

INNature

News from Indiana

Fall 2020 Update



Scarlet tanager, one of the many songbirds being helped by The Forest Bank.
See pages 8 and 9 for details. © Matt Williams

The Nature
Conservancy 

Protecting nature. Preserving life.

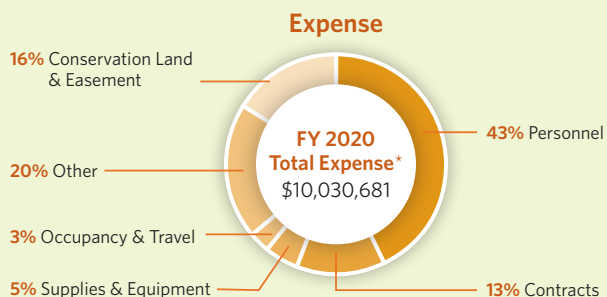


FINANCIAL RESULTS

Our Commitment to Accountability and Transparency.

Financial Information (July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020)

Our conservation accomplishments this year have been empowered by sustainable financial resources. Because of you, we met our fundraising goals for the year. We've leveraged these funds to maximize your donations and to help us achieve our mission of protecting lands and waters for people and nature.



*Total Revenue and Expense includes gifts of land and investment activities that are not part of operating cash.

Nature for Everyone

STATE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Since The Nature Conservancy started in 1951, the heart of our mission has focused on protecting the diversity of life on Earth. In recent years, our scope has widened to emphasize people, the impacts we make upon nature and the benefits we receive from nature. TNC is tackling the greatest challenges for people and nature, and both benefit greatly from the diversity of life we protect.

This summer, the value of diversity in people was put into question, leading to racial tensions across the country and around the world. Coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, our society is under great pressure. Nature, we believe, is one tool to help relieve this pressure.

At TNC, we've reflected on how we can improve our organization to better reflect our values and support nature for all. One thing stands out—we cannot stay silent. I can tell you with complete honesty and transparency that TNC—including staff and trustees—are working to build a society where everyone feels safe and welcome to enjoy nature.

The pandemic has changed how we work, but not what we are accomplishing. Offices switched to

living rooms and kitchen tables, with science, planning, fundraising and outreach moving ahead without risking the health of our staff and partners. Our field work continues, albeit with changes to increase safety precautions for staff. You will read about many of our recent accomplishments in this newsletter.

We completed a five-year strategic plan with a bold, new vision to protect freshwater, tackle climate change and improve soil health in Indiana with impacts rippling throughout the rest of the world. And yes, we plan to increase the pace of our land protection.

One of the blessings we discovered is how many people are connecting to nature like never before. Virtual events mean less travel, giving greater accessibility to more people farther away as well as other benefits like reducing costs. Spending time at home has led to gardening, backyard bird sightings and greater curiosity about trees, pollinator plants and nature trails nearby. We've been proud to help provide this solace to people and are working to increase our accessibility to nature, whether it's through our popular TNC TV series (see page 11) or improving parking areas at preserves.



Indiana Chapter state director Larry Clemens © Cristina Rutter

While we're living in rapidly changing times, our commitment to the diversity of life stays strong. Nature teaches many lessons, including how diversity builds resilience. What we learn and share in Indiana can help teach others around the world.

Yours in conservation,

Larry Clemens,
State Director

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Battling Invasive Species

On page 2, we told you that there are 27 active CISMAs working across 70 Indiana counties. What is a CISMA, and why is that important? CISMAs are *Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas*. They are formed to collectively combat the problem of invasive species spreading across the landscape.

CISMAs have been shown to very effectively target invasive species problems by engaging local interests and addressing invasive issues across various types of land ownership. By working together at the local level, CISMA partners are able to pool resources and knowledge to address mutual invasive species problems.

In Indiana, the first CISMA was formed in Brown County in 2006, the Brown County Native Woodlands Project. Now, through the Indiana Invasives Initiative (III), we are working to establish new CISMAs across Indiana, as well as provide resources and guidance for both new and existing CISMAs.

Another great way to tackle invasive species are through Weed Wrangles. First discussed in last year's newsletter, Weed Wrangles gather volunteer efforts to help control invasive plants that are negatively impacting our public parks, green spaces and natural areas. Through Weed Wrangles, community members learn to identify and control through hands-on removal of invasive trees, shrubs, vines and plants.

Because of the pandemic, fewer Weed Wrangles happened in 2020 than had been planned, but the III adapted and promoted and followed DIY Weed Wrangles for at home or work; some local park and rec departments jumped on the quieter time and aggressively removed large areas of infestations across the state, and there was even a CISMA that held a "Help us Weed Wrangle" at a preserve where they installed large barrels to hold garlic mustard that folks could pull while walking a trail at the preserve. This idea worked very well—a new strategy to help with invasive species eradication?



Thanks to volunteers, Big Walnut Nature Preserve is no longer a dumping ground for old TVs. Big Walnut Creek © Matt Williams/TNC; TV workday © Jesse Moore/TNC

Trash Clean-up at Big Walnut

Our stewardship workdays didn't happen this year due to COVID 19, but we are fortunate enough to have stalwart volunteers who dedicated their time and effort to maintaining our preserves. At Big Walnut Nature Preserve in Putnam County, for example, John and Austin Day and Jesse Fulwider cleaned up a trash dump (mostly abandoned TVs).

Several preserves throughout the state have benefitted from volunteer help. Volunteers have been helping with trail building, boundary posting, property clean up, invasive species control and mowing at preserves all over Indiana. Our thanks to everyone who has lent a hand.



3,000 plugs start their journey from Kankakee Sands in northwestern Indiana, traveled to Douglas Woods in northeastern Indiana for a June planting. © Stuart Orr/TNC; © Trevor Edmonson/TNC



Habitat Restoration at Douglas Woods

Three thousand plugs made a 200-mile trip from our Kankakee Sands nursery in Newton County to our Douglas Woods Nature Preserve, which straddles Dekalb and Steuben Counties. The plugs—mainly sedges, rushes and grasses—will be used in the wetland restorations at Douglas Woods. Seeds from areas close

to Douglas Woods were collected and then sent to Kankakee Sands to be grown in the nursery. Since 2010, we've planted more than 35,000 plants at Douglas Woods, which is helping to create habitat for species such as the rare Blanding's turtle and the blue-spotted salamander.

4R Nutrient Stewardship Comes to Indiana



In September, the Agribusiness Council of Indiana (ACI) announced the implementation of a statewide 4R certification program. Initiated in the Western Lake Erie Basin in 2014, the program has expanded internationally, adopted by states in the U.S. and Canadian provinces, and now all of Indiana. The program is a voluntary effort for ACI members that encourages agricultural retailers and independent crop consultants to adopt proven best practices through the 4Rs, which refers to using the Right Source of Nutrients at the Right Rate and Right Time in the Right Place. This approach provides a science-based framework for plant nutrition management and sustained crop production, while considering specific individual farms' needs. **Indiana will be the first "I" state to launch the 4R certification program!** Five retail location are currently participating in pilot audits with the full



The 4R Nutrient Stewardship program provides a framework for using the right nutrient source, applied at the right rate, at the right time, in the right place, to achieve improved sustainability. © Matt Williams

program launch scheduled for November. In partnership with ACI, Indiana Agriculture Nutrient Alliance, The Mosaic Company, and The Fertilizer Institute, The Nature Conservancy is proud to support this proactive, responsible commitment aimed at the long-term improvement of water quality.



Upper White River © Cassie Hauswald/TNC; Cassie Hauswald on the Wabash River © Melissa Molenda/TNC

River Conservation Grows in Indiana Soil

By Cassie Hauswald, freshwater ecologist

When you bite into a fresh Indiana-grown tomato or an ear of sweet corn, you can taste the sunshine and almost smell the healthy soil. For smallmouth bass and other fish that live in the Wabash River basin, their taste of Indiana may come in the form of a fat dragonfly larvae. While much of a Hoosier's diet doesn't come directly from a local river, our food choices certainly impact local waterways.

My work leads me to ask questions about my food and its sources: Do my garden-fresh tomatoes grow in fertile Indiana soil? Does my garden have enough calcium to prevent blossom-end-rot? Will my soil stay on my land or wash downstream in

the next thunderstorm? The questions I ask from a small-scale gardener magnify exponentially for farmers managing hundreds or thousands of acres.

Soil grows my food, and as a Hoosier, my agrarian roots make me proud to not only save our limited topsoil, but also to help build healthier soil that translates to healthier streams. The Ohio River aquifer near my home in Corydon provides my drinking water and southern Indiana's Blue River gives me solace as well as a testing ground for my education in conservation. For me and my family, Indiana's rivers—from the mighty Wabash to the picturesque Sugar Creek—

provide a focus for my work as well as a place of recreation that sustains a quality of life on which I have come to depend.

According to a recent Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences journal article, the Wabash River system holds ecological value, with 151 native fish species and a surprising amount of resilience and recovery opportunity. The recommendation of scientists like the article's lead author, Ball State fisheries biologist, Mark Pyron, calls for restoration of the river and its tributaries' natural hydrology to reduce sediment, improve its nutrient balance and restore flow patterns that affect temperature.

To protect the health of the Wabash River and other Indiana rivers, our work boils down to a few easy-to-understand (yet often hard-to-complete) tasks:

- Keeping fertilizer in farm fields,
- Improving soil by planting cover crops,
- Removing or modifying dams, and
- Protecting floodplains.

My dedicated colleagues at TNC accomplish these goals by using their unique skill sets across the state. A few current examples of our work include:

- ★ Leading a pilot effort in the Upper White River to test a reduction in crop insurance rates for farmers adopting cover crops. With a goal of reducing fertilizer loss from agricultural fields by 20%, TNC seeks leverage that can incentivize soil savings for farmers and nature.

FEATURED FUNDER: *The Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust*

- ★ Expanding floodplain conservation opportunities to agricultural landowners impacted by flooding in the Lower Wabash and White Rivers. By converting marginal row crop acres back to forested floodplain, we achieve multiple conservation benefits, such as reducing fertilizer, storing carbon and increasing habitat.

FEATURED FUNDERS: *The Lilly Endowment, Nestlé Purina PetCare, the Toyota Foundation and Walton Family Foundation*

- ★ Partnering with agribusiness and Certified Crop Advisors to support farmer adoption of soil health practices. These partners are the trusted advisors to farmers and can provide the technical expertise and tools to influence change on thousands of acres.



TNC's Mike Dunn, Brad Smith and Seth Harden (l-r), part of Indiana's freshwater team, kayaking the west fork of the White River © Cassie Hauswald/TNC

FEATURED FUNDER: *Walton Family Foundation and Corteva Agriscience*

- ★ Testing the propagation and restoration of submerged aquatic vegetation beds. If successful, this practice can not only trap sediment, but also provide fish cover and store carbon.

FEATURED FUNDER: *The Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust also is supporting this work.*

- ★ Quantitative sampling of mussels in the Blue River to learn about population changes over the past ten years. Mussels play an important role in rivers by

filtering water constantly as they breathe and feed. One adult mussel can filter approximately 20 gallons of water a day!

FEATURED FUNDER: *Individual private donors*

With Thanksgiving approaching, it's a good time to stop, think and be grateful for the good things in our lives. I'm grateful to be living in Indiana, and I'm grateful for our water and soils that provide for all of us. I'm grateful to be part of such a great organization that works so hard to protect our water and soil, and of course I'm grateful for all our members, without whom that work would not be possible.



Cassie's three dogs enjoy the peaceful Mosquito Creek in Harrison County. © Cassie Hauswald/TNC



Indiana forest © Chris Neggers/TNC; Dan Shaver, Forest Bank manager in Indiana.

This One Tree

By Dan Shaver, Forest Bank operations manager

Kneeling next to a small white oak tree seedling in a forest amazes me and makes me wonder. What is so important about this one tree?

It's not rare or endangered. It's not on a nature preserve or public land. It lives on a private church camp property. But something is important about this one tree—it has a chance to thrive.

We like to think that any tree seedling growing in the forest has a chance to thrive, but unfortunately, most tree seedlings will never make it to maturity. Insects, disease, drought, and competition for

sunlight, water and nutrients can all limit a seedlings ability to reach adulthood.

But this one has a chance.

That's because the Forest Bank program connects TNC with private landowners, such as the church camp, for forest protection and management. Our skilled experts remove invasive plants, reintroduce managed fire and take out select trees to allow more sunlight on others. In the next two years, TNC will cut, market and manage a sustainable timber

harvest on this property. This helps the overall forest, the landowner and this one tree.

As part of a forest system, this one tree is connected to a landscape that includes hundreds of native flowering plants, common and federally endangered wildlife, freshwater streams that feed a public drinking water supply and a place for people to live and enjoy. Plus, this one tree will remove carbon from the atmosphere for 150-200 years while at the same time providing habitat for more than 260 insects, migratory

Bank On It

Since 1999, TNC's Forest Bank program in Indiana has helped private landowners in select areas manage their forests while protecting a large landscape in a sustainable manner.

Landowners who enroll their land in the Forest Bank have four options:

1. Donate your land to TNC.
2. Place a conservation easement on your land that allows TNC to protect land and manage your forest sustainably.
3. Enter into a 30-year management agreement with the Forest Bank and receive a 3% annual payment based on timber market value.
4. Enter into a 10-year management agreement where TNC is paid by the landowner for forest management services.

For more information, contact Dan Shaver at dshaver@tnc.org or 812-374-9441, or visit nature.org/forestbank.



CYO Camp Rancho Framasa has had its land enrolled in TNC's Forest Bank program for over a decade. © Chris Neggers/TNC

songbirds like the scarlet tanager and other wildlife that will feed on the acorns, nest in branches and cozy up in its crevices.

The Forest Bank program allows partnerships to develop with 10- and 30-year management agreements or through bequests or land donations. Partially funded from timber sale revenues, donors help make this win-win program possible. Working together, the forest thrives, including this one tree.



Whether you own your woodland for hiking, hunting, timber management, wildlife management, bird watching or simply as a family legacy, professional assistance to help with forest management makes woodland ownership even more satisfying. Scarlet tanager © Matt Williams



Cover crops are being viewed more as a natural climate solution for storing carbon while also helping alleviate the effects of climate change, such as flooding and drought. © David Ike; Senator Mike Braun, photo courtesy Sen. Braun's office.

Indiana Senator Leads Bipartisan Climate Caucus

By Sean Mobley, senior policy associate

As Indiana reaches the end of the growing season, many farmers around the state will be planting cover crops to improve soil health and water quality, and to protect their most important asset—their land. Cover crops are an integral piece of soil health and water quality improvement strategies.

What farmers are also doing by planting cover crops is helping to fight climate change. Cover crops are being viewed more as a natural climate solution for storing carbon while also helping alleviate the effects of climate change, such as flooding and drought.

A climate solution that may seem unnatural at first glance is developing bipartisan climate policy in the US Senate. Last fall, US Sen. Mike

Braun (R-Jasper) worked to establish the first bipartisan Senate Climate Solutions Caucus with Sen. Chris Coons (D-Delaware).

As co-chairmen, Sen. Braun and Sen. Coons were first charged with recruiting other senators from their parties to join the caucus. Today, 14 members of the US Senate—seven Republicans and seven Democrats—compose the caucus, working across the aisle to offer commonsense, bipartisan policies to address climate change and lead action in US climate policy.

One of the first actions considered by Sen. Braun and the bipartisan Senate Climate Solutions Caucus is the Growing Climate Solutions Act. This would allow Hoosier farmers and forested landowners to work

with the US Dept. of Agriculture more efficiently to address climate change. This act would work to improve voluntary entry into carbon markets that many of our countries' largest companies are utilizing to lower their carbon footprint. Sen. Braun recognizes the role that nature can play in the climate change solutions and is pushing the Senate to consider these actions at a national scale.

TNC leadership has been working on and is proud to support this legislation with Sen. Braun. The Senate Climate Solutions Caucus will continue to advocate for policies that address one of the largest threats to people and nature—a changing climate. Stay tuned as we move forward tackling climate change together!

Great Places Newsletter

You're invited to join us online with our free, monthly e-newsletter. Learn about the places you love, and find out how you can help. Sign up at nature.org/greatplaces and start receiving the latest in conservation news and special event opportunities.



Children of Indiana Nature Park

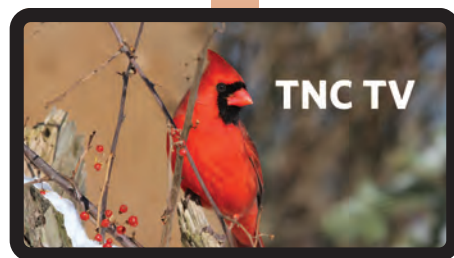
Share your love of nature with kids. Time spent outside with nature goes a long way toward creating a happy, healthy childhood. So we're giving kids a place they can call their own. *Literally.* Download your Nature IN-Deed at www.ilovemyland.org, check out nature activities, then head outdoors for nature fun.

TNC TV

TNC TV—our virtual way of staying connected and inspiring nature lovers—is back every other Thursday this fall! Season one included presentations on backyard birds and pollinators. Season two features spectacularly spooky species and a bird's eye view of fall foliage.

You can watch all the TNC TVs by visiting nature.org/indiana.

© Matt Williams

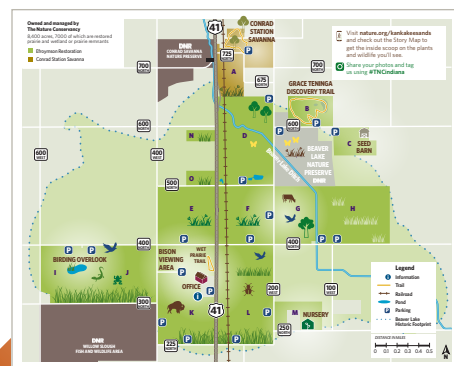


Stay Connected

The pandemic has taught us that even though we're far apart and unable to be with each other, we can still stay connected. And especially during the pandemic, a connection to nature is critical. Here are ways to stay connected with nature and TNC.

Get Outside!

Did you know that the bison herd at Kankakee Sands in Newton County was named one of the "20 Natural Wonders in Indiana that Will Amaze You" by the Indiana Office of Tourism Development? Speaking of 20, 20 calves joined our herd this year. We just completed new brochures for the trails at Kankakee Sands (go to nature.org/indiana to download), so your visit to the preserve will be a memorable one.



Follow us on social media

Never miss a TNC TV, Monarch Festival or bison update. Just follow us on social media.



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Big Walnut Nature Preserve in Putnam County © Christopher Jordan

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