

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA  
NEW ALBANY DIVISION

MONROE COUNTY BOARD OF )  
COMMISSIONERS, *et al.*, )  
 )  
Plaintiff(s), )  
 )  
v. )  
 )  
UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE, )  
*et al.*, )  
 )  
Defendant(s). )

Cause No. 4:20-cv-00106-TWP-DML

**DECLARATION OF RAY H. MOISTNER**

I, Ray H. Moistner, declare:

1. I am the Executive Director of the Indiana Hardwood Lumbermen’s Association. I am over the age of eighteen, and if called to testify, would and could state as follows.

2. The Indiana Hardwood Lumbermen’s Association supports the Houston South Project in the Hoosier National Forest.

3. Indiana has five million acres of forest land, which represents one-fifth of the state’s land base. The hardwood industry is the largest component of Indiana agriculture, in terms of jobs, wages and economic impact. Our state is home to hundreds of sawmills and veneer mills, and an even larger secondary manufacturing industry, including cabinets, flooring, furniture, pallets, recreational vehicles, dimension millwork, and more.

4. Hardwoods contribute over \$10 billion annually to the state’s economy, and the industry employs over 70,000 people, with even more jobs generated in sectors supporting or supported by the hardwood sector.

5. Healthy forests and a healthy forest products economy are inextricable tied. Indiana’s forests are sustainable, and statewide timber growth exceeds removals from harvest

and natural tree mortality by a factor of 2.3 to 1. In the Hoosier National Forest that ratio is much higher, due to policies of the last several decades which have restricted timber harvesting.

6. Prior to European settlement, the state was nearly 90% forested. By 1900, clearing for agriculture and housing reduced the state's forestland from 18 million acres to about 1.5 million acres. Today, Indiana has five million acres of forestland a recovery of more than threefold. The road to that recovery began on public lands in 1903 with the establishment of the State Forest system, and on private lands in 1921 with the passage of the Classified Forest Act. Gradually, lands unsuitable for crops and orchards have become magnificent forests.

7. Within those public lands, it is written into Indiana law that the 158,000 acres of state-owned forests are to be managed for multiple uses - including timber harvesting, recreation, wildlife management – to meet the diverse needs of citizens and to practice responsible, science-based forestry. Multiple-use forest management works well, for all stakeholders.

8. Learning from what happened in the Pacific Northwest has given the eastern hardwood forest stewards a unique opportunity to prevent history from repeating itself. As an example, 35 years ago, northern California alone had 150 sawmills providing tens of thousands of jobs. Activism efforts using the Northern Spotted Owl caused effective forest management to be replaced with a system that can only be described as benign neglect. Today, only 15% of those 150 mills remain. Harvest of excess mature timber has dropped over 80%, while acres destroyed by wildfires have increased in the same proportion. Production off of private lands dropped too, as over one billion dollars of payroll disappeared along with sawmill capacity. The United States, with our vast and renewable forest resources, became the second largest *importer* of softwoods, second only to China.

9. Millions of acres of federal forest lands are destroyed by fire each year. On what used to be productive, revenue-generating public lands, we now have Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs), while Forest Service (not FEMA) funds are diverted to fight those fires. The federal government even loses money on the rare federal timber sale due to all of the regulations. Our western forests continue to die from wildly high mortality due to a lack of forest management

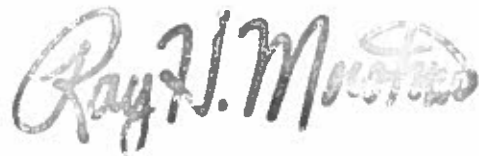
creating overstocked and dense conditions. The timber comes out of the forest one way or another - if not sustainably harvested it either burns or dies out.

10. From a human standpoint, eight of Indiana's nine poorest counties abut the Hoosier National Forest. The Hoosier is 202,000 acres of prime forestland. While Indiana's state-owned forests are verified sustainable at a 3.3 to-1 growth to harvest ratio, the same ratio on the Hoosier is 1305:1, according to information provided by the Indiana DNR Division of Marketing and Utilization. One of our state's most abundant resources is being wasted instead of helping to lift those areas out of poverty, using the premise that if the resource is managed in a sustainable manner there can be revenue generated for the community and livelihoods of its citizens. By harvesting and regrowing trees sustainably, we can restore the health and succession of the forest, and forest-based industries will emerge in those southern-Indiana communities, lifting the income and spirit of those communities in search of hope.

11. The Houston South project includes appropriate harvest levels, and controlled burn principles needed to maintain vital species such as oak and hickory, which are not only species needed to meet demand for essential products, but also important food and habitat sources for so many forest species. Without management, these species that require ample sunlight will give way to shade-tolerant species, and further exacerbating dire forest mortality levels that now exist.

12. The project is a strategic, appropriate, and forest science-based example of long-term sustainable forest management, which IHLA strongly supports.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on December \_\_, 2020, in Fishers, Indiana.



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RAY H. MOISTNER