

Another Voice: Logging Zoar Valley is a bad deal for the environment

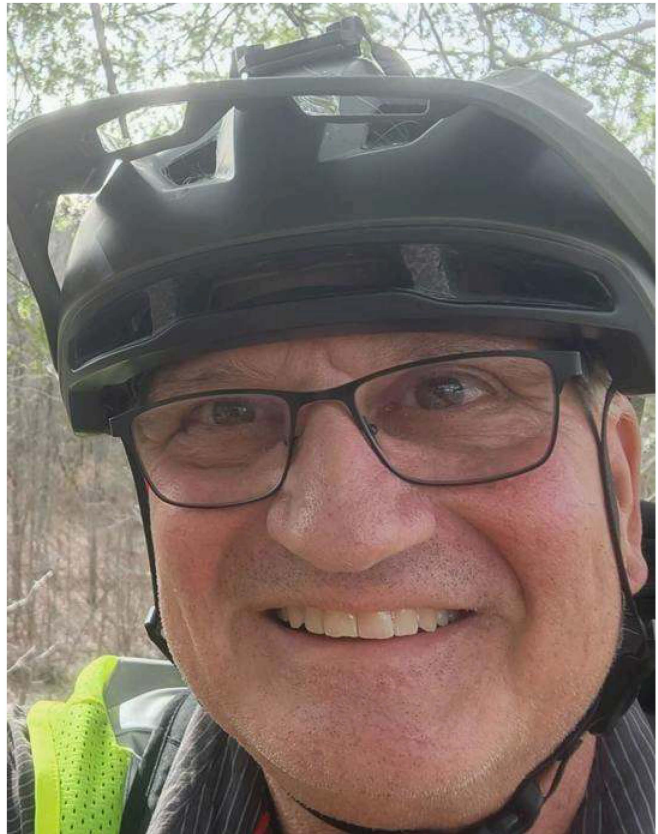
By Alan Matricardi
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Standing on the small viewpoint at the top of the “pyramid” of Valentine Flats is a singular experience in Western New York. It was there one day that my daughter and I were inspired with the sight of a bald eagle streaking high on a beeline down the valley, as if on some important mission.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation seems to agree, as these words from its website attest: “The 2,978-acre Zoar Valley Multiple Use Area & Unique Area (MUA/UA) is one of the most scenic and ecologically diverse environmental areas in Western New York. Zoar Valley MUA/UA is known for the spectacular scenery created by its deep gorge, sheer cliffs, flowing waterfalls, and dense forests.”

One of the main things that make this area unique is the virgin old-growth forest that lines the valley and rim. This uncommon forest condition in WNY is a result of undisturbed natural forest succession. It got that way largely due to its steep slopes and inaccessibility making unsuitable for agriculture and difficult, dangerous and costly to manage for timber. Once it is disturbed, it will take generations to recover.

My background as a graduate forest engineer with many years working in logging and forestry convince me that logging operations in this area are not environmentally or economically feasible. The cost of road construction, logging, restoration, and transportation to mill and market will exceed the value of the product and must therefore be subsidized. Environmental impacts will indeed qualify as “significant.”



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The current proposal by the NYSDEC to cut 92 acres of rare virgin old growth forest in Zoar Valley Multiple Use Area for wildlife in this manner is not a good deal for the environment or taxpayer and should be abandoned. There are plenty of other state forest lands nearby in the area that are actively managed for timber and wildlife because they are more suitable and feasible for these goals. The best and highest use for Zoar Valley is to simply leave it alone.

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