



Indiana Conservation Alliance | Investing in Conservation

INDIANA OUTDOOR STEWARDSHIP ACT

The Indiana Outdoor Stewardship Act (House Bill 1376) would increase state investment in Indiana's natural resources — our land, our waters, and our native wildlife.



How would the Outdoor Stewardship Act (OSA) accomplish this?

The OSA would dedicate the share of existing sales tax revenue that is generated by the sale of outdoor equipment and sporting goods — i.e., camping equipment, hunting and fishing equipment, hiking equipment, bicycling equipment — to state land, water and wildlife conservation programs.

These state programs are proposed to receive OSA funds:

- President Harrison Conservation Trust,
- State Wildlife Action Plan and Wildlife Diversity Program,
- Maintenance and repair of buildings and facilities on DNR properties.

Why these programs?

All of these programs have been underfunded and unable to fulfill their mission or meet their needs. The President Harrison Conservation Trust has not received a meaningful state appropriation since 2009, and revenue from sale of the environmental license plate has declined due to increased specialty plate competition. Coupled with the expiration of the companion land acquisition program, the Bicentennial Nature Trust, Indiana's ability to acquire new outdoor lands is severely limited.

The State Wildlife Action Plan and the Wildlife Diversity Program support DNR efforts to protect and restore wildlife habitats and populations. Neither program receives state funds dedicated for their specific purpose, apart from the funds that state taxpayers contribute on their tax return for non-game and endangered wildlife. Dedicated state funding will allow Indiana to match federal wildlife funds, resulting in a significant funding boost for wildlife conservation in Indiana.

The Indiana DNR owns and manages hundreds of outdoor properties — state parks, state recreation areas, state forests, nature preserves and state fish and wildlife areas. The buildings, picnic shelters, restrooms, inns and trails at these sites must be constantly maintained for the enjoyment of the millions of visitors who use them every year. Yet state funding has not kept pace with the need, resulting in a backlog of deferred maintenance projects estimated at nearly \$100 million. If Indiana does not address this need, the backlog will only grow and may result in many of DNR's historic buildings and facilities being lost.

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Is this a new tax?

No. The OSA dedicates existing sales tax revenues for conserving our outdoors.

The demand for and purchase of outdoor gear is mainly driven by the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities in Indiana – state parks and state forests to hike in, rivers and lakes to fish and boat on, fish and wildlife areas to watch birds or hunt deer and turkey, and trails for biking and walking. Given this, the use of sales tax revenue generated by the sale of outdoor equipment for land, water and wildlife conservation is a logical and sensible tax policy.

How much revenue would the OSA receive?

Over the past five years, sporting goods-related sales tax revenue collected by Indiana has averaged \$62 million a year.

Have other states adopted this approach?

Yes. Three states currently use this method of funding conservation programs.

State	Dedicated sales tax revenue
Texas	\$277 million (over 2 years)
Virginia	Up to \$13 million a year
Georgia	\$20 million a year (estimated)

In November 2018, over four-fifths of Georgia voters approved the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act and made it part of the state’s constitution, guaranteeing this state investment in conservation for future generations.

What must happen for Indiana Outdoor Stewardship Act to be adopted?

The Indiana General Assembly must enact this proposal – HB 1376 – into law, which could occur as soon as the 2019 legislative session.



Where can I find more information, and learn how I can help?

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