

President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust Project Commission

**Fort Harrison State Park Inn
Roosevelt Room
5830 N. Post Road
Indianapolis, Indiana 46216**

Minutes of December 9, 2025

1) Call to Order

Emily Kress, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order of the President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust (PBHCT) Project Commission at approximately 11:00 a.m., EST, on December 9, 2025, at the Fort Harrison State Park Inn, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Mark Becker, DNR Director of Land Acquisition, welcomed new board member Kade Carter. Mr. Carter was appointed by Governor Braun to represent the southeast region of the state pursuant to IC 14-12-2-14(b)(7)(iii).

2) Review and Approval of the President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust Project Commission Meeting Minutes for September 9, 2025

Kris Krouse moved to approve the minutes. Ron Hellmich seconded the motion. Upon voice vote, the motion carried.

3) Environmental License Plate Sales and Financial Report

Becker presented a chart with ten years of Environmental license plate sales data. It is unclear what effect the new BMV “black plate” may have on Environmental license plate sales. The \$40 fee for the Environmental license plate (\$25 to PBHCT, \$15 to BMV) has not changed since the plate was introduced in 1992.

Becker presented the financial report including fund balances for each PBHCT account. There is no general fund appropriation for PBHCT in the current budget. The Commission discussed how DNR might better utilize the Stewardship Fund.

5) Land Acquisition Report

Becker indicated that the Division of Land Acquisition had opened 100 new files for CY2025 year to date. Files completed calendar year to date:

Fee Simple	21	936 acres
Conservation Easements	16	1,900 acres
Easements	18	(utility, ingress/egress, etc.)
Other	5	(environmental restrictive covenants, etc.)
Total	60	

Calendar year to date: Seventeen PBHCT projects completed = 1,040 acres

During the period August 1 – October 31 (since last meeting): Seven PBHCT closings:

#1602: Lake County Parks and Recreation Board – Lake Hills County Park

On August 7, DNR completed the acquisition of a Conservation Easement over the Harvest Ridge Church tract covering 10 acres for \$44,750.

#1576: DNR Division of Forestry – Harrison-Crawford State Forest

On August 19, DNR completed the fee simple acquisition of the 10-acre Daily tract in Harrison County for \$15,610.

#1598: DNR Division of Forestry – Harrison-Crawford State Forest

On September 2, DNR completed the fee simple acquisition of the 10-acre Fillbach tract in Harrison County for \$12,600.

#1584 Whitewater Valley Land Trust – Whitewater Valley Conservation Area

On September 10, DNR completed the acquisition of a Conservation Easement covering two tracts for a total of 147.908 acres in Wayne County for \$287,463.

#1599 DNR Division of Fish, Wildlife & Nature Preserves – Virginia Willow Sinkhole Swamp Nature Preserve

On September 16, DNR completed the fee simple acquisition of the 118-acre Ems tract in Harrison County for \$725,000.

#1600 DNR Division of Fish, Wildlife & Nature Preserves – Virginia Willow Sinkhole Swamp Nature Preserve

On September 22, DNR completed the fee simple acquisition of a 40-acre tract from the Sam Shine Foundation in Harrison County for \$119,255.

#1596 DNR Division of Forestry – Morgan-Monroe State Forest

On October 31, DNR completed the fee simple acquisition of the 2.5-acre Stapp & Ashby tract in Morgan County for \$19,195.44.

6) Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on March 10, 2025, 11:00 a.m., at The Garrison Ball Room.

7) Meeting adjourned

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:45 a.m.

Commission Members in Attendance:

**Emily Kress
Missi Bush-Sawtelle
Mary McConnell
Kade Carter
Kris Krouse
Ron Hellmich, Nature Preserves**

Zack Smith, Forestry proxy
Mike Linderman, State Museum proxy
Anthony Sipes, State Parks proxy
Chad Whitis, Fish & Wildlife proxy
Betsy Yankowiak (call in)
Sam Bond (call in)
Rep. Mike Karickhoff (call in)

Other Attendees:

Mark Becker
Erika Hinshaw
John Connell
Laura Minzes
Craig Zandstra