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Bipartisan Support Emerges in Vote on Pro-Forest Amendment in Indiana House

An amendment introduced by Rep. Matt Pierce (D-Bloomington) that would have set aside 10% of state forests from logging did not pass today, with a vote of 50 to 35, with 22 Democrats and 13 Republicans voting in favor. [\[see votes here\]](#).

"If you listen to the discussion on the floor about this amendment, there was a high level of energy and support for the idea of setting aside some state forests to develop into old growth forest," said Jeff Stant, executive director of the Indiana Forest Alliance.

Three Republicans—Rep. Tony Cook (R-Tipton), Rep. Donna Schaibley (R-Zionsville), and Rep. Bruce Borders (R-Sullivan)—joined Rep. Carey Hamilton (D-Indianapolis) and sponsor Rep. Matt Pierce—speaking in favor of the amendment with only one lawmaker, Rep. Sean Eberhart (R-Shelbyville), speaking against it.

Eberhart announced that Governor Holcomb had authorized Eberhart to say that he does not support this policy. Forest advocates targeted Gov. Holcomb last fall during the controversy over the current logging of the Yellowwood State Forest Back Country Area.

"The Governor never made his position clear in the Yellowwood controversy, but it is clear now that he doesn't support statutory protection of state forests," said Stant. "We will need to continue our effort to communicate the growing public concern over of the imbalanced management of our state forests."

Comments in favor of the amendment focused on the quality of life that forests bring, the importance of future generations being able to experience a heritage forest and the limited amount of older forest in our state, and ensuring that outdoor recreation is prioritized and Indiana's tourism brand protected. Rep. Schaibley noted the divergence of scientific opinion about state forest management and the need for dialogue. Rep. Pierce added: "We have so few lands where you can experience what Indiana was like 100 years ago. It's rare to experience an undisturbed forest. Our children ought to have that experience."

"This vote reveals that the negative public response to DNR's aggressive logging is a policy issue that is not 'red' or 'blue,' said Stant. "The way our public forests are treated is an issue that matters to Hoosiers in both parties."

Forest advocates will continue the campaign to protect publicly-owned, wild forests in Indiana.

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About Indiana Forest Alliance: IFA is a non-profit, statewide organization dedicated to preserving and restoring Indiana's native hardwood forest ecosystem for the enjoyment of all.