

Proposed Erie County Forest Park  
by Larry Beahan

The 3,500-acre Erie County Forest, mostly on Genesee Road, is a treasure set aside in 1927 by foresighted legislators. It has generally been left alone to mature into a paradise of rugged streams, tall trees, great hiking trails and a small area of civilized maple sugar making and nature education. In 2006, a commercial logging crew stripped the 150- to 180-year-old hardwoods from two sections. According to a professional forester, the residual stand is now poles and low-grade hardwoods or hemlocks.

Public forest management should not promote the long-term forest degrading practice of harvesting only high-grade trees.

I add that such a practice is like breeding race horses by shooting all those who win. The draft management plan, on the county Web site since 2004, is based on a quick superficial survey, has two contradictory sets of recommendations and is designed to extract timber. The forest needs a management plan to preserve its trees for their recreational and ecological potential. Parks Commissioner Jim Hornung can get that job done. The Erie County Forest is a de facto park. Legislator Tom Loughran promises a law to formalize that status.

Let us support them and make it the Erie County Forest Park.