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INDIANA

Nature is hard at work for Indiana. The state's croplands, forests, wetlands, rivers, and lakes are the cornerstone of local livelihoods and ways of life. With strategic, thoughtful management, Indiana's natural infrastructure can deliver even greater economic benefits in the future.

INVESTING IN NATURE SUPPORTS OUTDOOR RECREATION, BOOSTS THE ECONOMY, AND ATTRACTS BUSINESSES AND TOURISTS.

Beautiful, accessible lands and waters are the foundation of the state's high quality of life. Indiana's natural treasures also attract visitors who support local businesses, guides and outfitters, and the broader hospitality industry. In Indiana:

- Over 3.2 million people (50.1% of residents) participate in outdoor recreation,¹ which adds \$15.7 billion to the state's economy and supports 105,078 jobs with \$6.4 billion in wages.²
- A total of 570,320 anglers spent \$1 billion and supported 8,210 jobs³ and 268,630 hunters spent \$534 million and supported 4,460 jobs.⁴
- Visitors to Indiana spent \$16.9 billion in 2024, which supported more than 210,000 jobs with \$4.1 billion in wages. Visitor activity also generated \$3.2 billion in local state and local taxes.⁵
- Indiana is the center of the U.S. recreational vehicle (RV) manufacturing industry, which generates an annual economic impact of \$38 billion. This supports 674 businesses, 142,177 jobs, and \$12 billion in wages.⁶

HEALTHY WATERS SUPPORT A HEALTHY ECONOMY.

Indiana's extensive surface water resources play a crucial role in industry, agriculture, and energy production. Groundwater supplies provide drinking water for two-thirds of the state's population.⁷ The Wabash River and its connected rivers and streams provide drinking water to 72% of Indiana counties.⁸ Conserved natural lands, like forests, protect drinking water quality by filtering rainfall and stormwater runoff.⁹ Fortunately, 56% of the land area within the Great Lakes States is forested, which means that these lands filter about 6 trillion gallons of rainwater every year and play a crucial role in providing clean drinking water to residents.¹⁰

- Conservation investments help ensure forests, wetlands, and riparian areas can continue to protect clean drinking water. Research has shown that treating drinking water from an unprotected watershed can cost 10 times as much as from a protected watershed.¹¹

NATURE IS INFRASTRUCTURE FOR WORKING FARMS AND FORESTS.

Indiana farmers are leaders in private land conservation, helping to steward working lands and maintain the state's \$35.1 billion agricultural industry. Ninety-four percent of the state's farms are family-owned or operated.¹² Investments in farmland stewardship support farming communities.

- Indiana farmers have leveraged \$1.2 billion in conservation funding from USDA's Conservation Programs since 1995, helping to prevent erosion, maintain habitat, and improve water quality.¹³

A recent study estimates that from 2019 to 2029, Farm Bill conservation programs will support more than 800 jobs generating over \$33.6 million in household income annually and yield more than \$47.9 million in taxes over 10 years.¹⁴ Forests are also critical to the local economy, in a state where the hardwood industry has an annual economic impact of over \$10 billion and supports 70,000 jobs.¹⁵

CONSERVATION STRENGTHENS MILITARY READINESS.

The Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program protects land near military bases through public-private partnerships, investing nearly \$2.2 million in FY 2024 to support Naval Support Activity Crane.¹⁶

The Southern Indiana Sentinel Landscape: a case study in economic benefits. An unexpected partnership is advancing sustainable management practices for natural resources, agricultural lands, and military interests. The designation of the Southern Indiana Sentinel Landscape in 2022 recognized the significance of four military installations as well as the region's rich natural and agricultural heritage. The landscape is predominantly farms and forests, and contains 470,000 acres of protected land like state and county parks, the Hoosier National Forest, national wildlife refuges, and land trust properties. Together, this program and extensive partnerships enable the working landscape to thrive while allowing a buffer to support military training activities.¹⁷



For the full report
Nature's Dividends: The Economic, Health, and Safety Benefits of Investing in Nature.



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