

Yellow warbler

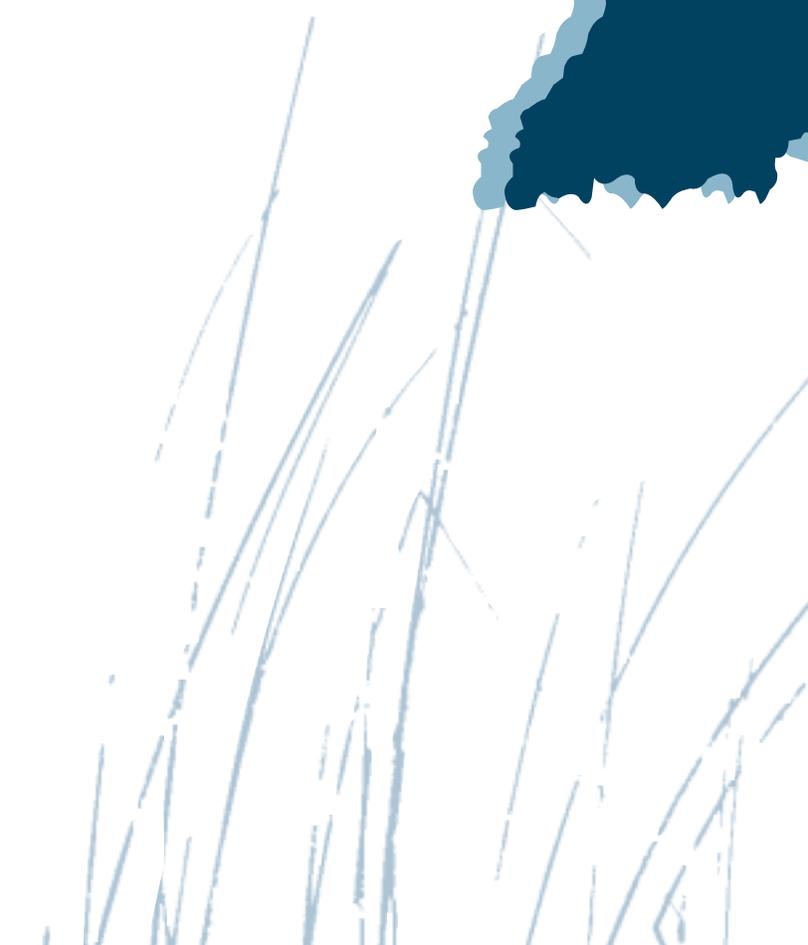


Hoosier

Wetlands

Conservation

Initiative



The *Hoosier Wetlands Conservation Initiative* is the action part of the *IWCP*. It represents a strategic approach to conserving Indiana's wetland resources. Carrying out the actions identified in this *Initiative* over the next two years (1996-98) will make significant progress in conserving Indiana wetlands, and just as importantly, lay the foundation for long-term, sustainable wetland conservation efforts with broad public support.

## A Strategic Approach

The Initiative has six strategic components:

1. **Focus areas.** The cornerstone of the *Initiative* is an emphasis on planning and implementing the *IWCP* through local (watershed or sub-watershed level) wetland conservation partnerships. Projects driven by local wetland conservation needs and local people will be most effective.
2. **Increased scientific information on Indiana's wetland resources.** Obtaining more scientific information on Indiana's wetland resources is critical to identifying and implementing long-term wetland conservation strategies and policies that are both effective and cost-efficient.
3. **Positive incentives.** Positive incentives that motivate people to voluntarily conserve and restore wetlands are emphasized.
4. **Education.** The *Initiative* emphasizes targeted educational efforts for technical staff, people who own/work the land, school children, and other audiences. This component seeks to provide better, more timely information on wetlands and wetlands-related programs and an increased understanding of the functions and benefits of wetlands.
5. **Acquisition.** The *Initiative* seeks to acquire permanent protection for the highest priority wetlands from willing owners.
6. **Continued work of the Wetlands Advisory Group and Technical Advisory Team.** The *IWCP* is the tangible result of work by and input from many people and groups over the past year, but especially the Wetlands Advisory Group and Technical Advisory Team. This *Initiative* details great progress. However, the development of a statewide, comprehensive effort to conserve Indiana's wetland resources is not complete. Implementation of the *IWCP*, including the *Initiative*, should be facilitated through the Wetlands Advisory Group and Technical Advisory Team in the same cooperative, partnership approach that has been used to develop the *IWCP*. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources should provide the leadership and coordination support needed to continue this process.

*"The Hoosier Wetlands Conservation Initiative is the key to making things happen."*

—Will Ditzler,  
J.F. New & Associates

# Objectives and Actions

Listed below under each of the six strategic components are specific objectives (what will be accomplished) and actions (how they will be accomplished and when). Following the six components is a section called “Funding the *Initiative*,” which outlines how the *Initiative* will be funded and where the money will come from.

## 1. Focus areas

### Background

The cornerstone of the *Initiative* is an emphasis on planning and implementing the *IWCP* through local wetland conservation partnerships. Although many existing wetland conservation programs are administered at the state or federal levels, implementation and application at the local level is the most effective means for delivery. Many successful focus area projects are already in place in Indiana. The case studies (page 31) illustrate the diversity and effectiveness of focus area projects.

**Objective 1.1** Increase the number of focus area projects in Indiana.

**Action 1.1.1** Promote the benefits of and need for focus area projects in promoting the *IWCP* (see Action 4.1.1).

**Action 1.1.2** By May 1997, develop a *Wetlands Focus Area Sourcebook* that provides guidelines for forming focus area projects.

Whether focus area projects are initiated and/or funded by state or federal resource agencies, conservation organizations, or concerned citizens, there are some “lessons learned” that will help focus area projects form in a way that will be as productive as possible. Some considerations for development of the focus area guidelines:

- Involve soil and water conservation districts and county drainage boards.
- When possible, have project coordinators (paid staff) at focus area level to assist with/coordinate:
  - Project planning
  - Incentives
  - Education
  - Information on programs
  - Information on regulations
  - Identification of future needs

*“We support the objectives and actions identified in the Indiana Wetlands Conservation Plan. We will continue to participate in its implementation along with other stakeholders who are interested in conserving vital wetland resources.”*

—Kathy Prosser,  
Indiana Department of Environmental  
Management

- Have a “Project Team” of local interests that guides the project.
- Seek funding package for seed money from a variety of sources—federal, state, local, private.
- Emphasize the multiple functions and benefits of wetlands—integrate water quality, flood control, wildlife habitat, timber production, and recreational programs.
- Design in ways to leverage existing programs and money.
- Consider variabilities between areas—a strength of the focus area approach.
- Recognize that these efforts are long-term.

Additional information in the handbook would include:

- Funding sources.
- Wetland conservation programs, materials, and contacts.

**Action 1.1.3** Provide funding to get focus area projects started.

A description of options should be included in the *Wetlands Focus Area Sourcebook*. Examples of potential sources of funding include: 1) the Nonpoint Source Program funded through the Indiana Department of Environmental Management under Section 319 of the Federal Clean Water Act; 2) the Lake and River Enhancement Program (LARE) in the Division of Soil Conservation, Indiana Department of Natural Resources; and 3) wetland restoration programs sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

**Objective 1.2** Increase the effectiveness of existing focus area projects.

**Action 1.2.1** Provide funding (see Action 1.1.3).

**Action 1.2.2** Develop a *Wetlands Focus Area Sourcebook* by May 1997 (see 1.1.2).

**Action 1.2.3** By May 1997, create a statewide network to share information, experiences, and expertise among focus area projects.

*“The IWCP is a product of significant effort by a great number of people which will potentially play an important role in resource conservation in Indiana.”*

*—Bob Hittle,*

*American Consulting Engineers, Inc.*

## 2. Increased scientific information on Indiana wetland resources

### Background

The lack of quantitative information on some aspects of Indiana’s wetland resources is a major obstacle to improving wetland conservation efforts. Increased scientific information on Indiana’s wetland resources is critical to identifying and implementing long-term wetland conservation strategies and policies that are both effective and cost-efficient. High priority should be attached to achieving these scientific information objectives.

*“The IWCP is a long needed guide to understanding and managing wetlands for the people of the state of Indiana.”*

*—Thomas R. Anderson,  
Save the Dunes Council*

**Objective 2.1** Have a standardized method for functional assessment of wetland quality in place by May 1998.

Some individual wetlands of one type are higher quality than others of the same type and thus should be given a higher priority for conservation. A standardized method for assessing wetland quality is needed. Both existing and new methods for functional assessment should be considered.

**Action 2.1.1** The next steps for obtaining a functional assessment method will be determined by the Technical Advisory Team and Wetlands Advisory Group.

**Objective 2.2** Have an inventory system capable of quantitatively identifying and monitoring Indiana’s wetlands in place by May 1998.

This is a major undertaking. It is important to note that the system for conducting the inventory should be in place by May 1998, but it is unlikely the actual inventory will be completed by then. The inventory system would be designed to try to answer the following questions:

- How many of what types of wetlands are there in Indiana and where are they found?
- How many of what types of wetlands are we gaining or losing?
- What is causing the gain or loss?
- What impact do specific wetland conservation programs, regulations, and policies have on wetland resources?

The inventory should be updated at regular, periodic intervals.

**Action 2.2.1** By March 1997, a task force should develop a description of the system needed, the costs to get it established, and a timetable for having it in place by the target date of May 1998.

The task force should be multi-disciplinary with representatives from resource agencies, universities, and the private sector.

**Objective 2.3** Prioritize Indiana’s wetlands for conservation by community type and watershed by May 1999.

**Action 2.3.1** Develop a process that integrates the inventory described in Objective 2.2 with the Natural Heritage Inventory database. The process should consider the multiple functions and benefits of wetlands and should incorporate monitoring information from the focus area projects.

**Objective 2.4** Have a method for assessing the impacts (costs and benefits) of wetland conservation efforts on local economies, communities, agricultural production, tax revenues, etc.

*Action 2.4.1* By March 1997, a task force should develop a description of the impacts that need to be assessed and a process for assessing them.

### 3. Incentives—positive incentives to voluntarily conserve and restore wetlands

#### **Background**

A variety of positive incentives to voluntarily conserve and restore wetlands is currently available in Indiana. Although these have been very popular and successful in conserving wetlands, with additional funding and/or promotion, they could be more effective. Existing incentives should be better utilized and additional incentives should be developed to fill priority needs.

**Objective 3.1** Identify existing, effective incentives and specific additional incentives needed in Indiana.

*Action 3.1.1* Compile an inventory of existing federal, state, local, and private incentives.

This inventory has been completed as part of the *IWCP* project. Detailed information on the incentives listed on page 17 of the *IWCP* are available in a separate document titled *A Summary of Wetlands Conservation Programs in Indiana*.

*Action 3.1.2* Assess incentive opportunities, review existing incentives, and identify modifications or additional incentives with the interests to whom the incentives are/will be targeted—the “end-users” (owners of agricultural land, owners of forested land, developers, owners of public land, lake associations, conservation groups, etc.) by August 1997. Additional considerations:

- Because the different interests will likely have different concerns and motivations, input from *all* interests should be gathered. Their input should be substantive—*they* should identify the incentives.

*“The Plan represents a significant effort to define the status of wetlands and develop public education and awareness of wetlands.”*

—Stephanie Morse,  
*Consulting Engineers of Indiana*

*“[The Plan represents] lots of dedicated effort moving in the right direction!”*

*—David Grandstaff,*

*Wawasee Property Owners Association*

- Consider incentives for:
  - Conservation of existing wetlands.
  - Restoration and then conservation of drained or modified wetlands.
  - Creation of wetlands.
- Identify needs for specific focus area projects, and promote and deliver incentives through the focus areas.

#### 4. Education—targeted efforts for technical staff, people who own/work the land, school children, and other audiences

##### **Background**

The need for better, more timely information on wetlands and wetlands-related programs, and an increased understanding of the functions and benefits of wetlands have been consistently identified as high priority needs. This call for *education* comes from a broad diversity of interests, including environmental groups, developers, and county surveyors, who identify a lack of information and misunderstanding as major obstacles. *Education* is a broad topic. The following objectives and actions focus efforts through 1998. The efforts should be delivered at both statewide and focus area levels.

**Objective 4.1** Inform Hoosiers of the *IWCP*—what it is, what it means to them, and how they can get involved.

*Action 4.1.1* Distribute information directly by mailing copies of the *IWCP* to all interests and communicating through the media upon completion of the *IWCP* in May 1996. In addition:

- Use existing mechanisms and programs.
- Emphasize the multiple benefits and functions of wetlands.
- Make all *IWCP*-related information available on the Internet.

**Objective 4.2** Identify existing, effective education efforts and specific additional education efforts that are needed in Indiana.

*Action 4.2.1* Compile an inventory of existing education efforts.

This inventory has been completed as part of the *IWCP* project. Detailed information on the education efforts listed on page 18 of the *IWCP* are available in a separate document titled *A Summary of Wetlands Conservation Programs in Indiana*.

**Action 4.2.2** Assess needs, evaluate existing efforts, and identify modifications and additional efforts needed by August 1997. The assessment should include three entities from throughout the state:

- People who represent the “recipients” of the information (landowners, developers, soil and water conservation districts, etc.).
- Wetlands conservation entities (technical people).
- Education community (people involved in conservation and environmental education as well as education in general).

**Objective 4.3** Improve the accessibility of existing wetlands information to all interests.

**Action 4.3.1** Develop outreach efforts for interests that currently have direct impacts on wetlands. Considerations include:

- The efforts should be developed cooperatively with the various interests—developers, county surveyors, farmers, soil and water conservation districts.
- The efforts should be small group-oriented (e.g., seminars, workshops, and one-on-one contacts).
- Emphasize wetlands avoidance by providing information on techniques for designing projects and conducting operations and land management practices in ways that avoid adverse impacts on wetlands.
- Deliver and coordinate efforts through the Wetlands Advisory Group, Technical Advisory Team, and focus areas.
- Emphasize two-way exchange of information.

*“The Indiana Wetlands Conservation Plan is comprehensive and addresses the problems in a thorough manner. It seems eminently workable.”*  
—Norma Flannery,  
Oxbow, Inc.

## 5. Acquisition—efforts to acquire permanent protection for priority wetlands from willing owners

### Background

Acquisition of enough land to conserve all of the functions and benefits wetlands provide in Indiana and to achieve the goal of the *IWCP* is neither feasible nor desirable. However, there is broad support for providing permanent protection of some wetlands because of their rarity, susceptibility to loss, or other factors. It is important to emphasize that acquisitions should be from willing sellers and that permanent protection can be obtained in ways other than fee title such as permanent easements.

**Objective 5.1** Identify long-term, statewide wetland acquisition priorities.

*Action 5.1.1* Compile an inventory of existing acquisition efforts.

This inventory has been completed as part of the *IWCP* project. Detailed information on the acquisition efforts listed on page 18 of the *IWCP* are available in a separate document titled *A Summary of Wetlands Conservation Programs in Indiana*.

*“This document has obviously been well thought out.”*

—James H. Keith,  
*Earth Tech*

*Action 5.1.2* By May 1999, develop long-term acquisition priorities based on the overall wetland conservation priorities identified under Action 2.3.1.

**Objective 5.2** Increase acquisition efforts for current high priority wetlands from willing sellers.

*Action 5.2.1* Provide additional funding to the Heritage Trust Program.

*Action 5.2.2* Provide funding for high priority wetlands identified through focus area projects.

**Objective 5.3** Address the issue of tax revenue reductions to local communities as a result of wetland acquisition programs.

*Action 5.3.1* Review options for addressing this issue based on the results of the task force work identified in Action 2.4.1.

## 6. Continue the work of the Wetlands Advisory Group and Technical Advisory Team

### **Background**

Both the Wetlands Advisory Group and Technical Advisory Team feel strongly that the approach used in developing the *IWCP* has been very effective, but considerable work remains.

The objectives and actions listed above can be most effectively achieved through continuation of the work of the Wetlands Advisory Group and Technical Advisory Team—through the same cooperative, partnership approach that has been used to develop the *IWCP*.

The benefits of this partnership approach are threefold:

1. Most of the expertise needed to address Indiana’s wetlands conservation issues is found in these two groups, and people whose expertise is needed can be recruited to participate.

2. The majority of statewide interests that affect or are affected by wetlands conservation efforts are represented. Interests not represented can be recruited to participate.
3. It is cost- and time-efficient. New organizations, programs, divisions, or sections are not created to develop or administer the *IWCP*. Instead, the activities of existing organizations are coordinated in a synergistic way.

The Wetlands Advisory Group and Technical Advisory Team should continue to function through at least 1998. Their role should include:

- Continuing as a forum for information-sharing, problem-solving, and discussion.
- Guiding overall work on the *IWCP*.
- Facilitating implementation of various actions identified in the *IWCP*.

As in the development of the *IWCP* to date, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources should provide the leadership and coordination support needed to continue this process.

In addition to the components, objectives, and actions identified above, two important issues that should be addressed in the continued work of the Wetlands Advisory Group and Technical Advisory Team are:

**Wetland Mitigation.** Considerable work has been done in other states and some progress has been made in Indiana to address this critical issue. There is a need for a clearly defined program that addresses mitigation banking.

**Wetland Regulations.** The need for improved coordination, efficiency, and consistency of local, state, and federal wetland regulations is a priority. Considerations for improving coordination, efficiency, and consistency of regulations through the *IWCP* process:

- Information on existing regulations and how to work with them should be communicated through the focus areas.
- Considerable progress can be made to address coordination and consistency issues through the focus areas efforts.
- Federal wetlands legislation and regulations are currently being reviewed by Congress and may change dramatically in the coming months.

*“I think the Indiana Wetlands Conservation Plan was much-needed and long overdue.”*  
—John McNamara,  
St. Joseph County Surveyor

*“The Indiana Wetlands Conservation Plan was very well formulated by a broad cross section of people.”*  
—Ursell Cox,  
Indiana Builders Association

# Funding the Initiative

The objectives and actions above describe what end results are desired, what actions should be taken to achieve those end results, and in most cases, identify a time frame for when they should be accomplished. However, in the real world, very little is accomplished without money.

When it comes to funding wetland conservation efforts, a few things are clear:

*“Funding must occur first and foremost- BEFORE THE PLAN is IMPLEMENTED! The costs should not be placed solely on the property owner, or the county!”*

—Jay D. Poe,  
Huntington County Surveyor

- In this era of agency down-sizing and tight budgets, extra diligence in spending public money (and private money for that matter) is imperative.
- Funding for existing local, state, and federal government wetlands conservation programs should be used in the most effective manner possible.
- Additional funding for wetland conservation efforts must come from all levels (local, state, and national) and all sources (business, conservation, and government).

Funding for implementation of the *Initiative* over the next two years falls into three categories:

1. Time and expenses for people who participate on the Wetlands Advisory Group and Technical Advisory Team. All indications are that the agencies, organizations, and individuals on these groups are committed to continuing their involvement.
2. Coordination and facilitation support. The first two years of the project were funded through a grant from the EPA to the DNR.
3. Funding for specific actions. The amount of funding needed for each action will be determined and reviewed by the Technical Advisory Team and Wetlands Advisory Group. Funding sources will then be identified and pursued.

*“My concern is that the wetlands plan won’t have any impact on the wetlands in Indiana unless it’s implemented. So the next phase of the process needs to continue.”*

—Vicki Carson,  
Indiana Hardwood Lumbermen’s Association

Yellow warbler

