

A message from the Friendly Forest Flatteners

Berkshire Eagle Columnists

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By Seth Brown

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The Notch Reservoir in North Adams. "Frankly, there are way more trees here than you need," writes humor columnist Seth Brown.

GILLIAN JONES-HECK — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

Hello, North Adams!

We at the Friendly Forest Flatteners have a great plan for flattening some of your forest around the Notch Reservoir and Bellows Pipe Trail. Sure, this hiking trail was named one of the best fall hiking trails in the country, but we think it would be even better if we could remove all those pesky trees that might get in the way of the view or house annoying animals.

You might have heard some negative things about the Lumber Loggers League, but we want you to know that we have completely changed our name, and we think you'll agree it now sounds much more appealing. Plus, we're working with Mass Motorway to might climate change — specifically, the climate of degrading long-standing public goods forshort-term profits. We'd hate for that to change! And that's why we'd really like to move forward with this plan to flatten your forest.

Frankly, there are way more trees here than you need. Some might say too many trees. And a lot of them are dead or dying or just dying to be logged and make us some money rather than sitting around being part of the local wildlife habitat. And although we generously offered to put together this forest flattening plan at our own expense, I'm disappointed that there still seems to be some opposition.

This is all very sudden, given that our plan has been on display for two years in the bottom of filing cabinet 42, and we hadn't heard any complaints about our plan at all until some locals actually read the thing. Now, suddenly you folks object to very normal business operations like spraying herbicides right next to your reservoir and don't appreciate how not doing that makes it more expensive for us.

Well, OK. We've heard your comments, and even though it cuts slightly into our profits, we're willing to not spray tons of herbicide if that's what it takes to let us flatten your forest. I understand that some of you still have concerns, so please enjoy our two-hour presentation, "A Flatter Forest Is A Friendlier Forest," and feel free to fill out this suggestion card with any questions.

The key fact to keep in mind is that wood is good. You love things made out of wood, so why should you get to enjoy a forest and still expect to have things built from wood? This forest should be wood for you! (Well, not technically you; we wouldn't sell it locally when we can get more money selling it elsewhere. That would be as crazy as hiring local companies to do the cutting sustainably instead of bringing in bigger machines from elsewhere to do it faster. But you get the idea.)

The point is, this is more than 1,000 acres of forest that has just been sitting around since the 19th century when the city bought it to be a protective watershed for the reservoir. But how better to protect the reservoir than by removing all those trees that might block its view of an incoming attack? Sure, many of those trees we'll cut down might be 80 years old and well on their way to becoming majestic centuries-old trees, but after we cut them down and sell them, we'll replace them with new baby trees, which are even better because everyone loves babies. Who's a cute little sapling? You are!

And look, do people living near other forests we've logged occasionally have muddy water rush down their street and flood their basement? Sure, a little bit of erosion might muddy your reservoir, but we'll beef up the culverts so all the erosion we cause shouldn't add too much runoff to your drinking water. And the small amount of money we'll pay you for all the trees we're cutting will probably cover most of your new forest management costs. And don't forget that we provided this plan to you for free, and it's a very valuable plan. (Believe me, if you knew what we stood to make on this, you'd realize just how valuable.)

So now that the North Adams Department of Public Works is inviting public comment to Commissioner Tim Lescarbeau at TLescarbeau@northadams.ma.gov until the end of the month, we hope you'll recognize that reservoirs and trees and hiking trails are all overrated. There's certainly no need to attend any meetings of people who might argue otherwise, because everyone should support this plan from the Friendly Forest Flatteners.

Remember, "A Flatter Forest Is A Friendlier Forest."

Seth Brown is the winner of the National Press Club's 2024 Angele Gingras Humor Award, the author of "From God To Verse", and encourages further research on forest-flattening at MAforests.org.