

IDNR Division of Nature Preserves

2013 Annual Report



DNP: Mission and Staff

Natural Heritage Data Center

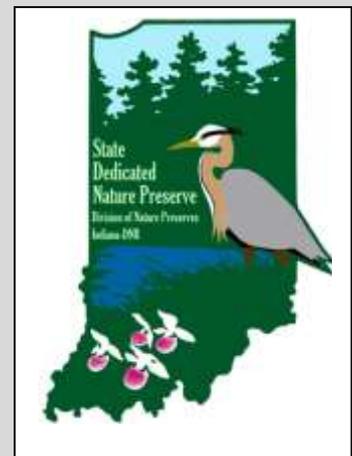
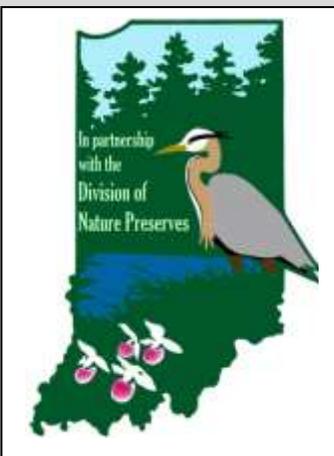
Indiana's Nature Preserve System

Nature Preserve Dedications

Heritage Trust Land Acquisition

Nature Preserve Management

Lake Michigan Coastal Program



Division of Nature Preserves Annual Report for 2013

Executive Summary

The Division of Nature Preserves is charged with finding, protecting and managing examples of Indiana's natural communities, coastal resources and rarest species for the benefit of present and future generations. It is composed of four primary components: Nature Preserve Protection, Nature Preserve Management, the Natural Heritage Data Center and the Lake Michigan Coastal Program. The Division is funded by a variety of funding sources, including trust funds, grants and general funds. Approximately one-third of the staff is paid by non-general fund sources. All of the remaining staff members receive a portion of their funding from non-general fund sources (see Figures 1 and 2). Division staff members work in nine locations scattered around the state, including the Central Office in Indianapolis.

The Division works with numerous partners, using grants and donations to protect, manage and restore natural areas. For example, a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant is restoring 76 acres of dune and swale at Pine Station Nature Preserve and 25 acres of savanna at Hoosier Prairie Nature Preserve. These two projects were accomplished with no State funds involved. The Bicentennial Nature Trust and Indiana Heritage Trust forged partnerships with numerous partners, protecting 13 natural areas in 13 counties.

Division staff was involved with numerous publications and outreach activities. These included 54 presentations, 83 partner projects, 54 technical assists to partners, 113 interagency projects, more than 300 outreach activities, and numerous projects to improve access and trails for visitors. The Division hosted Field Day events in spring and fall, at 17 preserves in 15 counties. There were also two public dedications held, Blue Cast Springs in Allen County, and the Fred and Dorothy Meyer Preserve in Morgan County.

During 2013, some of the field inventory work included monitoring of known occurrences and new finds of some extremely rare plants, including stout-ragged goldenrod at Clark State Forest, heartleaf plantain and pink wintergreen. Staff also monitored numerous occurrences of endangered and threatened plants.

The Natural Heritage Database now contains 17,158 element occurrences (rare plants, animals, natural community locations), and during 2013, 295 new records were entered and 1,324 records were updated. Staff answered 768 information requests and conducted 620 environmental reviews, 118 floodway permit application reviews, 163 public lake permit application reviews, and 25 coal permit application reviews. Fifty collecting and research permits were issued. The certified ginseng harvest was 4,822 pounds; and 27 ginseng dealers were licensed.

There is at least one nature preserve in every natural region in Indiana. Blue Cast Springs Nature Preserve, in the "Black Swamp" region, located in eastern Allen County, filled the last gap. Nature preserves contain at least one example of all but two of the 58 natural community types known to occur in the state. Of the 213 state-endangered plants, there is at least one protected example of 179 of them. All but three of the 88 state-threatened species have at least one population protected, and only two of the 115 rare plant species have no protected populations.

To date, 256 nature preserves have been dedicated. They are owned by 46 different entities, including five different DNR landholding divisions, 14 land trusts, 18 city/county governments, and four colleges/universities. Nature preserves protect some of Indiana's most diverse landscapes, including dunes, sand prairies and savannas, wetland complexes, lakes, rivers, forested ecosystems, glades, karst features, prairies, fens, bogs, swamps and geologic features. In 2013, five new preserves were dedicated, including Blossom Hollow in Johnson County; Blue Cast Springs in Allen County; Conrad Station in Newton County; J.D. Marshall, Indiana's first shipwreck preserve, in Porter County; and Marion's Woods in Steuben County. There were also four additions to nature preserves that were dedicated in 2013, Crooked Lake in Whitley County, Hoosier Prairie in Lake County, Manitou Island in Fulton County, and Merry Lea in Noble County.

Regional ecologists managed more than 3,433 acres in 2013, removing invasive species, installing and repairing trails, restoring wetlands, and planting prairie and wetland species. Large restoration projects funded through the Great Lakes

Restoration Initiative continue at several areas in Lake County. Regional ecologists were involved with prescribed burns at 27 different properties encompassing more than 1,093.5 acres. Technical assistance was provided to a number of agencies, and conservation planning efforts helped with the wetland mitigation at Prophetstown State Park, and with the restoration at Fort Harrison State Park on Global Service Day.

The Lake Michigan Coastal Program funded a number of projects in 2013 through its matching grant program, passing through more than \$1 million from NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). LMCP also focused on the development of a management plan for Indiana’s shipwrecks, anew website for shipwrecks, and the dedication of the J.D. Marshall as Indiana’s first protected shipwreck site.

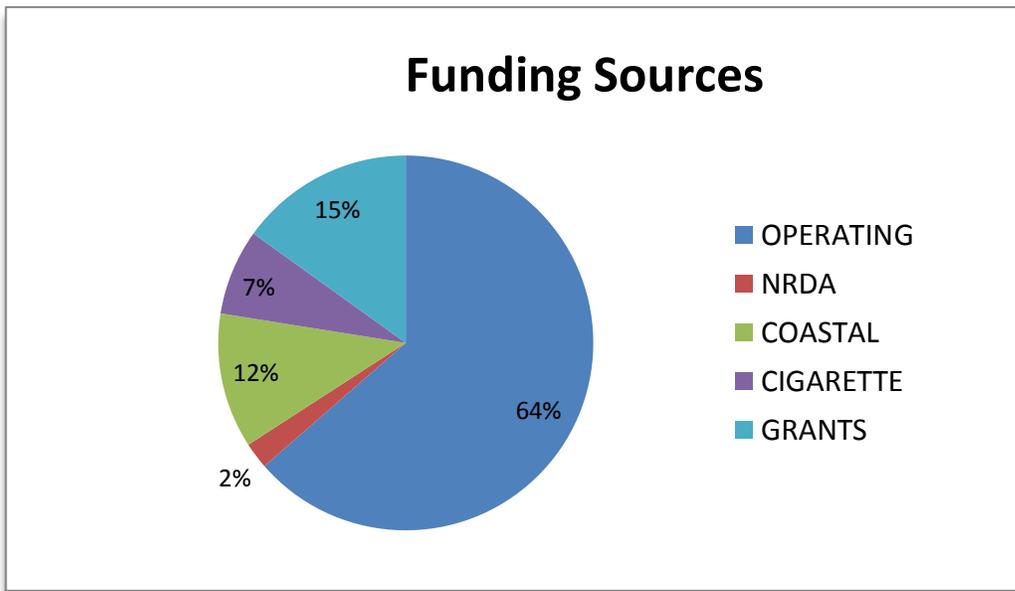


Figure 1. Funding sources for the Division of Nature Preserves.

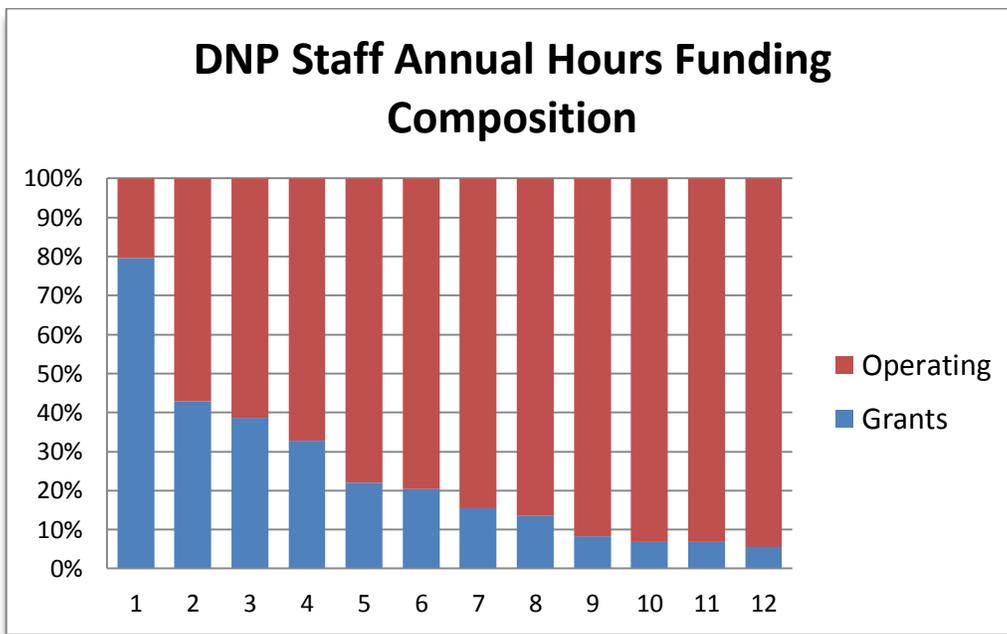


Figure 2. Composition of funding sources.