

President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust Project Commission

**Fort Harrison State Park
The Garrison Conference Center - Ball Room
6002 N. Post Road
Indianapolis, Indiana 46216**

Minutes of March 10, 2026

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 March 10, 2026, at the Garrison Conference Center at Fort Harrison State Park, Indianapolis, Indiana.

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

Gene Hopkins moved to approve the minutes. Ron Hellmich seconded the motion. Upon voice vote, the motion carried.

3) Environmental License Plate Sales

Becker presented a chart with Environmental license plate sales data since 2014. In 2025, 46,686 plates were sold, making it the best year since CY2010 when 48,269 plates were sold. The historical trend in recent years is an increase of approximately 1,000 plates year over year.

4) Financial Report

Becker presented the financial report including fund balances for each PBHCT account.

5) Land Acquisition Report

Becker indicated that the Division of Land Acquisition had opened 11 new files for CY2026 year to date. Files completed in the calendar year to date:

Fee Simple	3	175 acres
Conservation Easements	1	112 acres
Easements	8	(utility, ingress/egress, etc.)
Other	1	<u>(environmental restrictive covenants, etc.)</u>
Total	13	

Calendar year to date: No PBHCT projects have been completed yet this year.

Becker also gave an update on the Next Level Conservation Trust (\$25M ARPA funds appropriated for Conservation Land Acquisition by the General Assembly).

Since 2023, 29 NLCT projects have been completed or are in process, totaling 3,621 acres of land. The NLCT required a 25% match, which was exceeded at a match of 32%.

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During the period November 1 – January 31 (since last meeting), one PBHCT closed:

PBHCT #1583: Nature Preserves – Spring Creek Seeps

On December 12, DNR completed the fee simple acquisition of the 29.7-acre Barker tract in Montgomery County for \$325,000. This property is an addition to Spring Creek Seeps Nature Preserve and features more than 1,400 feet of frontage along Sugar Creek. This project includes matching support from The Nature Conservancy and Central Indiana Land Trust.

Becker also highlighted two recent Next Level Conservation Trust closings:

NLCT #4005: Nature Preserves – Big Walnut Nature Preserve

On January 15, DNR completed the fee simple acquisition of the 13.8-acre Geneva Wilson tract in Putnam County for \$120,000. This property includes a west-facing slope with mature hardwoods and more than 1,800 feet of frontage along Big Walnut Creek. This acquisition resolves a longstanding inholding at Big Walnut.

NLCT #4022: State Parks – Spring Mill State Park

On October 10, DNR completed the fee simple acquisition of the 40.8-acre Bassett tract in Lawrence County for \$210,000. The property is located on the north edge of the Park along the old stagecoach road that once served the pioneer village. It features Karst topography, including 3 large sinkholes believed to drain into the Whistling Cave system under the Park. This addition makes the total area of Spring Mill State Park 1,399 acres.

6) State Fair T-Shirts

PBHCT statute allows up to 10% of Stewardship Account to be used for promotional purposes (IC 14-12-2-26(a)(6)(D)). It has been PBHCT practice in recent years to support the purchase of t-shirts for DNR Employees and Volunteers at the State Fair. Typically, the cost is about \$8,000.

7) Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on June 9, 2026, 12:00 p.m. EST, at Turkey Run State Park.

8) Meeting adjourned

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:35 a.m.

Commission Members in Attendance:

Emily Kress
Missi Bush-Sawtelle
Kris Krouse
Ron Hellmich, Nature Preserves
Brad Schneck, Forestry proxy
Mike Linderman, State Museum proxy

Anthony Sipes, State Parks proxy
Chad Whitis, Fish & Wildlife proxy
Sam Bond (call in)
Kade Carter (call in)
Gene Hopkins (call in)
Mary McConnell (call in)

Other Attendees:

Mark Becker
Erika Hinshaw
Cheryl Hampton
John Connell
Jill Flachskam
Zack Smith
Jody Kress
John Seifert
Tom Laycock
Cliff Chapman
Andrea Huntington