

Should We Convert State Forests Into State Parks?

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Some Vital Questions

Should any, all or none of Indiana's state forests be converted into state parks? Should the primary functions of our state forests continue to be: 1. producing lumber and wood products and 2. providing public hunting grounds, with recreation being a secondary function? Would it be possible at the present time to justify converting some of the small state forests (less than 5,000 acres in size) into state parks? If entire forests should not be converted, what about changing parts of them as Indiana is now doing? Will the demand for outdoor recreation become so great during the next 25 years that pressure groups will attempt to change some of our forests into parks in function if not in name? From the standpoint of management, do trees in a forest receive different treatment from trees in a park?

These are not hypothetical questions which may become important in our society in another century. Citizens of Indiana should be discussing these problems now because already pressure groups are demanding that more emphasis be placed on recreation in our forests. The demand for park facilities will increase in the years ahead as the population of our state grows and a higher and higher per cent of our citizens become concentrated in cities and metropolitan areas (4). The purpose of this paper is not to answer all of the questions raised, but to provide some of the information which should be considered before conclusions to some of the questions are reached.

Differences in Management

The fundamental difference between a state-owned and operated forest and a state-owned and operated park is the difference placed on the use of trees, land, wildlife, water, unusual scenery, historic points of interest, and other resources. In the United States prior to the Civil war, and in many states prior to 1900, a forest meant a wooded area in which trees were grown for the production of lumber and wood products. At this same time, parks were wooded areas found generally in cities or their environs and their primary function was to provide recreation.

Managing trees to provide for shade and beauty and recreation is quite different from growing trees for lumber and wood products. In general throughout the United States trees are planted and cut in both forests and parks, and the person supervising this work must know the primary function of the wooded area. Trees are harvested in forests, but in parks only cut if absolutely necessary for safety and other reasons. Timber-stand improvement cutting and thinning in a forest is drastically different from that of tree-cutting in a park to improve recreational facilities. For example, in a forest managed for lumber production

wolf trees are undesirable. These trees have too many lower branches and only a short trunk free from knots. But a "wolf" tree in a park may be ideal for shade and to provide beauty for all to enjoy. "Twin trunk" and ornamental trees should not occupy space in a forest.

A good timber stand improvement cutting may decrease the recreational value of the land. In such cutting, hollow trees are removed and species with small potential commercial value are cut even if they provide fruit and nuts for wildlife. The object in a timber-stand improvement cutting is to provide more space, water, sunshine and soil so that commercial trees may make a rapid growth. In a park hollow trees, nut, fruit and flowering trees, and those which provide excellent shade and beauty are highly desirable regardless of their commercial value.

There is also a drastic difference in the planting programs followed in parks and forests. Some trees and shrubs that rank high in a priority list for park plantings would not be put in a forest. This is particularly true of colorful flowering and fruiting trees and those with ornamental leaves. Weeping willow, Lombard poplar, sassafras, linden, and hawthorn trees are examples. These are not planted in Indiana forests because they are not considered good for lumber and wood products.

Multiple Use

The multiple use of resources is now widely emphasized and accepted. Unfortunately, many people who have grasped the idea of using a resource in several ways, have not realized that conflicts between two or more uses can and do develop.

True, recreation is germane to every forest and a little lumber and wood products may be obtained even from trees in parks. However, if a conflict in the use of a tree develops, the decision on whether to cut it or let it grow should be decided in part on the paramount use of the forested area, namely, is the tree in a forest, a recreational area developed in a forest, or in a park? The primary use should receive top priority.

When recreational areas are provided in forests, there often follows a demand for additional facilities and space. People are generally not satisfied with a few small picnic areas. Soon there is a demand for shelter houses where food can be cooked "regardless of the weather" and for water and toilet facilities. Then, comes a demand for camping facilities, larger parking areas, and more and larger outdoor shelter houses. Next, may come demands for play areas, over-night cabins, lakes and wider roads. This is as it should be. The forests are large enough to make these things possible. All of these land-uses may be ideal in either a park or a forest recreational area. In reality part of the forest may easily become a park area. When this occurs recreation has replaced the growth of trees as the primary function of the land.

Shouldn't our state forests be very carefully mapped as to their potential use? If parts have greater potentialities as recreational areas and there is a need for these facilities, why not develop them? Conservation is now defined as a wise use of a natural resource. If these areas can be best administered by our state foresters as recreational

areas in the forest, well and good. The foresters say they can. If they can not, should not these potential recreational areas be transferred to the Division of State Parks without delay? Yet hasty and emotional action should not be taken. We should not forget that these areas in our forests would have only limited value if separated from the state forest with people not having access to both. Have we made the necessary surveys and uncovered the necessary data on which to make wise decisions?

Richard Lieber State Park

In 1956, five hundred and fifty-one acres formerly in the Owen-Cagles Mill State Forest were transferred to the Division of State Parks. This area is now the Richard Lieber State Park. It is located adjacent to and northeast of the Cagles Mill Flood Control Reservoir in Putnam and Owen counties. Part of the Owen-Putnam State Forest is adjacent to and south of the park. In fact, to gain access to the park by car, one passes through park land on one side of the road and forest land on the other. The major recreational value of this park depends upon the use of the Cagles Mill Flood Control Reservoir.

This transfer of land (apparently by executive order) brings up the point "Will and should other areas in our state forests be converted into parks?" There is also the question of, "On what data was the decision to make the transfer based?"

The Need for State Parks

Indiana is known throughout our country as having an excellent park system. However, some people believe that the growth of state parks has not kept pace with the growth of our population or the demands for outdoor recreation. Do we have a 5, 10, or 25 year state program of park expansion? If so, what is the relationship between this recreational program and the program of recreational expansion in our state forests? Representatives of the Indiana Department of Conservation say "the relationship is a normal one and both programs will be developed in a coordinated and harmonious manner." (2).

Indiana State Forests

Indiana's state forests are small. Thirteen contain 114,348 acres as of July 1, 1958, or an average of only 8,796 acres. We notice in Table 1 that our largest forest is less than 22,000 acres in size; only four of these 13 forests are over 18,000 acres in size; eight forests are smaller than 7,000 acres; and the smallest contains only 352 acres.

From the standpoint of conservation, which is wise use, the question has been raised, "Is there a minimum size of a state forest below which the cost of administration is too large for profitable management?" Some people are confused and believe that our smaller state forests, those below 5,000 acres in size, are in reality, if not in name, state parks. Apparently some people believe that the primary use of these smaller areas is or should be recreation. But, as forests, timber is harvested and the public is permitted to hunt in them. If these forests were converted into parks, tree harvests and hunting would stop.

TABLE 1. Size and Creation of Indiana State Forests (3)

Name of State Forests	Acreage		Date
	July 1, 1958		Established
Yellowwood	21,563		1934
Morgan-Monroe	21,436		1930
Harrison	19,798		1931
Clark	19,086		1903
Jackson-Washington	9,005		1931
Ferdinand	6,575		1934
Owen-Putnam	3,779		1951
Greene-Sullivan	3,757		1937
Martin	3,579		1932
Pike	2,827		1937
Frances Slocum	1,087		1934
Salamonie River	805		1934
Selmier	352		1944

114,348

Eleven of our state forests are located in southern Indiana in the most wooded section of the state. (4) Only the Frances Slocum and the Salomonie River forests are in the northern part and they contain only 1,893 acres, or less than two per cent of Indiana's state-owned forests. Consequently our state forests are strategically located between the more heavily populated and industrial areas in northern Indiana and the Lower Great Lakes region to the north and the rapidly expanding industrial area of the Ohio River valley to the south. Now is an opportune time to realize that our state forests may be managed for the dual purpose of producing lumber and wood products and of providing recreational facilities. This would help promote the tourist industry in southern Indiana.

Lag in Recreational Development

The Division of Forestry is quite cognizant of the need for developing additional outdoor recreational facilities. But apparently the biggest bottleneck to a more rapid expansion of forest recreational areas is the lack of funds. The following paragraph epitomizes the present situation:

"The state funds available for the forests have been used primarily to acquire the land, plant the idle acres, protect the properties from fire and improper use, and spend very little for roads, recreation and administrative facilities. The roads, trails, structures and recreation facilities now existing were established almost entirely by the Civilian Conservation Corps and WPA programs, and very little has been added since those days in the way of state expense. As of the present and the future this is not enough." (5)

Summary

1. The Division of Forestry is cognizant of the recreational potentialities in our state forests and the needs for outdoor recreation, but

adequate funds for expanding recreational facilities have not been available.

2. Most of the recreational facilities in our state forests were developed during the 1930's.

3. "The state forests are being planned for the simpler less intensive types of recreational use and as such supplement the intensive program of state parks." (5)

4. We should reassess our outdoor recreational needs and facilities and draw up long-ranged plans which will correlate the activities of all state agencies. This correlation should include due recognition for forest, fish, wildlife, recreational and other present and potential resources.

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