

# ***The Shawnee National Park and Climate Preserve, Illinois' Best Idea***

## **Myth Busters**

**This document contains Actual Facts busting through numerous opposition-based Myths regarding the initiative and management by the National Park Service (NPS) and the Forest Service (FS)**

**Myth:** Hunting is not permitted on National Park Service managed land.

**Fact:** 51 million acres managed by the NPS are open to hunting, representing 60% of the total NPS managed land. There are 75 different areas managed by the NPS that permit hunting.

<https://www.doi.gov/blog/hunting-and-fishing-national-parks-and-fish-and-wildlife-refuges>

**Myth:** Entrance fees will certainly be charged once the Shawnee becomes a National Park & Climate Preserve.

**Fact:** Only 25% of the NPS managed properties charge entry fees. In fact, the most visited national park in the country, the Great Smokey Mountains charges no entry fees. Only 109 of the current 423 NPS managed units charge entry fees.

<https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/entrance-fee-prices.htm>

**Myth:** Access that neighbors and recreational users have grown accustomed to in the national forest will be restricted once the Shawnee becomes a National Park & Climate Preserve.

**Fact:** Most access to the Shawnee will remain the same. Hunting, horseback riding, foot traffic, dog walking, rock climbing, bicycling, mountain biking, boating, fishing, backpacking, backcountry and developed camping, geocaching, foraging for mushrooms and fruits, are all common recreational uses permitted on NPS managed lands. While there may be some proposed minor adjustments of regulations, users will have ample opportunity to provide input on any changes that may occur. There is no effort underway to change recreational user access on the Shawnee.

<https://www.shawneeforestdefense.org>

**Myth:** The National Park Service does not actively manage natural areas and/or takes a “hands-off” approach to NPS managed land and does not utilize invasive species control measures.

**Fact:** The National Park Service is tasked with caring for none other than “America's Best” natural wonders. Of course, the NPS acts to protect natural areas. The NPS not only details its commitment to “maintain, restore, and protect the inherent integrity of the natural resources, processes, systems, and values,” it details the kind of proactive management the agency undertakes and the importance of working with local and state experts in Chapter 4 of its management policies.

<https://www.nps.gov/policy/mp/policies.html>

The NPS even has an extensive *Heartland Invasive Plant Management Plan* that focuses on controlling invasive plant species in the neighboring states of Missouri, Kentucky, and Indiana. Our state is excluded from the regional NPS Invasive Species Management Plan only because Illinois currently has no National Park.

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=155&projectID=31771&documentID=55204>

**Myth:** Transferring land from the USDA Forest Service to the National Park Service is unprecedented.

**Fact:** Numerous national parks began as national forests. For example, what eventually became **Olympic National Park** was first designated as part of the National Forest Reserve system in 1897. In 1906, the USDA Forest Service (FS) was established, and the Forest Reserves were shifted into the National Forest System. In 1909, President Theodore Roosevelt designated part of the area as a National Monument. In 1937, President Franklin Roosevelt signed the legislation that created the **Olympic National Park** out of the existing Monument and the remaining National Forest land.

<https://www.nps.gov/olymp/learn/historyculture/index.htm>

The 15,000 square miles of **Glacier National Park** similarly became a forest reserve in 1897 and a National Forest in 1906. It was transferred over to the Department of Interior and became a national park in 1910.

<http://npshistory.com/publications/glac/glaciers-past.pdf>

More recently, the **Great Basin National Park** was established but it was first managed by the Nevada Forest Service in 1909. It was transferred over to the FS in 1912. In 1922 part of it became Lehman Caves National Monument and part became Wheeler Peak Scenic Area but were both parts of the Humboldt National Forest. In 1933 Lehman Caves National Monument was transferred over to the National Park Service (NPS). It did not become a National Park until 1986. Whether the remaining National Forest was transferred over in 1986 or when the monument was expanded before becoming a national park is not clear.

<http://archive.org/details/historicresource00unra/page/n1/mode/2up?view=theater>

**Myth:** The USDA Forest Service only logs less than 200 acres on the Shawnee National Forest annually.

**Fact:** Current FS industrial logging projects *already underway* total more than 12,000 acres of Shawnee land. While the annual 200 acres or less figure was likely the case in the past, such figures are about to change, drastically.

Approved FS projects in varied states of implementation involving industrial logging include the following:

<u>Project name &amp; location</u>	<u>Amount of commercial logging</u>
Cretaceous Hills (Pope & Massac Counties)	3,200 acres
Waterfall (near Kinkaid Lake, Jackson County)	471 acres
Little Cache (Johnson County)	475 acres
Bean Ridge (Alexander County)	2,660 acres
Sharp Rock (near Kinkaid Lake, Jackson County)	2,310 acres
Oakwood Bottoms (Jackson County)	<u>3,000 acres</u>
Total	12,116 acres

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/shawnee/landmanagement/projects>

On top of these jarring figures, the agency has their sights on tens of thousands more acres opened to logging interests. In fact, the Chief of the USDA Forest Service designated more than 100,000 Shawnee National Forest acres as areas qualifying for categorical exclusions in 2019. This sidesteps the otherwise mandatory environmental review process, so the FS can more efficiently extract timber from these areas under the guise of “forest health,” as well (see the *Bean Ridge Project Newsletter*). <https://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/shawnee/landmanagement/projects>

**Myth:** With the USDA Forest Service at least the interested parties have input regarding management decisions compared to the DOI National Park Service, which will simply mandate many unknown changes.

**Fact:** The FS continues to operate with an outdated and likely unlawful, 10-year management plan issued in 2006. The FS has no intention of preparing a new plan any time soon. The planning process involves months of research and processing public input to develop an environmental impact statement (EIS). Many factors have changed since the outdated plan was developed in the early 2000s. Input from interested parties is therefore extremely limited under the current FS management regime. The National Park Service must begin a new planning process and will immediately start collecting data to issue an EIS in establishing a management plan for the newly designated Shawnee National Park and Climate Preserve, upon its designation. In contrast to the entrenched FS activities, the EIS process initiated by the NPS will provide ample opportunities for input by various parties.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/shawnee/landmanagement>

**Myth:** Without USDA Forest Service logging for “forest health” and let the sunshine in “restoration,” the oak component in the Shawnee will diminish and nonnative invasive species will take over.

**Fact:** Past commercial logging sites on the Shawnee have not regenerated into oak dominated forests. To the contrary, past studies on logged and burned sites on the Trail of Tears State Forest in Union County did not result in more advanced oak regeneration than found on the unlogged and unburned sites where at least ample mature oaks remained for producing and dropping acorns for further reproduction. This study was initiated in 2014 and completed in 2022.

*Hardwood Regeneration and Growth Following Multiple Silvicultural Treatments in a Central Hardwood Forest*, Inglis, E., (2022). <https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/theses/2949/>

Another 2008 study examined oak regeneration on past Shawnee logging sites that had been logged from 1980 - 1990. Maple and poplar dominated the logged sites with very little oak regeneration.

*Oak Ecosystem Management Considerations for Central Hardwoods Stands*, Groninger, J.W., Long, M.A.(2008). <https://academic.oup.com/njaf/article/25/4/173/4780109?login=false>

IDNR Natural Heritage and Illinois Nature Preserve Commission Biologists responses to FS Proposals to commercially extract timber at Bean Ridge and Sharp Rock projects on the Shawnee provide more documentation that commercial logging degrades Shawnee forest ecosystems, introduces non-native invasive species, and negatively impacts rare forest dwelling species.

See the uncovered documents on Shawnee Forest Defense website blog post, February 3, 2023.

<https://www.shawneeforestdefense.org>

**Myth:** The Shawnee National Forest contains too many private inholdings for it to be managed by the National Park Service.

**Fact:** Like FS units, the NPS manages many national parks, preserves and other units with fragmented ownership and private inholdings. Within Alaska's national park unit boundaries alone, there are more than 1.6 million acres of land owned by private individuals, corporations, the State of Alaska, and local governments.

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=11675>

The same is true for the Ozark National Scenic Riverways located in southern Missouri. The NPS ownership of land is fragmented with numerous private, corporate, and state-owned land. The map of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways land effectively demonstrates this fact.

<https://www.nps.gov/ozar/planyourvisit/maps.htm>

**Myth:** If the Shawnee is transferred out of the USDA Forest Service and into the Department of Interior Park Service, the many Forest Service employees will lose their jobs and will be forced to leave Southern Illinois.

**Fact:** Interagency transfers of federal employees between other land managing agencies, especially those transferring between US Department of Agriculture and the US Department of Interior are common. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management specifically facilitates such transfers. In fact, career-conditional employees from one agency may transfer, without a break in service of a single workday, to a competitive service position in another agency without competing in a civil service examination open to the public. Employees may transfer to positions at the same, higher, or lower grade levels.

<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/details-transfers/>

**For more information, please visit [www.ShawneeNtlPark.org](http://www.ShawneeNtlPark.org) or [www.shawneeforestdefense.org](http://www.shawneeforestdefense.org)**

**Questions? Contact [shawneeparkandclimatealliance@gmail](mailto:shawneeparkandclimatealliance@gmail.com)**



YouTube channel



Shawnee Park and Climate Alliance  
Website