

Friends of Salamonie Forest
P.O. Box 425
Huntington, IN 46750

14 April 2019

Division of Hearings
Natural Resources Commission
Indiana Government Center North
100 North Senate Avenue, Room N 103
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2273

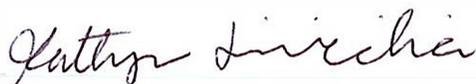
Ladies and Gentlemen of the Natural Resources Commission:

Please find enclosed a petition for rule change requesting the transfer of Salamonie River State Forest and Frances Slocum State Forest from the Division of Forestry to the Division of State Parks and Reservoirs within the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to be managed as state parks. Additional details pertaining to this request can be found in the enclosed petition dated January 31, 2019 and in the attached case statement dated April 14, 2019. This petition is submitted on behalf of myself, Friends of Salamonie Forest, and concerned local citizens. We respectfully request that a hearing be held to allow testimony from those submitting the petition, other interested citizens and experts in order to fully consider the merits of this requested rulemaking.

In addition, we request that any upcoming timber sales slated for Salamonie River State Forest or Frances Slocum State Forest be deferred beyond the date set by the Natural Resources Commission to consider the investigative committee's report on this petition.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit this petition to the Natural Resources Commission and thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Lisinicchia
Friends of Salamonie Forest

January 31, 2019

Petition to Change Salamonie and Frances Slocum State Forest to Parks:

We, the undersigned, are asking the Indiana Natural Resources Commission (NRC) for a rule change (or a nonrule policy change) to transfer Salamonie River State Forest and Frances Slocum State Forest from the Division of Forestry to the Division of State Parks and Reservoirs within the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to be managed as state parkland. Accordingly, we hereby petition the NRC to amend the rule defining "state park" (312 IAC 8-1.5-21-5) to designate all lands comprising the Salamonie River State Forest heretofore as Salamonie River State Park.

In addition, we request that the NRC further amend this rule to designate all lands comprising the Frances Slocum State Forest heretofore as the Frances Slocum State Park. As Frances Slocum State Forest may presently be not more than 500 acres, we note that IC § 14-19-2-1 defines a "small state park" as "a park having an area of not more than 500 acres", and that IC § 14-19-2-3 states that small state parks must "be developed for recreational or cultural activities by the public" and "contain or be adjacent to surface water." We believe that the hiking and horseback riding trails within this state forest as well as its direct proximity to the Mississinewa River will make it an ideal small state park. Alternatively, should the NRC decide that a state park is not a feasible designation for Frances Slocum State Forest, we ask the Commission to use its authority under IC § 14-10-2-3 to transfer the Frances Slocum State Forest back to the adjacent Frances Slocum State Recreation Area along Mississinewa Reservoir.

Over the past decade, the Salamonie and Frances Slocum State Forests have been treated without respect to their original intent of ecological conservation or for the citizens for whom they were established. Pending proposals to commercially log major volumes of trees in the heart of these two State Forests will harm their ecological and recreational values, are not supported by the local community, and will desecrate public forests used for nonconsumptive outdoor recreation that are very limited in northern Indiana. We believe this change in designation of these State Forests to State Parks will better align the management of these areas with the recreational needs of the community. In conjunction with this change, the following is needed:

- 1.) A network of clearly marked, accessible trails needs to be established for visitors so that they can safely explore more of these properties and appreciate their natural beauty without damaging their pristine conditions.
- 2.) Trails need to be maintained so that both horses and hikers will not have to slog through patches of deep mud or try to walk down the narrow, deep ditches that some trails have become. Off trail hiking, horseback riding or mountain biking needs to be stopped to avoid damaging the rich herbaceous communities on the forest floors.
- 3.) Sites need to be identified for eagle watching along the Salamonie and Mississinewa Rivers which has made both of these State Forests a tourist attraction.

4.) A plan for clearing the bush honeysuckle, multi-flora rose, Asian bittersweet and other harmful invasive plants from the sides of the roads needs to be established and executed. Logging or other human activities that tear up the ground and generate more sunlight on the ground should be avoided to reduce rather than increase this problem of nonnative invasive vegetation invading the interiors of these Forests. Rather than clearcutting or aggressively removing nonnative pines through selective cutting, the natural regeneration of pine stands with hardwoods that is occurring now in these Forests should be allowed to continue, a process which can occur without exacerbating invasion by other nonnative plants.

5.) The gravel road in Frances Slocum should be paved and adequate trash receptacles and restrooms built at the end of this road to make this forest more welcoming to visitors. A map should be provided of trails marked for hiking, horseback riding and/or mountain biking.

6.) A commitment is needed in the management of both of these Forests to allow trees to grow their full lifespan so they can evolve naturally and visitors can experience, appreciate, and learn how natural forests work without human interference, the opportunities of which are quite limited in northern Indiana for the expansive urban and suburban populations in this region.

Signature

Printed Name

Address
