

Honorable Senator Tammy Duckworth
524 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Duckworth,

I urge you to support changing the designation of the 289,000-acre Shawnee National Forest, administered by the Department of Agriculture (USDA), to **Shawnee National Park and Climate Preserve**, under the auspices of the Department of the Interior, Park Service.

Mature deciduous forests, like those found in the Shawnee, store massive amounts of carbon, helping mitigate climate change. Because the Shawnee contains the largest single ownership of these carbon-trapping forests in Illinois, as well as diverse historic and scenic landscapes, clearly our best use of the Shawnee is keeping its unique natural and historic features intact.

The Midwest has few national parks. Tourism-based businesses and cottage industries are growing across Southern Illinois, with potential to provide positive economic growth to the region. A new national park and climate preserve would attract more regional tourism and bring long-term sustainable jobs and businesses to Southern Illinois.

The USDA Forest Service currently plans to log more than 9,000 acres of the Shawnee's forest, employing clear-cut style shelterwood logging practices, thereby releasing tons of climate-changing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. As a national forest, much of the Shawnee's land is also available for oil and gas development and mining.

This new designation will benefit our changing climate, wildlife, recreation users, and local citizens, while stimulating much-needed economic development in Southern Illinois. Climate preserves are a vital tool in combating the climate emergency. Protecting the Shawnee merely involves transferring management responsibility of already federally owned land from the USDA to the Department of Interior, Park Service.

In 1872, Yellowstone became the world's first national park, initiating the concept of keeping natural lands in trust for the people. On the 150th anniversary of the first national park help designate this new one and put an end to resource extraction in the Shawnee. Please support federal legislation to establish the new **Shawnee National Park and *the nation's first Climate Preserve***.

Sincerely,