



# Hoosier National Forest Highlights



Contact: Teena Ligman  
812-275-5987

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## ENFORCING LAWS ON THE HOOSIER NATIONAL FOREST



BY: Lafayette Chamberlain, Law Enforcement Officer

Lafayette Chamberlain is one of two full-time law enforcement officers on the Hoosier National Forest. On any given day he can drive the Hoosier and see activities ranging from taking a deer out of season, dumping trash, riding an ATV where they are not allowed, or growing or producing drugs on the Forest. All are in a typical day's work for a National Forest Law Enforcement Officer.

Many Hoosier employees have received training in law enforcement and are authorized to take action. In addition, the Forest has agreements with several county sheriff departments to assist with patrols of Forest areas. Indiana Conservation Officers also enforce the same laws.

With all these people looking after our national forest, you would expect it to be a safe and protected place. Yet, according to Chamberlain, many people continue to believe they can do whatever they wish on public land and have little realization of the damage their actions may have on natural resources.

These damaging actions run a wide gamut. A person buries their hatchet in a nearby tree just for a place to put it, a camper puts a nail in a tree to hang a lantern, or someone carves their name into a tree – all of these actions can injure or kill the tree. In any of these examples, a person can end up paying a fine. They may also have to pay for damage to the tree.

All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are not allowed on the Hoosier, yet people continue to ride on the Forest. ATVs can cause tremendous damage to hillsides and streams, resulting in erosion and soil loss.

“People think when I come up to them they can just say they're sorry. But that's not how it works,” Lafayette Chamberlain explains. Chamberlain said ATV use is

a continuing problem. People ride the County roads, then get off into the Forest, which is not allowed. Anyone violating the off-road regulations is subject to fines up to \$5,000, may have to pay for the damage done, and can lose their ATV.

He said the problem with growing marijuana or producing meth on the Forest is also increasing. This creates a danger for Forest visitors and employees. Chamberlain advises people to stay away from any suspicious activity or materials they might encounter on the Forest and immediately report it to authorities. These can be deadly situations and the best advice is to back away and report what you have seen.

Other issues he frequently encounters are underage drinking and dumping trash. Every county has a station to collect trash so there is no reason for people to dump their trash along Forest roads, yet it continues to happen. This creates an ugly backdrop for visitors to the Forest, added expense for someone to clean it up; and hazards to our water supply and environment simply by not properly disposing of trash.

Chamberlain is perplexed at how many people he encounters have little concern for natural resource protection. He notes, "These lands were set aside for generations as a place to go and enjoy. We need to change our attitude on how we view and protect our great outdoors."

For more information on law enforcement on the Forest contact Lafayette Chamberlain at 812-275-5987 or [lchamberlain@fs.fed.us](mailto:lchamberlain@fs.fed.us).

### Pictures with Captions



Picture of tree damaged by carving.



Lafayette Chamberlain in a marijuana patch found on the Hoosier National Forest.



Erosion, soil compaction, and rutting caused by all-terrain vehicles on the Forest.