

Defending Our Land: Bernheim Forest Threatened by Pipeline and Interstate Bypass



Bernheim has a long history of protecting and restoring land. Now in our 90th anniversary year we are faced with defending our land from a pipeline and a proposed interstate bypass that would cut through forested knobs, streams, springs, and rock outcrops. These are some tough challenges, but we want to assure Bernheim members and supporters we are prepared to fight to protect our conservation lands.

Not long after we purchased the 494-acre Cedar Grove Wildlife Corridor in October 2018, Bernheim was contacted by Louisville Gas and Electric (LG&E) requesting an easement for the proposed Bullitt County Natural Gas Pipeline. These tracts are subject to a conservation easement and deed restrictions prohibiting 1) destruction of forests, streams and springs, 2) the transfer of property by Bernheim for non-conservation purposes and 3) the granting of easements for non-conservation purposes including natural gas pipelines.

We also learned recently of a study for the proposed Interstate 65-71 Regional Connector bypassing Louisville is considering several routes that would cut directly across Bernheim. These routes may affect Highway 245 in Clermont or connect at the new I-65 interchange in Bullitt County and cross the Cedar Grove Wildlife Corridor. Again, these tracts are subject to conservation easements and deed restrictions prohibiting destruction of natural features and granting of easement for non-conservation purposes such as highways. The project would begin in Bullitt County and cut across significant forests, streams, farmlands, and communities throughout the Salt River watershed, when alternatives exist that could meet the project goals by utilizing existing roadways with less new disturbance.

Bernheim management and Board of Trustees are opposing these projects and have let LG&E and highway planners know we cannot and will not grant the pipeline or highway easements. Bernheim will vigorously fight any action that would include taking of our conservation land through eminent domain.

The route of the proposed projects would cut directly through an area that is home to federally endangered Indiana bats,

northern long-eared bats, Kentucky glade cress, bluff vertigo snail, and the recently discovered hidden spring snail. Newly discovered in Kentucky, the hidden spring snail is dependent on pristine springs and is known to inhabit fewer than five other locations in the world. These projects will impact cave systems, springs, streams, mature forests, knobs, and rock outcroppings on which these species depend.

Nearby communities receive incredible benefits from Bernheim's protected land that includes eco-tourism, intact forests that function for wildlife habitat and provide ecosystem services of clean air, water, and scenic beauty. Bernheim's value to the local community and wildlife conservation increases every year as more land in Bullitt County is developed. Long term planning needs to consider Bernheim contributes immensely to quality of life and what makes central Kentucky a great place to live, now and for future generations. Our presence is a major part of the equation for creating healthy and attractive places for families.

You can help Bernheim in fighting the LG&E Pipeline and Interstate 65-71 Regional Connector project. Go to bernheim.org/forestunderthreat for information on how you can voice your concern to decision makers on both projects. Let them know you stand with large forests, abundant wildlife, clean streams, clean air, wild places, kids in nature, vibrant rural communities, and Bernheim Forest. Together we can make a difference and keep Bernheim Forest intact for future generations!

