



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 recommend the following appropriations be included in the proposed state budget bill, HB1001:

- **\$15 million** over two years for land conservation (President Harrison Conservation Trust)
- **\$10 million** a year increase for State Park operations
- **\$200,000** a year increase for Division of Nature Preserves operating expenses
- **\$4 million** a year increase for Division of Fish and Wildlife operating expenses
- **\$2.6 million** a year for the Lake and River Enhancement program, ensuring that new fee revenues are fully appropriated
- **\$3 million** over two years for State Park trails maintenance and repairs

INCA supports other construction and conservation appropriations in the House-passed budget bill, including:

- **\$27.7 million** for McCormick’s Creek State Park campground repairs
- **\$10 million** to match Lilly Endowment contribution of \$50 million
- **\$6 million** a year general fund appropriation for Clean Water Indiana
- **\$100 million** over two years for statewide deferred maintenance needs (which should benefit DNR needs)

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 and Hoosiers’ health:

- Time spent outdoors and the variety of physical activities that accompany outdoor visits improve human health in many ways: Improved cardiovascular health; Boosted immune system: Reduced inflammation, which is linked to a range of health problems including chronic pain, depression, and autoimmune diseases. In addition to the physical benefits, spending time in nature can also improve your mental health and well-being, through reduced stress and anxiety; improved mood and mental well-being; better sleep quality; increased creativity and focus. *(Lloyd Center for the Environment, 2023)*



Investing in Conservation

The 2025–2027 State Budget

- “If we had a medicine that delivered as many benefits as parks, we would all be taking it,” says Dr. Howard Frumkin, the former dean of the University of Washington School of Public Health and a past official of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Parks deliver cardiovascular benefits, fight loneliness, combat osteoporosis, counter stress and anxiety, and more. And they do those things without adverse side effects and at minimal cost.” (*Trust for Public Land, 2023*)
- According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the economic impact of outdoor recreation in Indiana is \$16 billion a year and employs 105,000 Hoosiers. (*U.S. Department of Commerce 2024*)
- 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 averaged over 19 million visitors a year in the last three years. (*Indiana DNR*)
- 39 Indiana counties and 4 of 16 regions in Indiana are deficient in outdoor recreation acreage. (*DNR - Indiana SCORP*).
- In 2023, the number of Americans participating in outdoor recreation grew 4.1% to a record 175.8 million participants. (*Outdoor Industry Association, 2024*)
- Applications for Next Level Trails grants exceeded available funding by \$227 million.
- 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*)

Investing in conservation provides a strong return on investment.

- The President Harrison Conservation Trust has completed 546 projects since 1993 and protected 63,853 acres. (*Indiana DNR*)
- The Next Level Conservation Trust, established in 2021 with \$25 million in federal funds, has committed nearly 80% of its funds and protected 3,346 acres so far. This program has leveraged over \$6.5 million in matching funds. (*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*)

Turkey Run State Park by 5500lbs, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rocky_Hollow_Trail_at_Turkey_Run_State_Park,_Indiana.jpg

Wood duck photo by Fabian Roudra Baroi, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wood_Duck,_Highpark_34.jpg

River otter photo (on opposite side) by Neal Herbert, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:River_Otter_(Lontra_canadensis).jpg

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.



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

For more information go to indianaconservationalliance.org.