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## Forest Service halts logging project in Monongahela Forest

Dec 23, 2019

ELKINS (AP) — The U.S. Forest Service has halted a logging project in West Virginia's Monongahela National Forest to protect an endangered fish.

The Center for Biological Diversity and Friends of Blackwater submitted objections in July to the project to protect the endangered candy darter.

The Center for Biological Diversity said in a news release the project would likely have caused significant erosion and sent sediment into rivers and streams, threatening the rare fish.

The candy darter was listed as endangered in November 2018.

In 2010 the Center for Biological Diversity and West Virginia Highlands Conservancy petitioned to protect the candy darter. In 2018 the Fish and Wildlife Service listed the species as endangered following that petition and a 2015 lawsuit. The agency also proposed protecting 370 stream miles as critical habitat.

The Center for Biological Diversity and Friends of Blackwater submitted formal objections in July.

The groups said the Big Rock Timber Project would threaten the endangered candy darter and the area's waters.

*"We appreciate the Forest Service's decision to withdraw this misguided project," said Jason Totoiu, a senior attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. "Building new logging roads and clearcutting trees on extremely steep slopes would have been disastrous for wildlife, including the beautiful candy darter."*

*"Friends of Blackwater and all of our supporters are very pleased that the Monongahela National Forest supervisor has withdrawn the Big Rock Timber Project proposal," said Judy Rodd, director of Friends of Blackwater. "Hopefully this is a step toward fully protecting the candy darter, a tiny jewel of a fish found in the timbering proposal area, near the world-famous Cranberry Glades."*