

Letters to the Editor

Loss of woods to development is a misuse of resources

To the Editor:

Why should we care about the woods? Beyond their aesthetics, oxygen production, water retention, carbon storage, and slope stabilization, what does the preservation of woods provide for us? I love to walk in the woods with my children while they pick up sticks, pretend to be aliens, and throw acorn parts in the stream to see what floats. But what else are the woods worth?

Consider the most recent proposed development in one of the last of our older wooded areas, Dobbs Ferry's eastern slope adjacent to the Saw Mill River Basin, just north of Hastings' Hillside Woods and Park.

Numerous scientific studies have shown that preserving the woods is the easiest way to mitigate climate change. Unfortunately, there is some drive in humans that wants to transform and control nature. But there is no technol-

ogy or sustainable initiative that competes with the efficiency of a forest. Forests support biodiversity, manage water runoff, and store carbon, keeping it out of the atmosphere. (If you're wondering, the reason that atmospheric carbon is "bad," is that it traps heat. The best way to stop the warming and erratic weather patterns we are experiencing is to store carbon. Older trees do this naturally and efficiently.)

This issue is obviously complicated. Do we need a massive development, on top of an aquifer, in the last of the old woods in southern Westchester County? Does the community want it? How about our new state climate mandates? Removing the carbon storage of the trees, and adding fossil fuel consumption in the form of cars and HVAC? The impacts are enormous. Each tree stores carbon and water, cools our area, makes the air easier to breathe, and supports

hundreds of native species of insect and birds. Adding traffic, besides inconvenience on our already distracted and clogged streets, increases the carbon emissions, and will increase the number of hazardous air days we experience in summer. The destruction of forest, flooding of the Saw Mill Parkway and nearby waterways, and the increase of traffic are connected: They are the results of ill-conceived, rampant development.

Demolishing a forest to install an enormous manufactured community in an area completely dependent on cars, while we wrestle daily with the consequences of climate change, is a mismanagement of resources. Please consider protecting our woods. We should care about the woods, because our lives, and the lives of our children, depend on it.

*Sue Galloway
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