



Earth First! Uprising in Shawnee National Forest

by *Orin Langelle and John B. Wallace*

In 1990, Earth First! occupied the Fairview Timber Sale area in the Shawnee National Forest in southern Illinois for 79 days – at that time the longest occupation in EF! history. The area slated to be cut was rich in biodiversity, a haven for songbirds, and loved by the many locals who went there to watch the birds, camp, or enjoy nature.

EF!ers in the Shawnee publicly stood in solidarity with the Mohawks during the Oka Crisis; the 78-day standoff between Mohawk protesters, police, and the army in so-called Canada. The Shawnee defenders also stood in solidarity with Redwood Summer, a major national mobilization to save the last of the ancient redwoods. Earlier that year, EF! Redwood Summer organizer Judi Bari was almost killed when a pipe bomb exploded under the seat of the car she was driving.

There was a lot of support during the occupation. Local organic growers donated more food than the camp could use and even the postmaster for the area gave the encampment a postal mailbox so mail could be delivered to the forest defenders.

By the time the occupiers were removed, the protest in the Shawnee was evening news in Illinois and many parts of Kentucky, Indiana and Missouri. The major daily newspaper in Springfield, IL, the state's capital, called the Earth First! occupation "a popular uprising."

On day 79, the encampment was raided and many were arrested as the bulldozers moved in. Following the next day of mass protest, civil disobedience, and multiple arrests, the 7th Circuit appellate court in Chicago issued a stay on day two of the logging operations.

Even though the Illinois U.S. Congressional Delegation formally submitted a request that the agency halt logging, the stay was eventually lifted. Even with daily protests and more than thirty arrests, the Forest Service eventually logged Fairview in the fall of 1991. The project cost federal taxpayers more than ten times the amount that the logging company paid to cut the forest.

While it took several years, Fairview was the beginning of the end to the Shawnee timber program for two decades. Litigation led to a court issuing a permanent injunction on the Forest Service's 1992 management plan for the Shawnee. The injunction prevented logging, oil and gas leasing, and off highway vehicle usage for 17 years. After petitioning the court, the Forest Service won a motion to lift the injunction in 2013.

Once the injunction was removed, the Forest Service quickly began plodding down the same path and started preparing logging projects. This time they combined the logging operations with much larger - "restoration" - projects, that make up thousands of acres and natural maintenance areas. This was clearly done to make it more difficult to track the actual prices logging companies were paying for the trees. The project proposals also include prescriptions for massive burning (1,000 to 3,000 acres) and extensive herbicide use.

Shawnee Forest Defense! is a new group of local residents who are rooted in the spirit of past Shawnee resistance and are standing firm for our future. This group of people started organizing following a Heartwood training workshop in 2017. Folks have been letter writing, attending forums, and speaking out. A second training workshop in October of last year, coupled with the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report, has inspired more people to step up and get involved.

This fall, we will be hosting The Resurgence: 2019 North American Forest and Climate Movement Convergence in the Shawnee from October 11th to October 14th. Come join us!

Orin Langelle is a concerned/activist photographer, who for over four decades has been documenting peoples' resistance to war, corporate globalization, ecological destruction and human rights abuses. John B. Wallace is part of Shawnee Forest Defense! (Both are Big River EF!ers in exile).

The Resurgence:

2019 North American Forest and Climate Movement Convergence Announcement

Shawnee National Forest, Southern Illinois, US; Shawnee, Kaskaskia, and Chickasaw Territory
October 11 through October 14; culminating on Indigenous Peoples' Day

This is not another conference. This is a call to action to radically transform the economic and political systems that drive climate change, forest destruction and the commodification of life.

This event will take place just above the confluence of the great Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, in the forested Shawnee Hills, next to the steep topography of the Illinois Ozarks and the southern swamps of the coastal plain. It is the traditional lands of the Indigenous Shawnee, Kaskaskia, and Chickasaw Peoples. We strive to remember the legacy of violence on this land, and all who lost their lives during the Trail of Tears and are buried in and around this region.

This convergence will provide space to:

- Build capacity to analyze, expose, and confront the root causes of climate change and forest destruction
- Challenge false solutions and amplify real, community-based alternatives
- Create momentum to broaden strategies and tactics to build effective resistance
- Develop concrete plans and actions to carry forward after the event

Now is the time! Join us to build a radical movement that unifies efforts to protect forests and land with projects dedicated to social, environmental, and climate justice, in order to create a resurgence powerful enough to achieve the systemic change we need to survive.

Forests, communities, and the Earth are under attack. Governments, corporations, and elites in North America are collaborating to consolidate power, profit, and control on a global scale. Their actions are driving climate change and the destruction of forests, causing the mass extinction of species, devastating communities, and threatening peoples and the entire biosphere. It has never been more critical to build a broad, united movement that can resist the wholesale war against the Earth.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently stated that life on Earth is in extreme danger if we do not achieve "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society" by 2030. To avoid the worst impacts from climate change, we must immediately cease burning fossil fuels and drastically reduce over-consumption. We must protect and restore the Earth's forest ecosystems. We

must defend the territorial rights of Indigenous and forest-dependent communities, whose lands include most of the world's remaining intact forests.

This convergence will be an opportunity to come together as many people working on the interconnected issues of forest destruction, climate change, Indigenous sovereignty, racial and gender oppression, corporate domination, fossil fuel extraction, and social and environmental injustice.

We will bring together our diverse experiences and backgrounds to build a powerful movement that can radically transform the economic and political systems driving planetary and human destruction.

Forests are intricately intertwined webs of life. The more intact and diverse forests are, the better they can withstand stresses like climate change. Forests will be the model for our organizing. The more diverse and interconnected our movements are, and the more focused we are on building strong roots, the stronger and more resilient we will be; able to withstand the stresses of the massive effort we undertake.

This is not another conference—This is a convergence.
This is the Resurgence! ✂

SHAWNEE NATIONAL FOREST
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS
TRADITIONAL LANDS OF THE
SHAWNEE, KASKASKIA AND
CHICKASAW PEOPLE

OCTOBER 11TH-14TH
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For more information contact forestclimate2019@gmail.com
forestclimateconvergence.org