

Summary judgment finds Shawnee logging project illegal

BY BRANDYN WILCOXEN | FOR THE SUN
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A federal judge granted a motion for summary judgment to stop a commercial logging project on the Shawnee National Forest on Monday.

Judge Nancy Rosenstengel granted the motion in favor of Friends of Bell Smith Springs and the Regional Association of Concerned Environmentalists, pre-

venting the remainder of a 70-acre area near Bell Smith Springs from being logged.

The U.S. Forest Service had cut down around 40 acres worth of oak and hickory trees before it halted operations pending the lawsuit.

Rosenstengel agreed with the plaintiffs in their argument that the Forest Service violated the Endangered Species Act by not consulting the

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding endangered animals in the area, specifically Indiana bats.

“The Endangered Species Act requires agencies to complete their consultation obligations before taking final agency action,” Rosenstengel wrote in her opinion. “Because the Forest Service did not do so, it violated the ESA.”

Sam Stearns, public

education coordinator with the Friends of Bell Smith Springs and a nearby resident, said the decision sets an important precedent for Shawnee National Forest land under modern law. Previously, the plaintiffs relied on precedent from a 1996 ruling in their favor.

“Since our initial victory 30 years ago on stopping logging on the entire Shawnee, there had been some changes

in environmental laws and Forest Service policies, but the important ones remain intact,” Stearns said. “The most recent victory will allow us to use that precedent to invoke current environmental law to prevent what’s going on.”

Stearns believes the ruling also vindicates him and others taking a stand against the project that strongly resembles what had been struck

down three decades prior, still seeing a need for accountability in government activities.

“I had spent the last 30 years hoping I was wrong, that way I could just quit environmental activism and just enjoy life in the forest, which is what I’d like to do,” Stearns said. “This ruling by the court has confirmed that the Forest Service cannot be trusted to tell the truth.”

Hunter appointed new Massac County State’s Attorney

Commissioners discuss Energy Transition Community Grant

BY TERRA TEMPLE | FOR THE SUN
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METROPOLIS — As of Wednesday, Sept. 2, Massac County has a new state’s attorney following the 2 p.m. swearing-in of Josh Stratemeyer as associate judge in the First Judicial Circuit.

The Massac County Commission adopted a resolution declaring a vacancy in the office and appointed Mark Hunter to fulfill the unexpired term of Stratemeyer during its meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 1.



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First Judicial Circuit Court Judge Cord Wittig conducts the swearing-in ceremony of Massac County’s 38th state’s attorney. Mark Hunter took the oath at noon Wednesday, Sept. 2. Hunter replaces Josh Stratemeyer, who was sworn in later in the day to become an associate judge in the First Judicial Circuit. Hunter was appointed on Tuesday, Sept. 1, by the Massac County Commission to fill Stratemeyer’s unexpired term, which ends in 2028. Hunter has served as Massac County assistant state’s attorney since February 2021. He previously served as the county’s state’s attorney from 1986-92.

pleted or otherwise funded before the timeline expires.

“Originally, when this money became available, they said it was going to be 20 years. However, it is now not a full 20 years for every closure; it’s so many years per what year you went out of commission,” George said. “It’s a 20-year program overall for energy transmission communities with the closures of the different plants. Some plants will fall off, others will come up if there’s been more closures since the time in which we had our closure. Massac County’s last likely year of eligibility is 2028 as things sit right now, unless there are changes by the state. We can still apply and potentially expect roughly the same amounts we’ve been getting in FY2026, FY2027 and FY2028.”

Commissioners agreed their priority is the completion of the CTE center, which will be located on land donated to the Massac Unit 1 School District. The mission of the Career and Technical Education center is to provide students and community members with work-based skills with which they can get a good job in the area.

The commissioners and the Unit 1 school board plan to work with Shawnee Community College to coordinate the center’s programs.

George said that DCEO is requesting the timeline for the Round 3 funds, especially those concerning the CTE center. She voiced concerns that Round 3 funding for other projects may be held back until center funds are spent, noting that “when you’re developing a build-

ing of that magnitude, it’s going to take time to get all [the required planning] done.”

She emphasized the money the county has received either needs to be spent or moved to a project where it will be spent. She said she will inform the commission when the 2026 application period opens and they can move forward from there.

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One spot still remains open on three boards that serve Massac County. Residents who are interested in serving on the Massac County 911 Board, the Southern Seven Health Department Board or the Southern Illinois Economic Development Authority can contact the commissioners — chairman Jayson Farmer at 270-853-4520; Jeff Brugger at 270-331-0810; or Jimmy Burnham at 618-638-8482.

In other business:

- The commission appointed Brook Jacobs to fill vacancy of Amanda Hannan on Massac Memorial Hospital board.
- Farmer signed a county trustee resolution quitclaim deed for parcel number 08-02-201-009.
- Following up on her Aug. 18 discussion with commissioners concerning changes to the tax sale process due to changes in state law, treasurer Sarah Bremer asked the commission for a decision of whether or not to hold a tax sale this year as the offices involved have a few weeks to get things together. To give Bremer a direction, commissioners voiced they were in favor of not having a tax sale if that’s best for the taxpayers. The commission will make its formal vote at its next meeting.

Third cruise-in benefiting Project Hope is Sept. 12

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METROPOLIS — If there’s one thing Sandra Greenwald has learned to expect since she began holding the Super Fast and Furriest Car Cruise-In, it’s not to expect.

When the inaugural fundraiser for Project Hope Humane Society was held in 2024, she truly didn’t know what to expect. When the second event was held last year, she didn’t expect to double the number of entries, going from 30 cars to 60.

“I think the community support has been more than I could have expected,” Greenwald said. “I would encourage everyone to come and support the event, and let’s make it better than last year.”

That opportunity will be next week when the third annual Super Fast and Furriest Car Cruise-In takes place from 4-8 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 12, on Market Street from the Superman statue to Eighth Street.

The benefit for Project Hope Humane Society, a no-kill animal shelter in Metropolis, is open to all makes and models of vehicles. There is no admission fee, but donations will be accepted.

For Greenwald, the event is a way to show her thankfulness for her two fur babies, her appreciation to Project Hope and a way to give back after her husband’s sickness during COVID. Her two dogs helped her cope during his recovery.

As she and her husband are car enthusiasts, especially of Ford Mustangs, holding a cruise-in for Project Hope just made sense. They attend car shows throughout the year and thought that, with Metropolis being the hometown of Superman, it would add a different angle to the event.

Opened in 1997, Project Hope Humane Society is one of the area’s only no-kill animal shelters, housing an average of 30 dogs and 45 cats/kittens. Based in Metropolis, the organization also works with Shawnee Correctional Center to provide SWATT — Shawnee Wellness Assistance Therapy Training — which trains larger shelter dogs and pairs them with qualified veterans at no charge.

Greenwald noted that while there are no set-up, participation or admis-

sion fees for the cruise-in, donations are being accepted to assist Project Hope. Those donations can range from money to pet supplies to cleaning supplies.

“My goal is to raise money and everyone to have a great time,” Greenwald said. “Anybody who wants to make a donation can. Thanks all the sponsors because with out them I could not do this.”

Vehicle owners showing in the cruise-in are asked to enter Market Street from Fifth Street at Superman Square. They can get their picture taken with their cars at the statue before lining up along Market Street.

For the cruise-in, six trophies will be awarded. Dash plaques, goody bags and door prizes will be given to the first 50 entries.

The evening will also include silent auctions, prizes, music, food and photographs. Greenwald said several vendors will be set up around Superman Square.

For more information, to be an event sponsor or to be a craft or food vendor, text Greenwald at 618-751-2017 or sign up that night, as vendor forms will be available. Volunteers are also needed for the event to assist with registration and more.

Pets are welcome, but should be on a leash and be current on their vaccinations.

During the event, Project Hope will hold a raffle drawing at 6 p.m. The shelter is raffling off four donations — a wreath, a handmade afghan, a tie-dyed tote and a bead craft basket. Tickets are \$1 each or six for \$5. Tickets can be purchased at Project Hope, 1698 W. 10th St., Metropolis, during business hours, 1-5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; through PayPal at info@projecthopehumanesociety.org by including your name and phone number; or text Susan Giles Howell at 618-638-3486.

For more information on the raffle, visit Project Hope’s Facebook page. Proceeds will benefit the shelter.

For the Saturday, Sept. 12, event, Market Street will be closed from the Superman Square entrance down to Eighth Street near the Lois Lane statue. Additionally, the entrances to Market Street from each side street — Sixth, Seventh and Eighth streets — will also be closed.

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