



Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission

Pres. – Brendan Kearns

V. Pres. – Arin Shaver

Secretary – Dale Brier

July 8, 2026, 1:00 pm ET

Little River Wetlands Office

8315 W. Jefferson Blvd.

Fort Wayne, IN 46804

Streaming Link: <https://dnringov.rev.vbrick.com/#/events/71698a3b-0873-4829-bd9f-e0b7f4df0ab0>

Meeting Agenda

Call to Order, Introductions, Announce Proxies, Open Agenda

Review and Approval of May 13, 2026 Minutes

Comments from Visitors or Guests

DNR Finance Report (Dale Brier)

Committee Reports

- ✿ Commission One-Pager
- ✿ Sponsorship Policy

President's Report

Old Business

- ✿ Post Retreat Follow-up Discussions

- ✿ Previous Sponsorship Requests
 - Wonders of Wetlands Days
 - Knox County Wabash River Expedition
 - Splash on the Wabash
 - Mudpuppy Place- Multiple Events

New Business

- ✿ New Sponsorship Requests
 - Wabash Riverfest
 - Float Jam 2026
 - Monarch Festival

General Reminders, Discussion, Announcements

Adjournment

Next Meeting: September 8, 2026, 1:00pm ET, Carroll County

If you anticipate needing a reasonable modification under the ADA to participate or have questions concerning access at the meeting locations, please contact Ric Edwards, DNR ADA Director, at REdwards@dnr.IN.gov or 317-232-4145.



Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission

Pres. – Brendan Kearns V. Pres. – Arin Shaver
Secretary – Dale Brier

May 13, 2026, 1:00 pm CT

Hovey Lake Office
8401 IN-69 S
Mt Vernon, IN 47620

Meeting minutes

Attendance

Voting Members Present:

Adams County - Randy Lehman
Allen County - Ron Zartman (alt)
Carroll County - Mike Tetrault
Fountain County - Tim Shumaker
Gibson County - Bill Knowles
Huntington County - Dave Hacker
Knox County - Ben Burke
Parke County - Phil Cox (alt)
Posey County - Carrie Parmenter
Sullivan County - John Waterman
Tippecanoe County - Kern Darbyshire
Vermillion County - Les Zimmerman
Vigo County - Brendan Kearns
Wabash County - Mike Beauchamp
Wells County - Doug Sundling
DNR - Dale Brier (designee)

Guests:

Allen Hurst - DNR State Parks
Jared Emmack - DNR Fish and Wildlife
Keith Poole - Wabash Co Alt
Kevin Green
Kevin Meyer - Knox Co Alt
Laura Kuhn
Laura Schwartz - Adams Co Alt
Marianna Weinzapfel Kassenbrock
Payton Green
Ralph Weinzapfel - Posey Co Alt
Terri Lehman
Zach Schoenherr - DNR Fish and Wildlife

Counties Absent:

Cass County
Warren County

Counties with no Appointment:

Jay County
Miami County

Call to Order, Introductions, Announce Proxies, Open Agenda

President Brendan Kearns called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. CT, welcomed attendees, and invited guests to introduce themselves. Allen Hurst announced that Cass County had given their vote to Kearns. No changes were made to the agenda.

Review and Approval of March 11, 2026 Minutes

Mike Tetrault moved to approve the minutes, and Randy Lehman seconded. The motion passed.

Comments from Guests and Visitors

Biologist Kevin Green summarized his ongoing turtle research at Twin Swamps Nature Preserve and answered questions from the commission.

DNR Finance Report

Dale Brier presented the DNR finance report (Attachment A). The balance was \$375,825.75. In response to a question from Kearns, Brier pontificated that state gas tax exemptions would not impact oil royalty revenues and that revenue may be higher than normal due to oil prices.

Kearns requested a motion to accept the finance report. Dave Hacker moved, and Tim Shumaker seconded. The motion passed.

Greater Good Presentation – Lower Wabash Partnership

Carrie Parmenter presented on the collaborative Lower Wabash Partnership, which includes staff from SWCDs, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). She reviewed the history of Wabash River conservation efforts and described how the Partnership works to streamline conservation initiatives and create a comprehensive plan. The Partnership participated in planning modules looking at the whole river system, hosted a stakeholder meeting and a partner meeting.

She discussed the Ecological Floodplain Inundation Potential (ECOFip) mapping process, which, along with TNC and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) priority lists, identified 106 high-priority sites for landowner outreach.

Zach Schoenherr overviewed the Partnerships work over the past years. In 2018, Parmenter and other partners drafted a landscape conservation design (LCD), an extensive document that helps align partners and their conservation mission. In 2025, the Partnership contracted a company to update the LCD that was finalized in 2026.

He covered species and habitat found within the Lower Wabash region, the Partnership's cost share program, their Oxbow Lake cost share, and provided a QR code to become a member or to subscribe to their newsletter.

President's Report

Kearns asked for an update on the Natural Resources Commission. Brier reported that the NRC's decision-making authority has been significantly reduced.

Kearns shared wood duck photographs he had taken.

He noted declining participation in river events and asked why the Pedal, Paddle, Play event was cancelled. Ron Zartman guessed volunteer shortages as the cause. Kearns noted that the "Experience Otter Creek" event was seeing declining attendance.

Old Business

Retreat Follow-up

Flyer

Kearns distributed a draft flyer promoting the commission's work (Attachment B). Hurst explained that the draft was prepared by Kearns, Les Zimmerman, and Kyle Quandt, working with a consultant as a proof of concept for legislative outreach. A \$5,000 expenditure to create an official one-pager was approved at the retreat. Hurst reported that the DNR Division of Communications could create the final version at no cost but would require guidance from the commission. Kearns asked members to review the flyer and email him recommendations.

Parmenter recommended a larger font than what was on the proof of concept. Zimmerman recommended a more concise flyer paired with a supplemental packet for those seeking additional information.

Post Report Document & Tracking

Hurst presented a post-event report form created by Quandt for sponsorship recipients (Attachment C). The form collects data such as volunteer numbers, event costs, and funds raised. Reports will be submitted to Hurst for database tracking.

Tetrault moved to make the post-event report mandatory for sponsorship awardees. Hacker seconded. The motion passed.

Funding Discussion (Limit: 30 minutes)

Kearns wanted to discuss current funding, future funding, and projects that members would like to fund. Using that as a diving board, he welcomed thoughts and discussions from commission members.

Lehman expressed support for continuing the current mix of sponsorships and larger grant projects.

Hacker recommended identifying larger projects that are easier to promote to legislators.

Zimmerman suggested spreading funding across more projects by lowering maximum awards or increasing required match. Brier cautioned that administrative workload increases with more projects thereby increasing admin cost and that too-small awards, or high match requirements, may deter high-quality applications and projects.

Phil Cox asked whether funds could be used for land purchases. Brier said yes, but with significant complexity, and noted that better-suited programs exist, such as the President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust Fund.

Doug Sundling asked whether the commission could fund the Lower Wabash Partnership. Brier believed state law intends to prohibit such funding.

Kearns voiced that large grants reduce opportunities for smaller, impactful initiatives and cited the Mudpuppy Palace mobile education unit as an example of a desirable \$5,000-scale project. He encouraged investments in education and suggested the commission consider hosting its own conferences. Brier advised against commission-led conferences.

Ben Burke noted Knox County SWCD's recent \$25,000 CISMA grant and agreed that smaller, education and awareness-focused projects would be a more effective use of corridor fund monies.

Brier noted that larger sponsorship amounts may trigger state grant agreement requirements. Kearns and Brier agreed that \$5,000 could be a reasonable maximum.

Beyond a new sponsorship direction, Kearns suggested raising the sponsorship limit for existing events. Brier noted that event costs often exceed \$1,000, meaning existing requests would likely increase their ask. When asked about expenses for "Splash on the Wabash," Hacker reported that insurance alone had increased from \$250 to \$2,200.

Brier asked whether the commission supports shifting emphasis from capitol projects toward education-focused projects. Kearns asked members to bring project proposals to the next meeting. Brier recommended forming a committee to review the sponsorship policy and propose revised mission, goals, and award limits. The committee formed includes Burke, Tetrault, Zimmerman, Kern Darbyshire, Kearns, and Brier.

Previous funding requests

Hacker motioned to approve the five previously presented events, including Wonders on the Wabash, Bluffton Summer Series, Canal Days, Christmas on the Canal, and Clean out the Banks, for their requested \$1,000 each. Parmenter seconded and the motion passed. Tetrault, Kern Darbyshire, Mike Beauchamp, and Sundling abstained.

New Business

New funding requests

Wonders of Wetlands Days

Zimmerman and Phil Cox reported on the Wonders of Wetlands Days event on behalf of Vermillion County 4-H. The event sets up 10 educational stations at Duke Energy's wetland facility along the Wabash River. 8th grade students from Parke and Vermillion County attend the event over two days on September 30 – October 1. The request was for \$1,000.

Knox County Wabash River Expedition

Ben Burke presented the event for sponsorship consideration on behalf of Knox County SWCD. It will be the inaugural educational 3.5-mile river rafting trip for Knox County 7th grade students. The trip will include education stations led by local conservation professionals. Knox County had

partnered with Sullivan County to purchase the rafts. The rafting will take place over four days, September 14-17, and the request is for \$1,000.

Splash on the Wabash

Hacker presented the event on behalf of Historic Forks of the Wabash and Boy Scout Troop 130. In its 13th year, Splash on the Wabash gets 600-650 people each year tubing down a stretch of the Wabash River. The event requires many volunteers, transportation, insurance, and safety professionals on site. It is scheduled for July 19, and the request is for \$1,000.

Mudpuppy Palace- Multiple Events

Parmenter presented a request for \$1,000 on behalf of the non-profit Mudpuppy Palace to support five summer 2026 events: Roots & Ripples, youth and adult programming at Alexandrian Public Library, America's 250th Celebration, the Family Matters backpack giveaway, and Mt. Vernon River Days. Funds would support purchase of materials needed. Kearns noted the event sounded broad and asked if they specifically talk about the Wabash River. Reading from the sponsorship request form, Parmenter relayed that the 'Programming benefits the Wabash River by increasing public awareness, appreciation, and understanding of the ecosystems, wildlife, waterways, and natural resources connected to the Lower Wabash River region.'

Announcements, Discussion, Announcements

Commission members went around the table sharing updates from their counties.

Adjournment

Kearns requested a motion to adjourn. Burke moved and Tetrault seconded. The motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 3:11 p.m. CT.

Next Meeting

July 08, 2026 | 1:00pm ET | Allen County

Attachment A

48686 Wabash River Heritage Corridor Fund

FY26 as of 4/31/2026

<u>Account</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Expense</u>	<u>Revenue</u>
431401	AD - Oil and Gas royalty along		\$ 99,315.86
510101	Payroll Salaries & Wages	\$ 10,288.41	
516002	FICA Regular	\$ 601.45	
516005	Payroll Medicare	\$ 140.63	
517003	Payroll Perf St Pd Em COntr	\$ 308.70	
517005	Payroll PERF State Share	\$ 1,152.32	
518161	Health Insurance	\$ 2,398.73	
518606	Payroll Life Insurance	\$ 8.89	
518796	Payroll Anthem Dental Trad	\$ 72.45	
518800	Anthem Vision	\$ 7.95	
518901	Payroll Employee Assistance	\$ 2.59	
519006	Payroll Long Term Disability	\$ 61.74	
519503	Payroll Def Comp - StateMatch	\$ 55.20	
519722	HSA Health Savings Acct 2	\$ 173.99	
547022	SpOp-Uniforms&Related	\$ 816.00	
541002	Mot Veh Ex - Gasoline	\$ 127.52	
541010	Mot Veh Ex - Parts & Supplies	\$ 124.64	
546002	Off-Office Supplies	\$ 40.84	
599036	AdmOp-PostageMeter/Potage	\$ 38.35	
547044	SpOp-Library Books (Powerbank)	\$ 114.68	
592026	AdmOp-Property Tax	\$ 2,333.70	
592029	Adm&Op Taxes & Collection Fees	\$ -	
571010	Grants - Cities	\$ 65,219.69	
571100	Grants - Counties	\$ 100,000.00	
571300	Grants - Colleges Universities	\$ 23,808.10	
573100	Grants - Nonprofit Orgs	\$ 189,154.61	
595120	InState Travel - Per Diem&Meal	\$ -	
595130	InState Travel - Lodging	\$ -	
595180	InState Travel - Board Member	\$ 11,624.60	
599116	AdmOp-Event Sponsor	\$ 4,875.00	

DNR payroll	\$ 15,273.05
Operating	\$ 3,595.73
Grants	\$ 378,182.40
Travel costs	\$ 11,624.60
Sponsorships	\$ 4,875.00
FY Expenses to Date	\$ 413,550.78

Fund Balance as of 7/1/25	\$ 902,941.00
Encumbered	\$ (212,880.33)
FY26 Revenue	\$ 99,315.86
FY26 Expenses	\$ (413,550.78)

*****	FY26 Available Balance	\$ 375,825.75	*****
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BIG INVESTMENTS. LASTING IMPACT.

How the Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission Sparks Economic Development and Quality of Life in River Communities

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES TO THE RIVERS THAT RUN THROUGH THEM.

ESTABLISHED IN 1991.

THE VISION: To protect and enhance the natural, cultural, historical, and recreational resources of the corridor while stimulating public interest and encouraging sustainable development.

THE MISSION: To help local communities preserve, enhance, and interpret the unique and significant resources of the corridor for educational and inspirational benefit. Through public/private partnerships, the WRHCC encourages economic development while improving the quality of life for present and future generations.

\$128,250

SPENT ON SMALL SPONSORSHIPS.
130+ PROJECTS SINCE 2011.

Canal Bridge and Trail: Carroll County Wabash & Erie Canal proposes to pave 1/2 mile of existing trail and place a foot bridge over the canal. Carroll County, IN | \$123,450

Montezuma Campsite: Town of Montezuma to rehab a restroom and add showers, create accessible camping and access route from the river. \$149,903

Montezuma B&O Bridge: Parke County Commissioners will renovate the existing B&O bridge structure in Montezuma for public trail use. \$187,500

Parke County, IN.

Ehler Island Camping: Historic Forks of the Wabash proposes to develop two camp sites and canoe launch on Ehler Island and construct a six foot wide ninety foot long bridge for access. Huntington County, IN. \$70,000

Quabache Park Campsite: Town of Attica proposes to add 9 campsites along Wabash River in Quabache Park with new restroom and shower facilities. Fountain County, IN | \$174,511

Clinton Riverfront Park: Clinton will develop an overlook, parking, access route and restroom in Riverfront Park. \$187,500

Hillsdale/Montezuma Trail Connector: Project Includes the development of a 0.5mi bike/ped trail from Montezuma bridge, a rest/picnic area, wildlife habitat amenities and interpretive signage. \$187,500

Vermillion County, IN.

Merom Trailway Development Project: Project includes acquisition of 2 acres and development of a 0.5-mile asphalt trail, parking area, campsites and picnic area along with the renovation of an existing shelter and the installation of wildlife habitat amenities and trail signage. Sullivan County, IN | \$187,500

Attachment C



WABASH RIVER HERITAGE CORRIDOR COMMISSION

Post-Event Report (Rev 05/2026)

A post-event summary report shall be provided to the WRHCC at ahurst@dnr.in.gov within 30 days after the completion of the event. Photos and social media posts encouraged!

Name of organization: _____

Event Name: _____

Location of Event: _____ Date/s of event: _____

Contact person:

Name: _____

Email: _____

How many individuals participated in the event? _____

How many volunteers assisted with the event & how many volunteer hours were tracked?

Total cost to host the event? If applicable, how much funds did the event raise?

Other important facts the previous questions have not addressed (# of trash bags, miles of river cleaned, acres weed wrangled... etc)
