Welcome to the Neighborhood

For many people, having a piece of property next door to a national forest is the fulfillment of a dream. Living next to a national forest allows a homeowner to enjoy the beauty of the forest, abundant wildlife, spectacular scenery, and a sense of solitude.

At the same time, it is important for property owners to understand what it means to live next door to public lands. National Forests are "working" forests managed for multiple uses like wildlife, timber, water quality, and recreation. We offer opportunities for you to get involved and participate in project planning and have input in these decisions during a process called "scoping." Along with the many benefits of being a national forest neighbor, there are also responsibilities.

This brochure provides information on a variety of topics that property owners should find useful. For additional information, contact a Forest Service office.

Selling, Exchanging, or Donating Your Land

The Hoosier National Forest (HNF) was established in 1935 and land acquisition continues to "grow" Indiana's only National Forest (NF). The Forest Service buys suitable land from willing sellers as funding is available. Properties that provide important wildlife habitat, protect endangered species, improve access to public lands and consolidate Forest ownership are considered for purchase.

Land Exchanges

Although there is no authority to sell NF land, the Forest Service can convey land through land-for-land exchanges when it is clearly in the public's interest. The lands to be exchanged must be of equal value or equalized with a cash payment less than 25% of the value of the Federal land. An effective land exchange program consolidates NF ownership and improves protection, management and use of the NF.

Boundary Management and Land Lines

The most valuable advice we can give you is to have your property surveyed by a licensed land surveyor. The fence you think is on the property line may not be. The site where you'd like to build your dream home may be partially on the HNF. If you construct a building on the Forest, it will have to be removed. Avoid costly mistakes by knowing where your property lines are!

If you decide to harvest your timber, check your boundaries well in advance of the harvest. Cutting across property lines can be a costly mistake.

Neighbors to a NF are encouraged to keep structures and improvements a reasonable distance away from common property lines. This reduces the likelihood of an encroachment. It will also improve wildfire protection.

What about Fences?



Fences are the responsibility of the private landowner. If you own livestock it is your responsibility to build a fence to keep livestock off NF land. It is imperative that you first ensure that the property lines are accurate before constructing your fence.

Contact Us

The Hoosier has two offices to serve visitors. Office hours are 8 - 4:30 Monday through Friday.

Hoosier National Forest
Supervisors Office and
Brownstown District
811 Constitution Avenue
Bedford, IN 47421
812-275-5987
Toll Free: 1-866-302-4173
www.fs.usda,gov/hoosier

Tell City District
248 15th Street
Tell City, IN 47586
812-547-7051

Federal relay system for the deaf and hearing impaired: 1-800-877-8339

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Typical corner boundary marked for National Forest land.

Living Next Door to a National Forest

A Guide for Landowners living near the Hoosier NF



America's Great Outdoors

USDA **United States Department of Agriculture** Forest Service



Who Manages the Roads?

Road systems within the HNF include State Highways, County and Township Roads. The HNF also maintains some roads. These roads serve as access for recreation use, hunting, fishing, fire control and other activities.

Some roads that access the NF cross private land on easements acquired from the private landowners. When the Forest Service acquires an easement across private property, the Forest Service regulates the use of the road. The public has the right to use the road unless the Forest Service has closed the road to public use.

Access by permit across the NF to private lands may be granted under some circumstances, if other access is not available. Contact the HNF for more information.

Permits for Utilities, Events, etc.

Private uses of the NF, such as private road rights-of-way and construction of public utilities, require a special use permit. These permits are issued if the use is compatible with NF purposes and if it is in the public interest. Payment of an annual special use permit fee is required.

Uses of the NF such as recreation events and commercial services also require a special use permit, as do gatherings of over 75 people. Not all permit requests are approved. For example, permits are not granted when the activity can be reasonably accommodated on private land. Processing an application for a special use permit does take time and certain fees may be billed to the applicant. Please contact your local Forest Service office for questions.



What about Fire?

The Forest Service is responsible for protecting NF lands from wildfire. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources and local Volunteer Fire Departments suppress fires on state and private lands. The Forest Service suppresses fire on private land if it poses a threat to NF land or when assistance is requested by other agencies.

If a property owner allows a fire to escape onto HNF land, the landowner may be billed for suppression and restoration costs and damages.

The Forest Service sometimes uses prescribed fire to improve wildlife habitat, stimulate ecosystems, or remove debris. Controlled fire can reduce the occurence and severity of wildfire by clearing the buildup of flammable material that has accumulated in the forest. For fires on or near NF land call 911 or 812-547-9262.

Who Provides Law Enforcement?

The County Sheriff is responsible for protecting residents and personal property. Any illegal activity should be reported to their office. The HNF has cooperative agreements with several county sheriffs.



Laws involving wildlife and fish resources are enforced by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and conservation officers. The Forest also has its own law enforcement officers who are responsible for protecting forest resources. Violations should be reported to the district offices.

Recreation



National Forest recreation activities include camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, boating, horseback riding and much more. The public must get landowner's permission to cross private land to access NF land. The public has the right to recreate on NF lands adjacent to private property but not on private land.

Mountain bike and horse trail users are required to purchase and display a permit and are restricted to designated trails on the HNF. You may NOT access these trails cross-country from your property. ATVs are prohibited on the Hoosier.

Collecting Firewood



The Forest Service issues permits for collecting firewood. Contact the local district office to find out more.

Invasive Weeds



The Forest Service is actively treating invasive plants on NF land. If a population of invasive plants straddles both your property and NF property- please contact us and we'll discuss how we might work together on controlling the plants.

There are many good resources to assist landowners in identifying, preventing, and treating invasive weeds. Contact our office or the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts for more information.

Managing your Forested Land

Professional assistance in managing your private forest land is available from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. District Foresters are assigned to counties throughout southern Indiana. The DNR website refers you to the District Forester for your area: http://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/4750.htm

Management of the National Forests is ever changing. Please contact the Hoosier National Forest to verify the information in this brochure!

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