Tree removal suggested for promoting growth

Written by Margaret Harper – Indiana Gazette

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A proposed plan to manage forestry in White's Woods would help promote growth and conserve resources in the area through the removal of 555,000 board-feet of trees, according to a local forester.

Dave Babyak, of Babyak Forestry Services, presented a Forest Stewardship and Management Plan update to White Township supervisors at a meeting Wednesday. The plan, which would harvest 555,000 board-feet of trees during the next 10 years, is meant to help clear room for growth and eliminate damaged and dying trees to make room for healthier ones.

When an area is too densely populated with trees, it can negatively affect forest growth, he said. By thinning the forest, it will be possible to increase the expected amount of future growth.

The area at White's Woods is 245 acres, with 229 of those acres forested, Babyak said. Most of the trees are poplar, red oak and red maple, he said. The harvested trees would be worth $166,000 if sold today.

The plan leaves 22 acres of land untouched for use as a natural habitat area, he said. Carolyn Trimarchi, an Indiana borough resident and frequenter of White's Woods, spoke against the plan at the meeting and questioned Babyak and the supervisors. She told the group she didn't understand how cutting down trees helps preserve an area.

"If this is a nature reserve, why does it need to be managed?" Trimarchi said. Babyak referred her to the Bureau of Forestry for an explanation and said many studies have been done on the subject. Supervisors also defended the program. "We're interested in a healthy forested area, and it's something we're investigating," said supervisor Gail McCauley.

Supervisors will receive a final copy of the report in the next two weeks, Babyak said. It will be reviewed at the next meeting and will be available for public review, said Larry Garner, township manager. A timeline for the program, if the township implements it, is not known.