

Another Voice: Logging in Zoar Valley should not be an option

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As a long time National and Buffalo Audubon member, I am totally against the logging project in Zoar Valley planned by Connecticut Audubon and the NYS DEC. I am not aware local Audubon members were asked for feedback about this plan. It appears to me that this out-of-state Audubon plan has given NYS DEC cover to log into this site and an additional 2,978 acres in the future.

We are so lucky to have this wonderful wild area of forest that has been growing and evolving since the last Ice Age, 10,000 years ago. In “The Hidden Life of Trees, What They Feel, How they Communicate” Peter Wohlleben, a forest ranger in Germany, writes, “But together, many trees create an ecosystem that moderates extremes of heat and cold, stores a great deal of water, and generates a great deal of humidity.”

I would add that trees sequester tens of thousands of tons of carbon out of the atmosphere, which mitigates climate change.

When I returned from Vietnam, I spent time visiting Zoar Valley. Walking in these forests I received solace and calm and reset my personal compass to a positive way of living. The green, the oxygen, the quiet, the wildlife and the water provided me inspiration.

I was involved with the Master Plan for Allegany State Park. In the plan, it was decided that logging was not an option because it opens corridors into the mature forests for invasive insects which destroy indigenous trees. Also, open corridors in a forest encourage invasive birds such as cowbirds to take over nests, known as brood parasitism. This prevents native birds from hatching their eggs.

In addition, Governor Hochul has a plan to plant 25 million trees in NYS by 2033. Given that understanding of the importance of trees, why cut these existing forests? It makes no sense. I appreciate Connecticut Audubon’s concern for creating and maintaining bird habitat, but I think their energy should be put into the winter bird habitats in Central and South America where our birds migrate, as those areas are quickly disappearing.

Cutting these mature trees today is a grave mistake. It will take a hundred years or more to rejuvenate the forests for future generations.

Jay G. Wopperer is a member of the Audubon Society and has led bird hikes in the Allegany forest.