



Investing in Conservation

The 2023–2025 State Budget

Indiana needs – and deserves – greater investment in our state’s outdoor heritage and our natural resources – our forests, streams, lakes, prairies, wetlands and wildlife habitats. This investment should include revenue sufficient to meet the need both for acquiring new lands for parks, wildlife areas, nature preserves, places to hunt, fish, hike and bike, and for ensuring that these indispensable resources are properly managed and maintained.



The Indiana Conservation Alliance and its partner organizations support Governor Holcomb’s proposed state budget, which includes:

- \$25 million over two years for land conservation
- Increase of \$7.2 million a year for fish and wildlife management, including the State Wildlife Action Plan focused on the 150 native Indiana fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need
- Increase of \$2.2 million a year for the Division of Forestry and its programs to assist private woodland owners
- \$3 million for a new visitors center at Prophetstown State Park
- \$50 million over two years for trail projects
- Salary increases for DNR staff, including conservation officers



INCA is also supporting increased funding for two programs that benefit water quality:

- DNR’s Lake and River Enhancement program which provides grants for stream and lake improvement projects. INCA supports HB 1304 which raises an additional \$3.2 million a year for LARE.
- Clean Water Indiana, which provides funding and assistance for projects to control soil erosion and improve soil health. INCA supports an additional \$8.6 million a year for CWI.

Why protect our natural areas and fish and wildlife habitats?

Beyond conserving our splendid natural heritage and protecting the plants and animals that make our planet livable, pollinate our food crops, and control insect pests, conservation of these resources also has a direct bearing on the state’s economic success.

- According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the economic impact of outdoor recreation in Indiana is nearly \$13 billion a year and employs 107,000 Hoosiers. (*U.S. Department of Commerce 2021*)

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- Outdoor spaces are a major element of quality of place, widely recognized as essential to recruiting and retaining top professional talent and the companies that rely on this talent. “Attracting new talent is essential, and the best way to bring in high quality people is to offer a high quality of place.” (*Fourth Economy Consulting, December 2017*)
- “Our research on smaller communities has found that community amenities such as recreation opportunities, cultural activities, and excellent services (e.g., good schools, transportation options) are likely bigger contributors to healthy local economies than traditional “business-friendly” measures. Smaller places with a higher quality of life experience both higher employment and population growth than similarly situated communities, including those that rank high by traditional economic competitiveness measures.” (*Weinstein, University of Akron; Hicks, Wornell, Ball State University, 2021*)

Indiana’s natural areas and wildlife habitats are at risk, and demand for outdoor recreation areas exceeds the supply.

- Our state parks average nearly 17 million visitors a year. (*Indiana DNR*)
- 39 Indiana counties and 4 of 16 regions in Indiana are deficient in outdoor recreation acreage. (*DNR - Indiana SCORP*)
- Forests and wetlands in our growing urban areas are being lost to development. Between 2001 and 2016, 85 Indiana counties lost forest acreage. Only 15% of the state’s original wetlands acreage remains. (*Indiana DNR*)



- Nearly all the \$25 million appropriated in 2021 for the Next Level Conservation Trust was committed in the first round of grant applications. \$30 million in project applications were submitted. (*Indiana DNR*)

Investing in conservation provides a strong return on investment.

- The President Harrison Conservation Trust has produced an excellent return on investment. The \$61 million in state funding provided since 1993 has leveraged \$74 million in private/partner contributions. The program’s 504 projects completed through 2016 protected 70,100 acres. (*Indiana DNR*).
- The Bicentennial Nature Trust produced similar excellent returns: the \$30 million initial investment leveraged nearly \$39 million in private/partner contributions. (*Indiana DNR*)
- DNR’s district foresters provide valued forestry advice to Indiana’s private woodland owners, who hold title to roughly 83% of Indiana’s forest lands and are the source of 90% of commercial timber harvested in Indiana. (*USDA Forest Service*)

It’s time to invest in conserving Indiana’s lands, waters and wildlife and protect more of the special outdoor places that we all treasure.

Take Action:

Contact your state senator and state representative and urge them to **support these vitally important conservation appropriations contained in the Governor’s budget**, along with increased funding for **Clean Water Indiana and the Lake and River Enhancement Fund**.

Find your legislators and their contact information here: iga.in.gov/legislative/find-legislators/

For more information go to indianaconservationalliance.org.

