

# Healthy Rivers Initiative

## Wabash River/Sugar Creek



### What is the Healthy Rivers Initiative?

The Healthy Rivers Initiative (HRI) is the largest land conservation project in Indiana history. It is a partnership of resource agencies and organizations working with landowners on opportunities to permanently protect 43,000 acres along the floodplain of the Wabash River and Sugar Creek.

### What are the goals of HRI?

- Provide a model that balances forests, farmed lands and natural resources conservation.
- Connect separated parcels of public land to benefit wildlife.
- Restore and enhance areas of land along the Wabash River, Sugar Creek and Muscatatuck River.
- Protect important habitat for wildlife, including rest areas for migratory birds.
- Open land to public recreational activities, such as fishing, hunting, trapping, hiking, canoeing, bird watching and boating.
- Establish areas for nature tourism.

- Improve water quality and flood protection for downstream landowners.

### How can I participate?

HRI partners work cooperatively with landowners willing to sell or donate their land to the project. This project does not involve seizing of land through eminent domain. Those interested in participating can:

1. Sell land to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). It can be the entire property or specific parts of the property you own. The DNR is interested in land that already is restored or retired from farming. Land that provides public access to waterways is another priority. The DNR recognizes each circumstance is different and can discuss a host of options that benefit both the landowner and the DNR.
2. Enroll land into federal programs such as:
  - *Wetlands Reserve Program*: A voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners to restore,

protect and enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring eligible land from agriculture and placing the land under a conservation easement. Visit [IN.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/WRP/WRPhomepage.htm](http://IN.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/WRP/WRPhomepage.htm).

- *Conservation Reserve Program*: A voluntary program for agricultural landowners, where landowners receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term vegetative cover practices on eligible farmland. Visit [IN.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CRP/crphomepage.html](http://IN.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CRP/crphomepage.html).

### Who's working on this initiative?

- Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources
- Indiana State Dept. of Agriculture
- The Nature Conservancy of Indiana
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

### Need more information?

**Phone:** 317-232-4050

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**Visit:** [HealthyRivers.IN.gov](http://HealthyRivers.IN.gov)

# Healthy Rivers Initiative Sugar Creek Project Area

Northern plants such as Canada yew, eastern hemlock and white pine create unique habitats for many birds including the Northern Saw-whet Owl and Veery. These plants and animals contribute to Parke County's unique character as one of Indiana's very special places.

Sugar Creek is among Indiana's highest quality streams and is home to many aquatic species, including such rarities as the Eastern Sand Darter and the Purple Cat's Paw Mussel. It is also a stream of great aesthetic beauty.

The Sugar Creek valley, including Shades and Turkey Run state parks, is widely recognized for its spectacular geologic features – sandstone cliffs, canyons, waterfalls and high backbones. Two areas of special significance are designated National Natural Landmarks: Pine Hills and Rocky Hollow-Falls Canyon Nature Preserves.

