

Dear Sirs:

I am writing you because of my concern, and the concern of others, about the dissecting of the Jonas Mountain Preserve by the proposed PP&L power line. Either of the proposed power line routes will proceed through the reserve and divide the forest tract into smaller parcels. (See www.monroeoowerproiect.com)

The 288 acre Jonas Mountain Preserve was accomplished by the efforts of private contributors, and township, county and state funding. The reserve was to protect natural habitat in perpetuity. It was to protect the headwaters, springs, forested habitat and the scenic heritage of the Poconos. The value of large blocks of forested habitat, such as Jonas Preserve becomes more important each year with the continued development in this area fragmenting the forest Interior into ever smaller parcels or reducing parcel size by encroaching along the edge.

The concern about preserving unfragmented ecosystems is based on an extensive body of sound research. A quick look at the research literature shows the effect upon streams, fish, amphibians, insects, reptiles, plants, mammals, and birds of fragmentation of habitat. As a habitat type is fragmented by development, roads, pipelines, and other encroachments it becomes unable to support the biodiversity necessary to continue a stable ecology. The result of smaller tracts is species loss and species change, disruption of the scenic heritage of the area, and even changes that can impact human health. An example is the changes reported by Allen, Keesing, and Ostfeld in February 2003 Conservation Biology: *“Forest destruction and fragmentation In the United States recently have been shown to reduce mammalian species diversity and to elevate population densities of white-footed mice (Peromyscus leucopus). One potential consequence of reduced species diversity and high mouse density in small fragments is an increase in human exposure to Lyme disease.”*

The penetration of forest interior patches by right-of-ways maintained in low height cover such as grass, and brush allow the entrance of many forest interior undesirables such as cowbirds, feral cats, coyotes, ATVs, and invasive plants. In short, the very nature of the forest preserve changes with cascading consequences for the entire ecology, and even spilling over into neighboring ecologies and human setting.

Thus the value of a large undivided forest tract is much greater than first imagined. Extensive literature exists showing that the biological value of two tracts half the size of a larger tract does not come close to equaling the value of the larger tract. In essence, the biological cost of fragmentation is far in excess of the apparent disturbance.

I am asking you as a public official to speak up for the citizens of this area and request PP&L and the PUC to look for alternate routes or methods that do not fragment this valuable forest Preserve.

Respectfully,