsewhere but may disproportionately contribute many lower-paying service sector jobs.<sup>91</sup> New residents

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<sup>88</sup> Egan, A.F., & Luloff A.E. (2000). The Exurbanization of America's Forests: Research in Rural Social Science. *Journal of Forestry*, 98(3), 26-30.; Green, G. P., Marcouiller, D., Deller, S., Erkkila, D., & Sumathi, N.R. (1996). Local Dependency, Land Use Attitudes, and Economic Development: Comparisons between Seasonal and Permanent Residents. *Rural Sociology*, 61(3), 427-445.; Jones, R.E., Fly, J.M., Talley J., & Cordell, H.K. (2003). Green Migration into Rural America: the New Frontier of Environmentalism? *Society & Natural Resources*, 16(3), 221-238.; Egan and Luloff 2000

<sup>89</sup> Interviews conducted by SIRAP researchers.

<sup>90</sup> Johnson, K.M., & Beale, C.L. (2002) Nonmetro Recreation Counties. *Rural America*, 17(4), 12-19.

<sup>91</sup> Onge, J.M.S., Hunter, L.M., & Boardman, J.D. (2007) Population Growth in High-Amenity Rural Areas: Does it Bring Socioeconomic Benefits for Long-Term Residents? *Social Science Quarterly*, 88(2), 366-381.

may contribute new skills to the area.<sup>92</sup> It is this transition that redefines the set of threats, assets, and opportunities to the forest region.

## **Conclusion**

Stakeholders agreed that the Shawnee NF region is an area of magnificent natural and physical features. However, the forest itself is an area of conflict. Recreation management and forest ecosystem management have caused considerable conflict within the Shawnee NF. Tensions over watershed resources, biological diversity and wildlife and aquatic habitat, minerals management, wilderness, roadless and wild and scenic rivers, and land ownership adjustment decisions also occupy Forest Service officials. Litigation and appeals have heavily influenced the Shawnee NF and consequently its management. Conflicts have been costly in terms of time and resources for the Forest Service and various stakeholder groups.

Stakeholders identified major conflicts that planning documents work to remedy. Stakeholders also spoke of general opinions that planning documents do not provide: perspectives from groups advocating multiple-use policies, groups advocating increased resource preservation, and a larger, more undecided segment aware, but not involved with the tensions.

These conflicts, heightened by lawsuits and appeals, may illustrate the changes in the role of the Shawnee NF. The forested region of Southern Illinois, increasingly a destination of recreational users and even recreational in-migrants, is seeing a transition to accommodate these new stakeholders. The preservation versus resource utilization debate is sure to continue, further defining the role of the forest.

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<sup>92</sup> Jones, Fly, Talley, and Cordell, 2003.