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Forester offers point of view

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I have read with a certain amount of professional interest the debate over the proposed Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) operations in White's Woods.

Perhaps we should look at some basic ecological concepts of forestry to aid in this discussion. Ecology is essentially the study of various species, plants and animals, their interrelationships and the various cycles of each ecosystem, life, energy water, etc. Trees or groups of trees known as stands are like all other living organisms or groups of organisms — they are born, they live, they reproduce and they die. Each species has a specific role to play in developing the ecosystem during the various stages of forest succession.

Forest succession starts with a major disturbance and over time leads to a mature, climax forest. But even a climax forest is not static. They are dynamic and cannot really be preserved individually. They are always changing, whether through a normal orderly processes of its life cycle or through other subsequent disturbances, natural or man made.

Species classified as Early Successional are absolutely dependent on these disturbances in order to survive or grow. How any tree or plant is classified is often determined by their tolerance to shade.

In short, too much shade and only certain species of trees, and the flora and fauna that they support, can reproduce and survive. Others will not. Some would look upon cutting as “deforestation.” For a forester, it is ultimately about the regeneration of the stand. Allowing more sunlight onto the forest floor encourages the establishment and new growth. I would guess that many of the folks who are opposed to the cutting in White’s Woods would be equally upset to learn that a native song bird, the golden-winged warbler currently is on the IUCN’s (International Union for Conservation of Nature) list of near threatened species. It is threatened due in part to the human impact on the loss of breeding-ground habitat here in Pennsylvania. Ironically, it is threatened not because too many trees have been cut, but rather it is an

Early Successional species, and needs a certain amount of forest disturbance in its breeding-ground habitat in order to survive. The only way all species that are native to this area will thrive is to maintain a diversity of successional stages — some early, some climax and some in between.

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